



DENVER BRONCOS QUOTES

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DENVER BRONCOS PRE-DRAFT PRESS CONFERENCE QUOTES (4/24/17)

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF FOOTBALL OPERATIONS/GENERAL MANAGER JOHN ELWAY

On the status of the Broncos' draft board

"It is pretty much set. We always massage it, but we finished last Thursday. There are plenty of players up there."

On how much more difficult it is to move up in the first round compared to last year

"There's no question of where we [are this year compared] to where we are now—and going up higher. It always gets more expensive the higher up you want to go. Just depending on where you start, obviously this year we're starting a little bit lower—or higher, however you want to put it—than we're used to being put. Again, you go back and you listen to all of the different options, and going up and going back."

On whether Oklahoma RB Joe Mixon is on the Broncos' draft board

"I'm not going to tell you who's on the board."

On positions that are deep in the NFL draft

"Defensively, there are a lot of corners and safeties. Obviously, both lines are a little bit weaker than they have been in the past. There are a lot of running backs and tight ends. This is a very good year for tight ends. The last couple years with the way college football is going, wide receiver is always deep. There are a lot of wideouts."

On evaluating Mixon's character

"We're still evaluating that. Obviously, that's an issue and it's something that we're continuing to look at while getting as much background as we can on Joe to see where he may fall for us."

On meeting with Mixon

"We had a good meeting with him. There's no question. I didn't get a chance to spend a lot of time with him, but I had a meeting with him. We went through the whole process and what happened. I'm sure he had been through it several times. But for us to be able to hear it from him, and what happened—we went through all that."

On having versatility on special teams with prospects

"That's a part of the process. When you look at every player, special teams is obviously—can they contribute on the special teams? How much experience do they have doing it? And if they haven't participated there, what do we think their abilities are to be able to come in and help us on the special teams. So, special teams is always a big thought process when we're evaluating players."

On if the college style of play has affected the way offensive linemen are prepared for the NFL

"I think so. I think technique and what they do offensively has changed over time, therefore it may be a cause as to why it's a little bit thinner this year as it has been in the past. There is a lot of throwing the ball and the ball comes out quick, especially with

different teams. The Alabama's and those types of teams, the SEC teams still run the football, so you get a good evaluation of those people. When you're talking about teams and how much they throw it, it definitely affects the offensive lineman."

On if there is a starting left tackle in the draft class

"Yes. There could possibly be one. If that's where we go he's going to come in and compete for a job. Just like all of the rookies that will come in, they'll all come in and compete for a job."

On meeting with Stanford RB Christian McCaffrey

"He was close. And it was free (laughing). And we wanted to meet with him. He's a great kid. We like Christian a lot and we wanted to bring him in. It was one of those [where] he was in the area, so we wanted to take advantage of that to get to see him again. He's a great kid."

On possible concerns McCaffrey may bring with local ties

"No. My concern is if he can play football. That's our concern. And that, he can do. So, there's not a concern there."

On signing free agents to allow the team to draft the best possible player

"My philosophy has always been when we go into the draft, we want to go in picking the best football players. Free agent-wise, my belief is that we fix needs in free agency. With [G] Ron Leary and [T] Menelik [Watson], and the offensive line and the guys we signed there and defensive line-wise what we did—we're still going to try to draft the best football players that are going to help us on our football team and not get in a situation where we reach for one. A lot of people think we don't have a left tackle on our team. We have a left tackle on our team. [OL] Ty Sambrailo played left tackle for us two years ago and was playing very well, but hasn't been able to stay healthy. That's always an option for us. The key thing about the draft as we go in and try to select players that make our football team and help us be a better football team."

On the depth at left tackle on the Broncos' roster

"We looked at all the options. We felt the direction we went was the best option for us at that time. Left tackles are not easy to find, so again we go back. We thought Ty [Sambrailo] is a guy that can compete there. [T Donald] Stephenson played a little left. Menelik played a little left, so we're not without there. It may not be ideal, but you never know. With the way Ty was playing a couple years ago, we felt that he was going to be a very legitimate left tackle until he got hurt."

On diluted or failed drug tests by a player at the NFL Combine

"We try to dig in and find out exactly what it is. If there's more of a history there, we find out. I'm not the authority on drug testing and all that stuff. So I go to 'Greek' (Director of Sports Medicine Steve Antonopoulos). Greek and the doctors let us know if there's an issue there. Usually, if it shows up there, it's showing up somewhere else."

On the depth of the NFL draft class in relation to moving up or down

"That's always a part of the process. Plus, if you trade away, or trade this year for next year, you don't know what you're getting into next year. Those are always the games that you play in the draft. You never really know. It's not always easy to go back. Everyone just says, 'Just move back, your guy isn't there, just go ahead and move back.' Well, you have to find someone who wants to move up. That's why it always sounds like it's really easy but until we get going and things start flying around, you never know if you can go up or if the price it will cost you to go up. Or, if you go back, is there a trade partner to go back? So that's why there's a lot of smoke this week. Until we really get to Thursday and get into it, you don't really know who is serious and who is not."

On if there is more importance in this draft coming off a 9-7 season

"No, they've all been important. This one is just as important. I think that 9-7 is a disappointing year for us, especially coming off the Super Bowl. But, we feel like we have a lot of things in place that can help us be a very good football team. The divisions have gotten a lot tougher and there's a lot of things that have gone on there. That's a part of the process, realizing that we have to get better. For us on the personnel side, this is our time of year, and that's why we have to be good."

On the team's biggest need entering the draft

"We need a new GM. Other than that we're pretty good. Just ask [Denver Post columnist] Mark [Kiszla] (laughing)."

On whether the value of offensive tackles has changed

"I think the one thing that we talk about all the time—everyone talks about left tackle and right tackle. Really, I think that is old-term kind of talk. You need two good tackles because they can move their pass rushers around. If you're weak on the right side, they'll put them on the right side or the left side or whatever. We want to have two good tackles. Some guys are more built for left tackle than right tackle. I think they are still the same thing, whether it is at blindside or not, you've got to have two good tackles. That is what we look for. We've got to do a better job of helping protect them, too. I think that [Offensive Coordinator Mike] McCoy and the staff, looking at all of those different options protection-wise, we're looking to help those guys, too. No matter how good of a tackle you are, there are too many great pass rushers out there. You're going to always get beat because there are a lot of great pass rushers out there. We've got to do the best job. We can find a guy that fits that spot and also the best job of taking care of him over there, too."

On the quality of the tight end class

"When we classify a tight end, the fact is you have 'Y' and an 'F.' It's a deep 'F' class. Guys that are good routers and can move, not necessarily the strength of being an in-line tight end. There are a couple of good in-line tight ends, but for the most part they are 'Fs.' They are more scheme fits. That is why we say it is a deep class, but what happens is if that is where it falls to us in the third, fourth, fifth round, there may be a real tight end there that we can go ahead and get. Again, it goes down to a scheme fit. When we talk about tight end, we have to classify between the 'Y' and the 'F.'

On whether the team has received trade offers to move up or down

"Everybody is talking about moving up and down right now. It's that time. In the next couple days, it will continue to go and you find out who wants to do what. Until we get to draft day, you never know how serious anybody is."

On how many first-round talents he believes are in the draft

"It's always hard to put a number on. I think if I give you a number there, it tells you what is on our draft board. I don't want to go there, but I think there are plenty of players in the first round and we'll get a good football player."

On his comfort level entering his seventh draft

"I think experience helps a lot, especially with trying to figure out where players might go, and then also moving around if you want to move around. I feel much better this year than I did my first two or three years. Hopefully I get better."

On why some quarterbacks have had success being drafted in later rounds

"I think it all comes down to fit. If you find a guy later in the draft, it comes down to fit. It has to fit into the offense where he goes. [Seattle QB] Russell [Wilson] fit into Seattle perfectly and what they've done with him and his athletic ability. It was a good fit. [Dallas QB] Dak [Prescott] was a good fit in Dallas. You have that offense line and a great running game, that is going to help take care of a young quarterback so the pressure wasn't on him. You've got people around him that are going to make him a better player. I don't believe you can find guys late in the draft that are going to help a team in the top 10 picks. It comes down to if they are drafted later, what team they are drafted to and the people they have around them. That is what determines the success."

On how changes on the coaching staff affect the draft process

"Defensively, it's the same. That is the good thing. [Head Coach] Vance [Joseph] is going to have different wrinkles, but with Joe [Woods] as the [defensive] coordinator it's pretty much the same defense. That allows us to stay the same on the defensive side. Offensively, having had Mike here four years ago, knowing what he wants and what he's going to do offensively, I think we're familiar with that. We'll try to do the best we can and help them with what they like."

On former Broncos CB Champ Bailey being inducted into the Colorado Sports Hall of Fame this week

"I'll just say this: it's the first of many for Champ. He had a tremendous career and was one of the top corners to ever play the game. When he came to Denver from Washington, what he did in the community here, this is just the start for Champ. I think it couldn't happen to a better guy."

On conversations in the draft room when players begin to fall in the draft

"It starts opening discussions, and they are falling for a reason. Usually if they fall you have to realize—if he falls to us, No. 1, is it somebody we want? And No. 2, why is he falling? Some of that we can put up with and we'll discuss that. It always happens to

some players. Last year with [Miami OL Laremy] Tunsil, it was a little bit more unexpected. A lot of time you know going in who might fall.”

On whether the way Denver’s roster was constructed in the 2015 season affects how the team looks at the draft board

“I don’t want to go backwards on defense and I’ve said that from the very get-go. We’re not going to go back on defense. It’s important for us to continue to stay good on defense and help the defense. If we have a great defensive player, we’ll go that direction. What we want to do is stay good and get better defensively and continue to get better on the offensive side. If we can do that, that makes us a better team.”

On the scouts’ role in learning about draft prospects’ character

“I think there are two things to that. I think No. 1 is to have the background, and our scouts do a tremendous job. I think their job is not only evaluating the players, but also the background research that they do on each player. We have that. Then the most important thing after that is do we put them in a situation when they get here that we can help them. These are young guys. We have to help them down the walk of life. Ray Jackson, who is our player development guy, does a tremendous job. What have they done? No. 1, and No. 2, can Ray get them going and help them out? We get them in a situation where we support them and get them going down the right path where we feel like we can put those mistakes in the past and go in the right direction.”

On whether Adam Peters taking the 49ers Vice President of Player Personnel role affected the Broncos’ draft process

“Adam did a great job for us. I’m happy for Adam that he got the opportunity with [49ers General Manager] John [Lynch] to go to San Francisco. He’s worked hard for that opportunity. I’m happy for him. He did a tremendous job for us. What we’ve done is spread some of the responsibility that Adam had with where we are now. Once we get through the draft and get into May, we’ll make some changes there. That is usually when we make our personnel changes.”