

DENVER BRONCOS
EXECUTIVE NEWS SUMMARY

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Denver Broncos position preview 2018: Mix of veterans, rookies at receiver

By Ryan O'Halloran
The Denver Post
July 18, 2018

First of a series looking at the position groups for the Broncos heading into training camp. Today: Wide receivers

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Club That Has Done It: Demaryius Thomas and Emmanuel Sanders have a combined 1,093 regular season receptions.

Club That Has Not Done It: The other 11 receivers have combined for 33 catches, 29 from Jordan Taylor. Eight players have not played in an NFL game.

"It's unique," said new receivers coach Zach Azzanni. "You've got two guys in Demaryius and Emmanuel who have played a ton of ball and you can add Jordan in there. And then you've got guys who are green and wet behind the ears, but obviously very talented."

Leading the young-but-obviously-talented crowd are second-round pick Courtland Sutton and fourth-round selection DaeSean Hamilton.

The Broncos' task during training camp is figuring out who fills the Nos. 3-6 spots on the receiver depth chart.

Sutton and Hamilton will be on the team but how big of a role will they fill? Will Taylor be ready for Week 1 following off-season hip surgeries? Does Isaiah McKenzie have to win the punt return job to make the team? And does 2017 third-round pick Carlos Henderson figure in the mix?

Thomas and Sanders will lead the way as they've done the past four years.

Thomas has led the Broncos in catches for six consecutive years and his 575 catches are second-most in the league (Pittsburgh's Antonio Brown is first at 648) during that span.

"I don't always talk about myself and my goals, but I always want to be the best at what I do," Thomas said. "I want to get back over 1,200 yards (and) do whatever I've got to do to help my squad."

Thomas had four consecutive years of 1,200-plus yards from 2012-15. His production dropped to 1,083 and 949 yards the last two years. Sanders' streak of at least 1,000 yards ended at three years when he missed four games and posted only 555 yards last season, his lowest total since 288 with Pittsburgh in 2011.

The Broncos had the future in mind when they drafted Sutton and Hamilton.

In 2019, Thomas will have a cap number of \$17,533,334 and Sanders \$12,937,500, third- and fourth-highest on the team, respectively, according to Over The Cap. Does that mean the Broncos move on from Thomas and Sanders after his season? Hardly. But what the Sutton/Hamilton additions give the Broncos is insurance if they choose to give them prominent roles next year, assuming they make a favorable impression in training camp.

Azzanni listed three primary challenges for all rookies in general and Sutton/Hamilton in particular.

"No. 1 is speed of the game – everybody is fast," Azzanni said. "No. 2 is a different system, different terminology. But the biggest challenge right now is a lot of things in college are no-huddle so they didn't verbally hear the play call as much as getting a signal."

During the offseason program, the 6-foot-4, 216-pound Sutton looked fluid working on the perimeter and winning matchups in the red zone. In three-receiver personnel, the Broncos could use Thomas and Sutton outside and move Sanders inside.

"Being a big guy, Courland is probably more suited to be an outside guy but he's quick and is a mismatch inside," Azzanni said. "But in our offense, everybody moves around."

If keeping Sanders outside makes sense against certain opponents, Hamilton could be the third receiver and play in the slot.

"He's a playmaker," Sanders said of Hamilton. "I think he's one of those diamond-in-the-rough type of guys. He has deceptive speed. He can get open. He has good hands."

The receiver position gets interesting after the top four. To open 2017, the Broncos kept six receivers.

A hamstring injury kept Henderson out of the final two days of minicamp this spring and earned him a public verbal salvo from coach Vance Joseph, who stressed the importance of Henderson (out all of last year with a thumb injury) being available.

McKenzie enters his second year hoping to reclaim the punt return post he earned and lost as a rookie. He fumbled six times (lost two).

"Those guys have come out and there is nobody comfortable, which is fun," Azzanni said last month.

Joseph targeted midway through training camp as a potential return date for Taylor. Azzanni expects him to catch up quickly and if he does, it may be trouble for Henderson and/or McKenzie in terms of making the roster.

“Jordan’s a smart guy – he’s a pro so he’s in the room every day taking notes and he’s out there (on the practice field) with the script going through it mentally,” Azzanni said. “I doubt he would have any trouble jumping in knowing the system.”

Thursday: Defensive line.

2018 Broncos receivers

No.	Player	Age	Year	Ht./Wt.	College
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9	John Diarse	23	R	6-1/214	TCU
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2017 team: Broncos Signed through 2021 Cap number: \$10,937,500

Started 29 games in college for LSU and TCU and had 96 catches-1,429 yards-nine TDs.

10	Emmanuel Sanders	31	9th	5-11/180	SMU
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2017 team: Broncos Signed through 2021 Cap number: \$10,937,500

Cap figure next year jumps by \$2 million. Streak of three straight 1,000-yard seasons ended in '17.

11	Carlos Henderson	23	2nd	5-11/199	Louisiana Tech
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2017 team: Broncos Signed through 2021 Cap number: \$10,937,500

Hand injury kept him out last year and hamstring issue shelved him in mini-camp.

13	Kenny Bell	26	3rd	6-1/188	Nebraska
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2017 team: Baltimore Signed through 2018 Cap number: \$480,000

Boulder native has not appeared in a regular season game. Caught 181 passes in college.

14	Courtland Sutton	22	R	6-4/216	SMU
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2017 team: SMU Signed through 2021 Cap number: \$1,243,987

Second-round pick caught 31 TDs in 39 college games. Expected to be instant red zone threat.

15	River Cracraft	23	1st	6-0/198	Washington State
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2017 team: Broncos Signed through 2020 Cap number: \$480,000

No regular season games. Caught 218 catches for 2,701 yards in 42 college games.

16	Isaiah McKenzie	23	2nd	5-8/173	Georgia
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2017 team: Broncos Signed through 2020 Cap number: \$613,694

Is punt return his only route to making the roster? If so, better have fumbling issues resolved.

17	DaeSean Hamilton	23	R	6-1/206	Penn State
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2017 team: Penn State Signed through 2021 Cap number: \$650,660

Fourth-round pick had 214 catches (Penn State record). Impressive during offseason program.

19	Jordan Leslie	26	3rd	6-1/205	BYU
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2017 team: Broncos Signed through 2018 Cap number: \$480,000

Has been on practice squad of five teams, including Broncos last year. Two career games.

81	Tim Patrick	24	1st	6-4/212	Utah
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2017 team: Broncos Signed through 2018 Cap number: \$480,000

No regular season games. Ended last year on practice squad. Five TD catches in college career.

85 Jimmy Williams 23 R 5-11/194 East Carolina
2017 team: East Carolina Signed through 2021 Cap number: \$483,333
Undrafted free agent had injuries during three of five college seasons (119 catches/1,722 yards).

87 Jordan Taylor 26 3rd 6-5/210Rice
2017 team: Broncos Signed through 2018 Cap number: \$630,000
Has 29 catches in two years. Likely to start camp on sideline after offseason hip surgeries.

88 Demaryius Thomas 30 9th 6-3/229Georgia
2017 team: Broncos Signed through 2019 Cap number: \$12,033,333
Second in team history in TD catches (57) and receiving yards (8,653). Has not missed a game since '11.
Source: overthecap.com for salary information.

Broncos new hope: Keenum and the Kids

By Mike Klis

9 News

July 18, 2018

Change is welcome.

When the Broncos came off their 2015 Super Bowl season, change at quarterback (Peyton Manning and Brock Osweiler didn't return), right outside linebacker (DeMarcus Ware was often injured), and left defensive end (Malik Jackson bolted for free agency and Jacksonville) brought downgrades.

Now that the Broncos are coming off a 5-11 season that was the franchise's worst since 2010, change is a must.

In Keenum and the Kids, the Broncos have hope for 2018.

Newly signed free agent quarterback Case Keenum and a rookie class led by No. 5 overall draft pick Bradley Chubb have zapped the Broncos with the belief they will be a changed team in 2018. For the better.

This intends no disrespect to the fine games of Von Miller, Chris Harris Jr., Demaryius Thomas and Matt Paradis, among other proven Broncos starters. It's just that they had fine seasons in 2017 and the Broncos still finished last in the AFC West.

Keenum is new and should be improved. He was the NFL's seventh-best quarterback last season after he threw 22 touchdown passes against just seven interceptions for a 98.3 passer rating while leading the Minnesota Vikings to the NFC Championship Game.

Meanwhile, a trio of Broncos passers -- Trevor Siemian, Brock Osweiler and Paxton Lynch -- combined to give Denver the 31st-best quarterback play with 19 touchdowns and 22 interceptions for a 73.0 rating that bested only DeShone Kizer and the Cleveland Browns in the 32-team NFL.

Besides Keenum, there is promise Broncos general manager John Elway just had his best draft class since his first one in 2011. Not so coincidentally, Elway had the No. 2 overall draft selection in 2011 when he made the right call in choosing Von Miller instead of Marcell Dareus, and he had the No. 5 selection this spring when he took Chubb instead of trading back with Buffalo.

In the six years between 2011 and 2018, when Elway suffered too many misses, his average first pick was No. 27.

Besides Miller, a six-time Pro Bowler and Super Bowl 50 MVP, Elway also came up with starters Rahim Moore, Orlando Franklin, Virgil Green and Pro Bowlers' Julius Thomas and Harris (undrafted free agent) for his first rookie class.

The 2018 rookie class could bolster similar depth. Chubb is expected to immediately start opposite Miller at Ware's former right outside linebacker position. In second-round pick Courtland Sutton and

fourth-rounder DaeSean Hamilton, the Broncos hope they found the eventual receiver duo replacements to Demaryius Thomas and Emmanuel Sanders.

Third-round pick Royce Freeman could well be the Broncos' starting running back at some point this season and fourth-round inside linebacker Josey Jewell will be expected to play this year and start in 2019.

Broncos rookies report for training camp next Tuesday with the veterans to follow three days later. The Broncos' first camp practice, which is open free to the public, will be Saturday morning, July 28.

It will be the first time Broncos fans will be able to see Keenum and the Kids break a sweat at UCHealth Training Center. To say the Broncos will be better than last year's 5-11 edition isn't saying much. But they should be better. Changes were made. Changes were necessary.

Emmanuel Sanders goes incognito to surprise Skyline football

By Taylor Temby

9 News

July 18, 2018

Coaches don't just become legends when their careers are over. Instead, it's a status they have to earn.

Legendary Colorado high school coach Herman Jones has found success by taking an unorthodox approach to the game. On Tuesday, he transferred his knowledge to the Falcons at Skyline High School in Longmont.

"We really trust our coaches so it was like, 'Okay, they're going give us a good guy to work with, and we're all going to get better,' so we came out here really serious and ready to learn a lot of stuff," Skyline senior Jeremy Hollingsworth said. "We're going to do this 100 percent, and we're going to learn from it, but you go to the back of the line, and everyone's like, 'What are we doing?'"

That's because Jones' drills were nothing like anyone had ever experience. The Falcons were running with cartons of eggs instead of football, players were doing sack races in the end zone, and quarterbacks were throwing greased footballs to wide receivers who were making catches -- with frying pans.

If you're thinking something seems fishy, you're absolutely right.

"I smelt that from a mile away," sophomore Oscar Aranday said.

Herman Jones -- as it turned out -- was actually Denver Broncos star wideout, Emmanuel Sanders. No. 10 underwent an extensive makeover to become the retired football coach, complete with track suit, fake beard, aged skin, a prosthetic stomach and Velcro white sneakers.

"Once we got the gray hairs on me, that's when I was like, I'm Herman Jones," Sanders said. "I actually got into character, though, I actually believed for a minute I was an old man. It feels good to be old, expect my back is hurting from this belly."

While some players guessed something seemed a little off, they were still in disbelief when they met the star wide receiver.

"It's incredible to have a player of this status, one of the best in the league from our home state NFL team," senior Kyle West said.

"Everyone here is a Broncos fan, and everyone here knows how good he is and how fun he is to watch," Hollingsworth added. "It's just crazy for him to be on our field at our home school coaching us."

While legendary coach Jones turned out to be fictitious, the visit itself was unforgettable. Sanders partnered up with Dick's Sporting Goods to donate \$5,000 to the Skyline football program to put toward new equipment. Sanders will also be on hand to open a new Dick's Sporting Goods store in Fort Collins this Saturday, July 21 from 1:30-3 p.m.

"They've got some athletes out here," Sanders said of the Falcons. "I don't even know if I can catch [a football] with a frying pan, and they were doing it. And the quarterbacks were throwing spirals with grease. So they're going to be alright."

Skyline finished the 2017 season with an 8-3 record. They made it to the first round of the 4A state playoffs.

NFL Future Power Rankings: Projecting the next three seasons

By Louis Riddick, Mike Sando and Field Yates

ESPN

July 18, 2018

To project which NFL franchises are in the best shape for the next three seasons, we asked our panel of experts -- Louis Riddick, Mike Sando and Field Yates -- to rate each team's roster (excluding quarterback), quarterback, draft, front office and coaching using this scale:

100: A+ (Elite)

90: A (Great)

80: B (Very good)

70: C (Average)

60: D (Very bad)

50: F (Disastrous)

40: F- (The worst thing imaginable)

After averaging the results from the panelists, each of the five categories was weighted to create the overall score -- roster (30 percent), quarterback (20 percent), draft (15 percent), front office (15 percent) and coaching (20 percent). The result is a comprehensive ranking based on how well each team is positioned for the future.

Read through the full file No. 1 through No. 32, or jump to your favorite team using the quick links below:

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Arizona Cardinals suspend GM 5 weeks after extreme DUI plea

By STAFF

Associated Press

July 18, 2018

The Arizona Cardinals suspended general manager Steve Keim for five weeks and fined him \$200,000 after he pleaded guilty in court Tuesday to extreme DUI following a Fourth of July arrest in a Phoenix suburb.

A Chandler police report shows Keim had a blood-alcohol level of 0.19, more than twice Arizona's legal limit of 0.08 for drivers.

It wasn't immediately clear when Keim would be sentenced or if he was facing a jail term.

The Cardinals report to training camp at University of Phoenix Stadium on July 27.

Keim has been the Cardinals GM since 2013 and signed a contract extension in February through the 2022 NFL season.

According to the arrest report, Keim told police he only had two beers and ate pizza two hours before he got pulled over around 12:30 a.m. in Chandler.

But officers said they smelled alcohol on Keim's breath and he had slurred speech.

Keim also refused to take several field sobriety tests, but did consent to have his blood drawn.

"As stated at the time of the incident, this behavior is indefensible and completely unacceptable," the Cardinals said in a statement Tuesday. "While Steve has accepted full accountability and responsibility for his actions, that does not diminish their gravity nor the severity of the consequences that result from them.

"Those who work within the National Football League — particularly those in leadership positions — bear a greater responsibility and are held to a higher standard than simply a legal one and we feel that these measures are reflective of that."

During his suspension, Keim will be barred from the Cardinals' facilities and prohibited contact with the team.

He won't be allowed to return to the team until after he's completed counseling and evaluation plus a DUI education course.

The \$200,000 fine will be donated to the Arizona chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

"Once again, I apologize to everyone who has been negatively impacted by my actions and incredibly poor judgment, in particular the Cardinals, our fans and my family," Keim said in a statement released by the team Tuesday.

"I fully deserve and accept the punishment that has been issued. My goal is to do everything I can to grow from this personally and help others learn from my inexcusable behavior."

No fake news in Green Bay Packers' financials, NFL doing just fine

By Nancy Armour

USA Today

July 18, 2018

We should all fail as well as the NFL.

Each of the league's 32 teams got a check for \$255 million last year, their portion of a national revenue sharing pool that topped \$8 billion, according to the Green Bay Packers' annual financial report. That's up almost 5 percent from the previous year, due largely to increases in the TV contracts, and is on top of whatever teams generate from local revenues like luxury boxes, concessions and independent endorsement deals.

In other words, the contention by President Donald Trump and his supporters that the NFL is self-destructing because of player protests during the national anthem truly is "fake news."

That's not to say there aren't warning signs for the NFL. Concerns about head trauma remain, and there's no telling what impact that will have on the game's future. Ratings are declining as Americans decide they can do without behemoth TV subscription packages, a trend that's not likely to reverse itself. At the same time, rising ticket prices have made games inaccessible to some fans, and advances in technology have made the in-home – or on-device – viewing experience comparable to being in the stands.

Despite all that, the NFL remains the easiest bet a billionaire and his friends can make.

Consider that David Tepper paid \$2.2 billion to purchase the Carolina Panthers in a deal that closed earlier this month. That's an absurd amount of money, more than the gross domestic product of some countries. Small and developing countries, but countries nonetheless.

Tepper is a smart business man, having founded one of the world's top-performing hedge funds. He's already seen as an upgrade over previous owner Jerry Richardson, and it's highly unlikely he won't make changes that will add a few more millions to the Panthers' local revenue stream.

But say he doesn't. Say Tepper is content to put the team on autopilot and continue doing what it's been doing. Tepper could, theoretically, recoup his investment within 20 years. Even sooner if a couple more franchises go on the market.

Using the Packers as a guide – since the NFL dropped its non-profit status, the league's only publicly owned team's annual report is as close a look as we get at the league's finances – the Panthers could cover personnel expenses with money made from local revenues. The salary cap last year was \$167 million. The Packers reported making \$199 million in local revenue -- and that was in a down year because Aaron Rodgers missed most of the season with a broken collarbone and Green Bay missed the playoffs for the first time in nine years.

The salaries of coaches, support staff and front-office personnel would likely eat up the rest of the locally generated revenue, and there will be additional expenses for travel and day-to-day operations. The Packers reported total revenues of \$454.9 million and a net income in 2017 of \$38.6 million -- though that reflects the ongoing renovations at Lambeau Field.

Forbes estimated last year that the Panthers had operating income of \$102 million. If they don't make any stadium renovations, don't build a new training facility and hold off on any other major capital expenditures, Tepper can expect to bank at least \$100 million each year he owns the team.

Try finding a stock or another investment with that kind of return.

There are fans who have been turned off by concerns about head trauma or the NFL's dismissive treatment of women. And yes, there are some so incensed by the players' method of protest that they will never hear the message.

But to say the NFL is in trouble ignores reality. Or at least the ability to read a financial report.

The Family Ownership Dramas That Roil the NFL

By Jon Wertheim

MMQB

July 18, 2018

Even in a city famous for its burial rituals, this one was notable for its scope and scale. On March 23, New Orleans came to a standstill for the mourning of Tom Benson. Radio stations offered traffic reports and alternate routes for getting to (and avoiding) Benson's mass at St. Louis Cathedral in the French Quarter. Louisiana's governor, John Bel Edwards, stood alongside business leaders as Benson, the state's only listed billionaire, was commemorated and celebrated.

The embodiment of the self-made man, Benson, who died at 90, was the proprietor of various local enterprises, from car dealerships to banks. But he was best known for owning Louisiana's two professional sports franchises, the NFL's Saints and the NBA's Pelicans. So it was that commissioners Roger Goodell and Adam Silver both attended the funeral. Pallbearers included Drew Brees and Anthony Davis, as well as their respective coaches, Sean Payton and Alvin Gentry.

There were, however, some conspicuous absences. Benson's daughter, Renee, was not in attendance. Nor were his granddaughter and grandson, Rita and Ryan LeBlanc. The three estranged family members—the Three R's, they're called in New Orleans—were invited to a private viewing of Benson's body three days before the funeral. But it was made clear they were not welcome at the funeral.

The source of the estrangement has been embedded into New Orleans lore. By most accounts the Three R's never embraced Benson's third wife, Gayle, whom he married in 2004. Before a Saints-Falcons game late in the '14 season, Gayle Benson and Rita LeBlanc exchanged heated words in the owner's suite at the Superdome. As fireworks lit up the field, the dispute turned physical, as Rita (then 38) reportedly grabbed Gayle (then 68) by the shoulders and began shaking her repeatedly as Tom looked on disgustedly.

Six days later Tom wrote a letter to Renee, Ryan and Rita that read in part: "During the 80 years of my life, I have built a rather large estate, which was intended to mainly be for you all as my family. Suddenly after I remarried you all became offensive and did not act in an appropriate manner and even had arguments among yourselves which created a very unpleasant family situation which I will not stand for." He then banned them from Saints and Pelicans games.

For years Benson had made clear that he was leaving his empire, including the teams, to Renee, Ryan and Rita. In particular, Rita was being groomed to take over as majority owner. She had interned in the league office while at Texas A&M and joined the Saints full-time in 2001. By '05 she had risen to executive vice president. When the following season the Saints announced their rebuilding plans post-Katrina, it was Rita—and pointedly not Tom—who stood alongside commissioner Paul Tagliabue.

But after this family dispute, Benson called a new play and named Gayle as the sole beneficiary. His last will and testament, revised and dated July 27, 2015, read in part: "I specifically provide that Renee Benson, Rita LeBlanc, Ryan LeBlanc, and all of their descendants shall have no interest in my succession whatsoever, and no legacy or other inheritance or benefit of any kind shall be paid to any of them under this will or otherwise."

The three spurned family members filed a petition in Civil District Court in New Orleans asserting that Benson was mentally unfit to make this decision. After an out-of-court settlement (largely in the owner's favor), Rita took out a newspaper ad asking New Orleans' citizenry to "pray for the reunification of our family." Nonetheless, at Tom's death Gayle, whose business background is in interior design and real estate, became the owner of both an NFL and an NBA team—making her, by most measures, the most powerful woman in U.S. sports.

The intrigue made for gripping local theater. The public was split over which side to support. The New Orleans Advocate once referred to Benson's change of heart—and change of succession—as "a palace coup."

At NFL headquarters in midtown Manhattan, the Benson feud was no idle matter. Family disputes, embroidered with Shakespearean elements, have always been a part of the league's history. But as the values of teams—and the age of their patriarch owners—drift ever higher, lines of succession become more and more significant. Add in the complexities brought on by second (and third) spouses, stepchildren and the specter of a hefty inheritance tax, and it's a volatile mix that can disrupt—and subvert—a league.

One former longtime high-ranking NFL executive puts it this way: "Trust me, the same way the public talks about head injuries or Colin Kaepernick, [the league office] talks about these ownership issues. It can be hugely destabilizing. Just look at Carolina."

When Jerry Richardson led a group to buy the expansion Panthers in 1993, it was assumed that his two sons, Mark and Jon, would eventually take over the team. For years Mark was the team president, representing the franchise at owners meetings and serving on the league's influential competition committee, while Jon ran the team's venue, Bank of America Stadium.

Richardson's sons, however, were often at odds with each other. Eventually, sources tell SI, their father had enough of their feuding. On Sept. 1, 2009, the team made the abrupt announcement that both Mark and Jon were resigning from their jobs and offered no further explanation. Even before Jon died in 2013, Jerry asserted that he would sell the franchise rather than leave it to his sons.

On Dec. 17, 2017, Sports Illustrated published a story in which multiple former and current Panthers employees accused Richardson of sexual harassment, of using racial epithets and of then effectively buying their silence with non-disclosure agreements. That same evening Richardson issued a press release stating that he was selling the team. Buyers emerged offering more than \$2 billion, and with them came with uncertainty, including whether the Panthers would remain in Charlotte. In mid-May, hedge fund manager David Tepper won the derby, reportedly for \$2.275 billion, and announced that the team would not relocate. But the concern would have been avoided had Richardson left the Panthers to his heirs.

Another succession scenario is playing out in Denver. Before his health began to fail him, longtime Broncos owner Pat Bowlen expressed his unwavering intention to keep the franchise in the family, with each of his seven children receiving an equal share upon his death. But that didn't settle who would actually run the Broncos. In 2014, Bowlen, suffering from Alzheimer's, relinquished control, ceding day-to-day operations to CEO Joe Ellis—who as a nephew of George H.W. Bush is familiar with thorny issues around family lineage. Bowlen put the team in a trust and laid out a plan to determine which child was

the most capable successor. Ellis, team counsel Rich Slivka and Denver lawyer Mary Kelly, who specializes in family law and mediation, will make the determination.

According to The Denver Post, Bowlen's plan refers to such abstract qualities as "leadership," "integrity" and "sound judgment" in deciding his potential successor. It also includes specific requirements, such as an MBA, J.D. or other advanced business-related degree, and mandates at least five years of senior management experience with the league, a team or a stadium, though it does not specify which job titles are considered "senior management." While such a checklist makes sense, one can imagine how this kind of bake-off could cause rifts among jockeying siblings.

In late May the second-oldest child, Beth Bowlen, made her case to The Athletic. After recently earning her law degree from the University of Denver, Beth, now 47, noted, "I have completed the criteria laid out by the trustees." Reached for comment by the Denver media, the trust responded tersely: "The trustees have informed Beth of their determination that she is not capable or qualified at this time. We will continue to follow Pat Bowlen's long-standing succession plan for the future ownership of the Denver Broncos."

In Chicago, Virginia McCaskey, the 95-year-old daughter of Bears founder and patriarch George Halas, stands as principal owner, controlling 80% of the team. McCaskey is still a vital presence. Earlier this year she declared herself "pissed off" by the Bears' 5–11 finish in 2017. Until recently she drove herself in a Cadillac adorned with a bumper sticker reading PRAY THE ROSARY. But for all her vim and vinegar, the Bears' succession plan is uncertain.

When Virginia took over upon her father's death in 1983, it gave rise to an unusual situation. For all the scions eager to seize control—Jerry Jones Jr., for instance, allegedly hands out business cards declaring himself "future owner" of the Dallas Cowboys—McCaskey had to prevail on some of her then 11 children to join the family business. Perhaps most notably, Michael McCaskey served, somewhat reluctantly, as Bears president and CEO, surely one of the few NFL executives to hold a Ph.D (in business from Case Western).

In 1999, after the botched hiring of a head coach, Virginia moved Michael to chairman of the board. In 2011 he left the team to pursue his passion for photography. Jeff Davis, a Chicago journalist and author of *Papa Bear: The Life and Legacy of George Halas*, reached this conclusion: "The McCaskeys are not bad people. It's unfair to say that. They are good people. But they're not very hip, and they were not ever supposed to run the Bears."

Even owners anticipating succession problems haven't been immune to conflict and chaos. Before his death in 2013, Titans owner Bud Adams bequeathed the family business, including the team, via a holding company, to his three children—Susie, Amy and Kenneth—and their families. Adams drew up bylaws that included a three-quarter "supermajority" voting requirement on crucial issues, effectively preventing the families of two siblings from ganging up on a third.

The NFL fined the Titans over this three-fourths standard, claiming that the structure violated league bylaws, but it remains unchanged. Not that it has prevented the siblings from feuding. In the 1990s, Tommy Smith, Susie's husband, served as CEO before Adams made the awkward move of firing his son-in-law. After Adams' death, Smith re-emerged as the Titans' president and CEO. But in 2015, he was out again. Smith cited the demands of his other business considerations, but The Tennessean suggested the move reflected "an apparent shift in thinking within the family-owned business."

Last year Susie Adams announced that she was putting up for sale her share of the holding company that includes the franchise. Buyers have been hard to come by—perhaps not surprising, given that the one-third share, which would amount to nearly \$700 million based on Forbes’s valuation of the team at \$2.05 billion—comes with no path to full ownership in the Titans, no guaranteed seat on the board and the three-fourths majority clause that creates blocking rights but that prevents meaningful change without consensus among the owners.

Vaulting ambitions, shifting allegiances, dynastic dreams, clans severed by mistrust and distrust, unclear succession plans, filial fights . . . from Henry Ford’s auto company to the Bluths’ banana stands, these are elements common to the family-owned business, a cornerstone of the American economy. Depending on which study you cite, as many as 90% of all U.S. enterprise is family-owned. And even when companies are publically traded, families often still hold considerable power—as shareholders of, say, Walmart are likely aware.

Family businesses can be immensely successful and immensely gratifying, an opportunity for a clan to work together and build generational wealth. They can also be immensely fraught, marrying the stress of family life with that of the workplace life. A study commissioned by J.P. Morgan Private Bank revealed that more than half of all family business leaders expect to transfer ownership to the next generation. But in reality only one-third of businesses make such a transition; the rest are either sold or dissolved. As *The Economist* once put it, “Family firms are frequently more riven with intrigue and visceral hatreds than a medieval court—and for similar reasons.”

In many ways the family-owned sports franchise is not manifestly different from, say, the family-owned plumbing supply business or catering hall. “The reality is that in order to have a healthy and smooth-running organization, what you really need to do is build a healthy, functioning family,” says Joe Astrachan, Professor of Management and Entrepreneurship at Cornell’s SC Johnson College of Business and a family business expert. “That’s true whether it’s a family restaurant or a football team.”

Yet in other ways, a professional sports franchise is altogether different. Perhaps most obviously, there’s the staggering value and appreciation. Never mind that George Halas paid \$100 for the Chicago Bears in 1920, the Pittsburgh Steelers were purchased for \$2,500 in 1933 or that the eight original AFL owners, including Bud Adams, acquired their franchises for \$25,000. Even in recent years, owners have made, literally, a fortune. For instance, in 2005 Ziggy Wilf joined five partners and bought the Minnesota Vikings for a reported \$600 million. If the Panthers—playing in a smaller media market, and in a lesser venue—are worth \$2.3 billion, the Vikings could be worth as much as \$3 billion, a five-fold increase in value in a little over a decade. Jerry Jones bought the Dallas Cowboys in 1989 for \$140 million, the first nine-figure purchase of a sports team. Risky proposition? The Cowboys are now worth an estimated \$4.2 billion.

“Say the local family furniture store is not worth very much. So if there are three kids [it’s likely] one of them works in the furniture store and the other two went off and became lawyers and doctors. It just is not that much to fight over,” says Wayne Rivers, co-founder and president of the Raleigh-based Family Business Institute. “But when you’re talking about a team worth a couple billion dollars, well, lawyer up!”

Apart from wealth, owning a professional sports team confers a measure of celebrity. To some, ownership represents a trophy and fame represents a perk. To others, it’s an annoyance. But unlike

other family-run businesses, owners are public figures. “I would say the visibility is having the biggest effect,” says Astrachan. “The pressure on a sports family is much greater than most other businesses. The media are constantly covering their business. And because of that, they’re far more visible. They get far more comments from the public than a normal family business, even of a similar size and value. . . . If the idea is, You know what, we’re going to clamp down on you so hard because we don’t want you to embarrass us, we’re not going to explain why, you’re not going to be in on what’s going on, then you can have all kinds of dysfunction.”

While there are family feuds in most sports—one recent example: Jeanie Buss fired her brother as she seized control over the Lakers—they are especially pronounced in the NFL. The league bans corporate ownership, so wealthy individuals or families are, effectively, the only option.

The NFL is also the league with the highest percentage of franchise revenues—roughly 80%—coming from leaguewide sharing outside the local market. What this means is that even a poorly run franchise is assured of making great sums of money, reducing pressure for profitability and cash flow.

And although (because?) there are only eight home games per season in the NFL, more so than in other leagues the owners are demi-celebrities, held up as custodians of a civic trust, expected to sit alongside their clan in a luxury suite. As Colts owner Jim Irsay—who inherited the team from his father and plans to leave it his to offspring—explained to SI in 2009, “If I’m not there on game day, people will notice, and I’ll have to answer for that.”

One NFL source points out that “family drama at the team level” has always been a challenge, ticking off several examples from decades past. In the 1990s, Eddie DeBartolo Jr., owner of the dynastic San Francisco 49ers, became embroiled in a gambling extortion scandal and eventually pleaded guilty in federal court to failure to report a felony.

In the wake of the scandal, he and his sister, Denise DeBartolo York, sued and countersued each other. To put it charitably, a rift still exists between Eddie and the York family—Denise’s husband, John, in particular. (The 49ers’ CEO and effective owner, Jed York, is Denise’s son and Eddie’s nephew.)

When Falcons owner Rankin Smith made rumblings that he was selling the team, a child he had fathered out of wedlock emerged, demanding a share. In 2002, Taylor Smith sold the team his father had bought in 1965 for \$8.5 million to Arthur Blank for \$545 million. In 2013, Blank’s second wife, Stephanie, served him with divorce papers during Super Bowl XLVII, temporarily clouding the Falcons’ ownership picture.

In Washington, it was assumed that longtime Redskins owner Jack Kent Cooke would leave the team to his children upon his death; his son, John Kent Cooke, was the Redskins’ longtime president and presumed heir. Jack had declared in 1992, “When I’m gone, someone named Cooke is going to run this team. And when he’s gone someone else named Cooke is going to run this team.” But Jack Kent also, memorably, declared, “I don’t intend to die.” He did, in 1997, but not before changing his will seven times in the last 10 years of his life. In the final draft, he’d left the Redskins not to his offspring, but to a trust, with instructions to sell it, the proceeds going to the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation. So it was that John Kent Cooke put together a \$750 million bid to buy the team that his father had owned and for which he had worked for decades. Yet the trustees were duty-bound to accept to best price; and Dan Snyder paid \$800 million for the team and the stadium, then the largest sports transaction in history.

Further complicating matters in many cases: the specter of the estate tax. While most NFL owners are thrilled by ever-increasing franchise valuations, it inspires concern among some owners, especially those whose net worth is concentrated mostly in the team. Under current federal laws, estates in excess of \$11.18 million are subject to a 40 percent tax before assets are transferred to heirs. Everything above the basis—the original acquisition cost—is taxable at death.

A cautionary tale comes in the form of Joe Robbie, former owner of the Miami Dolphins. Robbie passed away in January 1990. The bulk of his net worth was tied up in the Dolphins, and he had not been proficient in his estate planning. Beset by internal feuding, the Robbie family was forced to sell the franchise at a deeply discounted price in order to pay the reported \$47 million in estate taxes. While it's safe to assume that most NFL families have undertaken estate and wealth transfer planning to avoid such scenarios, the estate tax still looms large. When in 2015 the NFL allowed trust ownership of teams and dropped the percentage that owners are required to control to as low as five percent, it was seen as an effort to keep teams in families. (Reportedly, 31 of the 32 teams approved this change with, ironically, only Tennessee abstaining.)

A source with firsthand knowledge of the NFL tells SI that in part to combat “the Beverly Hillbillies scenario,” the NFL keeps close ties with a group of billionaires, who could—and would—potentially buy a team. Steeped in finance backgrounds, they would, presumably, run teams with professionalism, emotional detachment and sophistication, unencumbered by family drama and melodrama. They would buy a team to diversify existing wealth rather than to create new wealth. According to the source, the league's thinking goes like this: The 32 NFL franchises should be run like the multibillion-dollar assets they are; not like multimillion-dollar assets they were.

Inside NFL headquarters, the names on the list of potential owners are referred to as “Tiger cubs.” Roger Goodell's brother, Bill, was a longtime general counsel at Tiger Management, a successful New York hedge fund, where his colleagues included men with the means and interest to own an NFL team. It has not gone unnoticed that the NBA has made a recent practice of seeing to it that when longtime owners are ready (or forced) to sell—Herb Kohl in Milwaukee, Donald Sterling with the Clippers—the buyers have been billionaires from out of state who made their fortunes outside of sports. The eventual buyer of the Panthers, David Tepper, is a hedge-fund billionaire (net worth \$11 billion) from Pittsburgh who was well-known to the league as a minority owner of the Steelers. (The NFL did not respond to multiple requests for comment for this story.)

For all the family drama—and the instability it creates—the NFL is unlikely to relax its ban on corporate ownership, the Green Bay Packers' unique structure notwithstanding. In 1996, NFL commissioner Paul Tagliabue and then vice president of football development Roger Goodell took meetings with Disney representatives to discuss the possibility of financing a franchise in Los Angeles. But it never happened. And likely never will.

Like Winston Churchill's line about democracy, single-family ownership is perhaps the worst model for the NFL ownership—except for all the others. A publically traded company, which owes a duty to shareholders, tends to be motivated by short-term profit. The board of a publically traded company is unable to make quick decisions the way individual owners can. Managers of public companies—with an eye on their next career move—are prone to seek short-term wins over long-term growth. And when new management teams come, they bring new philosophies; and this whipsawing strategy is at odds with stability.

“If you’re going to make a sports analogy to non-family management, [public companies] are always looking to hit a home run or throw a bomb,” says Astrachan, “whereas family businesses are a ground game. Not a lot of the debt, not a lot of the showmanship, but we’re going to slog through this and make this work, and we’re going to build a stable base, which allows you to have that dynastic quality.”

Astrachan sits on the boards of multiple family businesses and consults for Fortune 500 firms. His unsolicited advice for the NFL for finding stability amid its feuding clans: “I would be providing educational quasi-consultative services to the offspring of these families—regardless of whether or not the patriarch thought it was too intrusive.”

Rivers, of the Family Business Institute, agrees. And he adds that, given the red-hot sports economy, there’s no time like this present. “The seeds of family business destruction are sown in good times . . . in good times, family businesses become complacent. They start to read their own press clippings. They are making more money than they ever have before. They start to believe in their own legend. That is when they get in trouble and get sloppy and make mistakes. That’s when the family intrigue can come out, because they bicker over money and power. It can be a pretty heady, exciting environment; but also a toxic environment if they are not careful.”

Cardinals suspend GM Steve Keim five weeks for DUI

By Herbie Teope

NFL.com

July 18, 2018

After pleading guilty to extreme DUI earlier Tuesday, Arizona Cardinals general manager Steve Keim found out his punishment from his employer.

The Cardinals suspended Keim for five weeks and fined him \$200,000, which will be donated to the Arizona chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the team announced.

Keim was arrested on July 4 on suspicion of driving under the influence in Chandler, Arizona, leading to Tuesday's guilty plea. Extreme DUI is defined as blood alcohol content of .15 or more. Keim's BAC was .193, according to a Chandler Police Department report.

"As stated at the time of the incident, this behavior is indefensible and completely unacceptable," the Cardinals said in a statement. "While Steve has accepted full accountability and responsibility for his actions, that does not diminish their gravity nor the severity of the consequences that result from them.

"Those who work within the National Football League -- particularly those in leadership positions -- bear a greater responsibility and are held to a higher standard than simply a legal one and we feel that these measures are reflective of that."

While serving the five-week suspension, which is effectively immediately, Keim is barred from the team's facilities and is prohibited contact with the team. He cannot return to the Cardinals until he completes counseling and evaluation, along with a DUI education course. Keim will also participate in DUI awareness and education programs within the community.

During Keim's absence, his duties and responsibilities will be handled by multiple members of the personnel staff, the Cardinals said in a statement.

"Once again, I apologize to everyone who has been negatively impacted by my actions and incredibly poor judgment, in particular the Cardinals, our fans and my family," Keim said in a statement released by the team. "I fully deserve and accept the punishment that has been issued. My goal is to do everything I can to grow from this personally and help others learn from my inexcusable behavior."

Keim, who enters his 20th season with the Cardinals, has served as the team's general manager since 2013. The Cardinals in February signed him to a contract extension, which will keep Keim with organization through 2022.

Before taking over as general manager, Keim previously held the positions of vice president of player personnel (2012), director of player personnel (2008) and director of college scouting (2006).

With Keim set to miss at least the first three weeks of training camp and two preseason games, the bulk of the on-field player evaluations will likely fall on first-year head coach Steve Wilks.

The Cardinals report for camp on July 27, with the first practice set for July 28.

2018 fantasy football QB rankings: How to evaluate Aaron Rodgers, Case Keenum and Andrew Luck?

By Des Bieler
The Washington Post
July 18, 2018

In advising, “Wait to draft a QB,” no one sounds particularly smart at this point — just aware of the blindingly obvious (at least for one-QB leagues). That said, some signal-callers provide far more upside than others, and fantasy drafters confident in their ability to pluck value from unheralded players at other positions can choose to splurge on an elite passer.

Still, there are about 20 players here I’d be OK with as the top QB on my roster, plus a few more I could live with while working on ways to acquire better options. And who knows, maybe something unexpectedly good will emerge from the Bills’ depth chart. OK, maybe not.

1. Aaron Rodgers, Packers (Off week: 7)

A broken collarbone limited Rodgers to just seven games last season, so it’s hard to get too worried about the relatively low yards-per-game (239.3) and interception-rate (2.5 percent) figures he posted in that span. Considering that in every season but one in which he has played at least 15 games, Rodgers has finished first or second in fantasy scoring among QBs (and the one outlier, in 2015, was a hardly disastrous seventh-place showing), it only makes sense to place him atop this list. The one outlier in the list above was 2015 when he finished seventh and then he threw for a league-high 40 TDs in 2016. A longtime favorite target, Jordy Nelson, is gone, but Davante Adams appears ready to make the leap to WR1 status and the Packers brought in an end-zone maven in TE Jimmy Graham.

2. Russell Wilson, Seahawks (7)

Rebounding from an injury-plagued 2016 season that saw him land outside the top 10 in QB scoring for the first time — he plummeted all the way down to 11th — Wilson finished No. 1 among all players last season in standard scoring, with only Todd Gurley topping him in PPR formats. While Wilson’s yards per attempt fell to a career low (7.2) in 2017, he led the NFL with 34 TD passes and was back to bedeviling defenses with his feet, rushing for 586 yards and three scores. Seattle has made moves to improve its offensive line, but the team took major losses on defense as the “Legion of Boom” was all but dismantled, creating conditions under which the Seahawks may call a higher percentage of passing plays than in recent memory.

3. Tom Brady, Patriots (11)

Brady turns 41 next month, lost an explosive WR in Brandin Cooks and will be without another top WR, Julian Edelman, for the first four weeks of the season. But will any of that matter much? History says probably not, as Brady has proved as remarkably consistent as he has been durable, playing in all 16 games in 14 of the past 16 years (with only 12 games played in 2016 because of his Deflategate suspension), and finishing as a top-11 QB in all but one of those seasons. That includes a fourth-place finish in 2017. New England still has kingpin TE Rob Gronkowski, as well as promising new pass-catchers such as WR Jordan Matthews and first-round rookie RB Sony Michel.

4. Deshaun Watson, Texans (10)

If it's smart not to draw too much pessimism from Rodgers's abbreviated 2017 season, it's probably also wise not to get overly enthused about Watson's own seven-game campaign, even though a fair amount of excitement is warranted. After all, the former Clemson star took the NFL by storm, averaging by far the most fantasy points per game (24.1) of any QB, while showing the same ability to rise to the occasion he displayed in college. He is on track to make a full recovery from the torn knee ligament that ended his rookie season, but it may affect his dashing style, and a greater concern could be how far his touchdown rate falls from its ludicrously high level of 9.3 percent.

5. Cam Newton, Panthers (4)

One way to look at Newton's fantasy finishes over the past four seasons, 17-1-18-2, is to think of him as a boom-or-bust prospect at a position marked by steady alternatives. Another way is to add in his finishes from the previous three seasons, 3-4-3, and realize that the Carolina QB is much more likely than not to turn in a top-five campaign. Known for his fantasy-friendly rushing prowess, Newton actually notched a career-high in yards on the ground (754) last season, and he gets a healthy Greg Olsen back, as well as a first-round WR in D.J. Moore.

6. Carson Wentz, Eagles (9)

In his second season, Wentz's year was similar to Watson's — electrifying and injury-shortened. But while he kept up his strong play over nearly twice as many games, his recovery timetable could sideline him for the start of this season. Would-be owners who don't mind spending a roster spot on a rare QB handcuff could protect themselves by drafting Super Bowl MVP Nick Foles in the final rounds, and in Wentz, they'd be getting someone who was leading the NFL in passing touchdowns and passer rating when he went down. The North Dakota State product was looking like the Next Big Thing in the NFL, almost literally, as he used his size and exceptional mobility to shake off or elude tacklers before launching downfield strikes. As with Watson, his astronomical TD percentage (7.5) seems certain to tumble.

7. Drew Brees, Saints (6)

A player whose touchdown percentage is likely to rise from last year, Brees threw for his fewest scores (23) and yardage (4,334) since arriving in New Orleans in 2006. That had much to do with a vastly improved defense, not to mention a top-notch RB combo in Alvin Kamara and Mark Ingram, and those trends could continue — at least after Ingram returns from his four-game ban. Add in the fact that Brees is 39 and we might never see him threaten 5,000 yards and 40 TDs again, but he still has impeccable skills (leading the NFL in completion percentage and yards per attempt last season), talented receivers and a dome-heavy schedule.

8. Matthew Stafford, Lions (6)

As with Brees, Stafford isn't likely to post eye-popping numbers this year but is very likely to give owners a top-10 season. That's what he has done for each of the past three years and four of the past five, and if anything, his supporting cast has improved. Detroit has been steadily building one of the league's best

offensive lines, and if Kenny Golladay builds on his intriguing rookie season, he will join Golden Tate and Marvin Jones in giving Stafford a trio of dangerous WRs.

9. Ben Roethlisberger, Steelers (7)

Talk of Roethlisberger's injury-prone nature has been a bit overblown, considering he's missed 12 starts over his past seven seasons, and at 36, he seems to have regained some enthusiasm for continuing his NFL career indefinitely. Big Ben certainly has reason to be eager for a season in which his all-universe WR, Antonio Brown, has a worthy complement in JuJu Smith-Schuster, with rookie James Washington bringing a stellar college résumé to the table as he vies for No. 3 WR duties. Of course, that spot was vacated by the talented Martavis Bryant, but he was also notoriously mercurial, and Roethlisberger will still be able to dump the ball off to his all-universe RB, Le'Veon Bell (provided he doesn't sit out any portion of the season).

10. Kirk Cousins, Vikings (10)

Cousins has finished higher than 10th in QB scoring in each of the past three seasons, and now he goes to a team featuring the receiving talents of Stefon Diggs, Adam Thielen and Kyle Rudolph. He slots in at this slightly lower point because it still remains to be seen how he performs in a new environment, having left Washington and offensive-minded head coach Jay Gruden for a Minnesota team with a staunch defense and commitment to a conservative attack. The Vikings' offensive line could also struggle a bit, giving the team further reason to prefer a ball-control style, but its weapons are too good to think Cousins won't thrive.

11. Andrew Luck, Colts (9): If it looks like his surgically repaired shoulder will hold up — and if and when we see Luck actually throw passes downfield — his ranking will likely rise, but for now it is meant to reflect his risk/reward status.

12. Jimmy Garoppolo, 49ers (11): There's so much excitement for a guy who threw just six TD passes in his five starts last season, which might seem odd, but Garoppolo showed great command in completing 67.1 percent of his passes while throwing for over 308 yards per contest.

13. Marcus Mariota, Titans (8): He disappointed in 2017 but figures to benefit greatly from a coaching change in Tennessee that includes the addition of offensive coordinator Matt LaFleur, who helped engineer the Rams' dramatic improvement last year.

14. Philip Rivers, Chargers (8): Rivers annually keeps his owners more than competitive at the position, and has a very nice-looking WR corps, but volume could be a slight issue if the Bolts' defense lives up to its billing.

15. Alex Smith, Redskins (4): He shocked many with his suddenly aggressive play last season in Kansas City, but Smith has been on an upward trend for years, and he should be able to sustain a high level of play as Cousins' replacement.

16. Patrick Mahomes, Chiefs (12): Owners could be in for a roller-coaster ride with this first-year QB, who has athleticism and arm strength to spare, plus a terrific group of receivers, but whose inexperience and aggressive instincts may lead to big week-to-week swings.

17. Jameis Winston, Buccaneers (5): After averaging over 300 yards passing in the 11 full games he played last season, and likely set for positive TD regression, Winston would be a contender for QB1 draft status except, of course, for his three-game suspension to start the season.

18. Matt Ryan, Falcons (8): Speaking of positive TD regression, Ryan should throw for some more scores after following up his 38-TD, NFL MVP campaign with a 2017 season in which he threw for just 20. He embodies the quality depth at QB.

19. Jared Goff, Rams (12): OK, we now can be sure he's not a bust, but is Goff the QB1 he finished as last year? He threw just 477 passes but was very efficient, leading the league at 12.9 yards per completion, and the likelihood that he doesn't hit on as many big plays and that defenses start to figure out coach Sean McVay's schemes diminish Goff's chances of returning to the top 12.

20. Dak Prescott, Cowboys (8): Prescott was predictably unable to repeat the remarkable efficiency he enjoyed as a rookie, but while he still managed an 11th-place finish last year, he was QB23 from Week 10 on and now will be working with a distinctly unimpressive receiving corps.

21. Blake Bortles, Jaguars (9): A mediocre talent but not as terrible as his many critics contend, and one with useful rushing totals, Bortles' biggest problem going forward may be an imposing Jacksonville squad that fails to let him pad his stats in garbage time.

22. Derek Carr, Raiders (7): Carr's TD passes have dropped from 32 to 28 to 22, his supporting cast is questionable and the jury is very much out on whether back-from-the-booth head coach Jon Gruden is fully plugged into this decade's offensive concepts.

23. Mitchell Trubisky, Bears (5): By bringing in coach Matt Nagy and much-needed pass-catchers, Chicago has spurred hope it can make a Rams-like leap in Trubisky's sophomore season, but that's probably a bit too much to ask.

24. Eli Manning, Giants (9): His recent stats give cause to worry that Manning is about to fall off the performance cliff, but the Giants are committed to him and have assembled a fearsome-looking array of weapons.

25. Andy Dalton, Bengals (9): His fifth-place finish in 2013 is an increasingly distant, and bizarre, memory, Dalton has settled in under coach-for-life Marvin Lewis as a favorite of no one but the late-round-QB crowd.

26. Case Keenum, Broncos (10): Denver saw enough of Trevor Siemian, Brock Osweiler and Paxton Lynch to rightly view Keenum as a major upgrade, but the rest of us should simply see him as just competent enough to restore Demaryius Thomas and Emmanuel Sanders to fantasy relevance.

27. Ryan Tannehill, Dolphins (11): The last of the job-secure QBs, Tannehill wasn't exactly setting the league on fire even before missing all of last season with a knee injury, but he offers a modicum of upside.

28. Tyrod Taylor, Browns (11): With running ability that has made him an occasional asset in fantasy and a strong arm that could pair well with Josh Gordon, Taylor may keep No. 1 overall pick Baker Mayfield pinned to the bench longer than some Browns fans want.

29. Sam Bradford, Cardinals (9): It's probably less a question of when he will give way to hotshot rookie Josh Rosen, and more a question of when his body will give way to injury, but Bradford is a good bet to play well as long as he remains upright.

30. Joe Flacco, Ravens (10): Has been given an improved supporting cast, and will likely be given time to show he can take advantage of it before Baltimore considers replacing him with rookie Lamar Jackson.

Several NFL players among the world's highest-paid celebrities

By Michael David Smith

Pro Football Talk

July 18, 2018

Forbes is out with its annual list of the highest-paid celebrities in the world, and several NFL players made the cut.

The highest-ranked NFL player is Matt Ryan, who checks in at No. 29 with an estimated \$67.3 million, according to Forbes. That comes from the contract Ryan signed this year as well as endorsement deals with Nike, Gatorade, Delta Airlines, IBM, Mercedes Benz and Banana Republic.

Matthew Stafford is next at No. 36, making an estimated \$59.5 million. No. 67 is Drew Brees, with \$42.9 million. No. 70 is Derek Carr, with \$42.1 million. No. 72 is Alex Smith, at \$41.4 million.

The biggest surprise name on the list will be No. 87 Trumaine Johnson, with \$37 million. That's because Forbes is using all earnings over the past 12 months, which includes both the \$20 million signing bonus Johnson got from the Jets this offseason, and the \$16.7 million base salary Johnson got from the Rams last season. Over the next 12 months Johnson will have to get by on "only" his base salary of \$6 million, so he'll be nowhere near this list a year from now.

Three other NFL players made the list: No. 90 is Jimmy Garoppolo, at \$36.2 million. No. 96 is Ryan Tannehill, at \$35.2 million. No. 97 is Von Miller, at \$35.1 million.

The highest-paid celebrity in the world over the last year, according to Forbes, was Floyd Mayweather, who made \$285 million from his blockbuster fight with Conor McGregor in August of 2017. After Mayweather were George Clooney at \$239 million, Kylie Jenner at \$166.5 million, Judge Judy Sheindlin at \$147 million and Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson at \$124 million.

Cardinals G.M. suspended five weeks, fined \$200,000

By Charean Williams

Pro Football Talk

July 18, 2018

The Cardinals suspended General Manager Steve Keim five weeks and fined him \$200,000 after he pleaded guilty to extreme DUI on Tuesday.

Keim will face no further discipline from the NFL, according to Adam Schefter of ESPN, as the Cardinals were in communication with the league before taking action.

The team will donate the fine money to the Arizona chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

Keim is allowed no contact with the team and cannot enter team facilities during his suspension. He also is required to undergo counseling and evaluation, in addition to a DUI education course, before returning to work.

Keim also will participate in DUI awareness and education programs within the community.

“As stated at the time of the incident, this behavior is indefensible and completely unacceptable,” the Cardinals said in a statement. “While Steve has accepted full accountability and responsibility for his actions, that does not diminish their gravity nor the severity of the consequences that result from them.

“Those who work within the National Football League – particularly those in leadership positions – bear a greater responsibility and are held to a higher standard than simply a legal one and we feel that these measures are reflective of that.”

Keim was arrested in the early hours of July 4, and a blood draw determined he had a blood alcohol content of .19.

Keim, who signed a contract extension in February that runs through the 2022 season, released a statement apologizing.

“Once again, I apologize to everyone who has been negatively impacted by my actions and incredibly poor judgment, in particular the Cardinals, our fans and my family,” Keim said. “I fully deserve and accept the punishment that has been issued. My goal is to do everything I can to grow from this personally and help others learn from my inexcusable behavior.”

Multiple members of the personnel department will handle Keim’s duties during his absence.

Steve Keim pleads guilty to extreme DUI

By Josh Alper
Pro Football Talk
July 18, 2018

Cardinals General Manager Steve Keim pleaded guilty to an extreme DUI charge in Chandler, Arizona on Tuesday.

Chandler Municipal Court records show that Keim, who was arrested on July 4, entered the guilty plea for a charge reserved for people arrested with a blood alcohol content above .15. While many aspects of Keim's arrest came to light in the days after it was announced, his BAC was not known.

KTAR reports that Keim's BAC was .19, which is more than twice the legal limit of .08. Extreme DUI carries a possible sentence of 30 days in jail, although former Cardinals wide receiver Michael Floyd was sentenced to 24 days in jail after his 2017 conviction on the same charge.

The Cardinals released Floyd, who had a previous DUI arrest, after that arrest and the team has said there will be "consequences" for Keim, who also had a previous DUI arrest, as a result. Floyd was also suspended for four games by the NFL and discipline for team executives has varied after past incidents, although the revelation of his BAC will likely lead to a stiffer sentence.

UPDATE 5:34 p.m. ET: The Cardinals announced a five-week suspension and \$200,000 fine for Keim after Tuesday's guilty plea.

John Schnatter wants back in to Papa John's

By Mike Florio
Pro Football Talk
July 18, 2018

If it wasn't so funny it would be sad, and if it wasn't so sad it would be funny.

Papa John's founder John Schnatter, who somehow made hundreds of millions of dollars without a shred of self-awareness (there's hope for me yet, I suppose), has opted not to go away, count his money, and watch the value of his shares of Papa John's stock continue to rise, due in large part to his departure from the company. Instead, Schnatter wants back in.

Via Deadspin.com, the Wall Street Journal obtained a letter that Schnatter sent to the Papa John's board of directors on Saturday, which apparently attempts to revoke his decision to resign as the board's chairman.

"The board asked me to step down as chairman without apparently doing any investigation. I agreed, though today I believe it was a mistake to do so," Schnatter said. "I will not allow either my good name or the good name of the company I founded and love to be unfairly tainted."

The letter came a day after Schnatter's 28-minute radio interview during which he claimed that he was "pushed" to use a racial slur during a May conference call with a marketing firm — and during which he made clear his and the company's disdain for NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell. In the letter, Schnatter again admits to using the slur during the conference call.

During his radio interview, Schnatter downplayed the possibility of litigation against the marketing firm that he believes leaked his remarks because he "hate[s] lawyers." But they all hate lawyers until they need one, John, and it sounds like you'll be needing a small army of them to help you get your hands back on the wheel of the company you decided to take public.

NFL continues to thrive, despite its challenges

By Mike Florio
Pro Football Talk
July 18, 2018

The National Football League is continuing to make ends meet. As expected.

On one hand, there has been considerable wringing of hands and gnashing of teeth regarding the potential impact of declining TV ratings and anthem protests on the NFL. On the other hand, the money continues to flow, in unprecedented fashion.

As evidenced by the Green Bay Packers' financial statements, which by law are required to be published every year because of the team's publicly-owned nature, revenue continues to increase, despite the pearl clutching about Colin Kaepernick and those inspired by him taking advantage of a loophole/flip that the NFL created nearly a decade ago when deciding to (wait for it) inject politics into football by bringing players out of the locker room for the national anthem, as part of the effort to wrap the shield in the flag.

But we already knew that, even before seeing the Green Bay numbers. Falcons owner Arthur Blank, after giving quarterback Matt Ryan a record \$30 million deal, justified the investment by explaining that league revenues are up, and club revenues are up. And indeed they are.

Some would say, "Well, they'd be even higher but for the antics of Kaepernick and company." Of course, Packers CEO Mark Murphy could have made that declaration on Monday, when discussing his team's balance sheet. But he didn't. Murphy said only that the anthem issue had no impact on the team's financial performance.

It had not impact on the team's financial performance.

Keep that in mind the next time someone from the league, or someone in the media looking to curry favor with the league, claims without proof that anthem protests are "bad for business." The verdict has been issued, and the answer is that (as suspected) any huffing and puffing by those who want to control behavior by making threats simply aren't blowing anyone's house down.

More “minor” changes could still be coming to kickoff rules

By Darin Gantt
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The NFL may not be finished fiddling with kickoffs.

According to Kevin Seifert of ESPN.com, the league said there may be additional changes to this year's new rules about kickoffs, which they're trying to make safer.

A league spokesman said any additional changes would be “minor,” but the fact they're still adjusting just before training camp starts is still a bit startling.

The new rules are a significant change, with former referee Terry McAulay calling them “the biggest change I've ever seen.” And if the league's considering adjusting the rule book now (it was just published on June 28), there figures to be confusion among coaches as they try to figure out what to teach players.

“The NFL officiating and football operations staff, with competition committee approval, may make some minor tweaks to the language to further clarify the rule,” league spokesman Michael Signora said. “If so, that information would be circulated to all clubs and the rule book updated accordingly.”

The league took steps to change kickoffs to try to curb injuries, routinely describing it as the most dangerous play in the game. And even in the recently published rulebook, there were other changes which hadn't been previously disclosed, including automatic touchbacks if a ball hits the end zone without being touched by a member of the receiving team.