How did Broncos fall to dead last in power rankings of Denver's big four sports franchises?

By Mark Kiszla
Denver Post
March 22, 2019

This is a Broncos town. It always has been. But is the future guaranteed? In the current power rankings of the Denver's big four professional sports franchises, our local NFL team ranks dead last.

Nobody puts baby in a corner. But the Broncos are locked in the basement, listening to the footsteps, as the Nuggets, Rockies and Avalanche get to work.

How did that happen?

At a time when our worldview is framed by the corners of a cellphone, two pieces of recent video illustrated how far the Broncos have slipped in the local pecking order.

In the first video clip, Nuggets players danced in their locker room under showers of bottled water, after coach Michael Malone saluted the team's first playoff bid since 2013 with this happy declaration: "We got no champagne, but we got some water. We ain't satisfied, but we're going to celebrate."

And then there was: Woody! TMZ released a video of (now former) Broncos quarterback Chad Kelly dressed like our favorite cowboy from "Toy Story," after his trip to a Halloween party took a ridiculously bad turn and he was chased from a stranger's home with a vacuum cleaner tube.

From the top of the organization to the last man on the 53-man roster, the Broncos often seem more like fodder for a bad reality TV show than championship material. How long will it be before they can again match the fun factor of the Nuggets, instill the same civic pride as the Rockies or even be as much of a playoff contender as the Avalanche?

The four main elements that define success for a pro sports franchise are star power, coaching, management and ownership. To understand the depth of the Broncos' problems, consider this: They rank closer to the bottom than the top in every category, when compared to our local NBA, major-league baseball and NHL franchises.

Franchise player

No. 1: Nolan Arenado, Rockies. By signing a jaw-dropping $260 million deal, he not only became the new king of Denver sports, Arenado made LoDo one of the more happening spots anywhere between Boston and Los Angeles in the major leagues.

No. 2: Nikola Jokic, Nuggets. We can't make this stuff up. That a dude with a belly taken 41st in the 2014 draft has turned into a legitimate MVP candidate is almost as delightfully unfathomable as not one (David Fizdale of the Knicks), but two (Scott Brooks of the Wizards) coaches have compared the Joker to Magic Johnson.

No. 3: Von Miller, Broncos. With all due respect for the MVP of Super Bowl 50, the nature of his job does not allow Miller to have as much impact on his team during a game-in, game-out basis as either Arenado or Jokic does.

No. 4: Nathan MacKinnon, Avs. There's no shame in finishing fourth on this list. What's more: At 23 years old, MacKinnon has yet to reach his prime, while it's fair to wonder if Miller's best football is behind him.

Coaching

No. 1: Malone, Nuggets. He's got my vote as NBA coach of the year. How about you?

No. 2: Bud Black, Rockies. First manager in team history to look fearlessly at the beast that is Coors Field through the eyes of a pitcher.

No. 3: Vic Fangio, Broncos. Beautiful football mind. Better man. But as even Fangio admits, there's stuff a 60-year-old rookie head coach can only learn by going through it the first time.

No. 4: Jared Bednar, Avs. Are we certain he's the right guy for this job?

Management

No. 1: Tim Connelly, Nuggets. From Jamal Murray (No. 7 in the first round, 2016) to Monte Morris (No. 51 in the second round, 2017), maybe we should give John Elway some of whatever magic elixir Connelly is drinking.

No. 2: Jeff Bridich, Rockies. He has a firm vision of how to win at 5,280 feet above sea level and an even stronger belief Colorado can compete with the mighty Dodgers.

No. 3: Elway, Broncos. Hoping Joe Flacco has one more Hail Mary in him. No Plan B? Flacco is Plan E, F or G. I've lost count.

No. 4: Joe Sakic, Avs. Took over as front-office chief in May 2013, and his five-year plan to restore the team to its Stanley Cup glory might require a decade.

Ownership

No. 1: Josh Kroenke, Nuggets and Avs. Got both jobs too young. Grew up fast. Kudos.

No. 2 Dick Monfort, Rockies. Reinvesting money of loyal fan base in team payroll.

No. 3: The Pat Bowlen trust, Broncos. Let's celebrate the induction of Mr. B in the Pro Football Hall of Fame in August, then get down to the business of asking: For the good of the franchise, would it be best if the family sold the Broncos?

QB Kevin Hogan to re-sign with Denver Broncos, source says

By Ryan O'Halloran
Denver Post
March 22, 2019

The Broncos are expected to re-sign quarterback Kevin Hogan today, according to a league source.

Hogan became a free agent last week when the Broncos opted to not tender him a contract.

Acquired on waivers from the Washington Redskins last September, Hogan was the Broncos' No. 3 quarterback until Chad Kelly was released following his October arrest.

The Broncos have three quarterbacks under contract for 2019: Joe Flacco (acquired via trade from Baltimore last week), Hogan and Garrett Grayson (who finished last year on the practice squad). None have played a snap for the Broncos.

Hogan, 26, played at Stanford and was a fifth-round draft pick by Kansas City in 2016. His only regular season action was for Cleveland in 2016-17 — eight games (one start, a loss), 101 pass attempts, 621 yards, four touchdowns and seven interceptions.

Hogan returns for chance as Broncos No. 2 quarterback

By Mike Klis
9NEWS
March 22, 2019

It may have been no more than a one-year contract for about $1 million, give or take, but it wasn't the only offer Kevin Hogan received to become a backup quarterback.

Given his options, Hogan decided to return to the Broncos and compete for the role as Joe Flacco's backup.

"There's always a competition," Hogan said Thursday in a phone interview with 9News. "Nothing's ever promised, but it's something I wanted to do. I wanted to be back here in Denver to grow as a player and I like the way things are heading. I wanted to come back."

The Broncos showed a leap of faith in believing Hogan can be their backup quarterback in 2019, because he didn't play a snap in 2018. He was claimed off waivers from Washington last September and took Paxton Lynch's place on the Broncos' 53-man roster to start the season.

Before that, Hogan starred at Stanford, endured physical and mental punishment while appearing in eight games over two seasons for the then pitiful Cleveland Browns, and then he played very well last preseason for Washington before the Broncos picked him up to replace Lynch.

Hogan, 26, was non-tendered as a restricted free agent in lieu of a $2.025 million salary last week, but he agreed on a smaller pay out Thursday to return – knowing the team is certain to select a quarterback at some point in the draft next month.

"I loved the way coach (Rich) Scangarello and coach (T.C.) McCartney developed quarterbacks out in San Fran and I'm excited to work under them," Hogan said about his new offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach. "Excited to be part of our QB room with Joe and Garrett (Grayson) and get back to work."

Hogan was all in as Case Keenum's backup last year and he'll do the same this year now that the Broncos have replaced Keenum with Flacco this year.

"I think he's an unbelievable talent," Hogan said of Flacco. "One of the best natural throwers in the NFL. Someone I've really watched over the years. He's had a lot of success and I'm excited to be in the same room as him and help him any way I can to get ready for Sundays."

Where will Kareem Jackson play? Wherever the Broncos want him to

By Jeff Legwold
ESPN.com
March 22, 2019

If the Denver Broncos list Kareem Jackson's position on the roster in the season to come, they just might be able to jot down "wherever."

As in wherever they need Jackson in the secondary in a given game, a given series or even a given play.

"I actually enjoy kind of floating around, playing a little bit of everywhere," Jackson said. "I feel like that could be an advantage for us as a team game planning-wise, just depending on what type of skill sets that the offense possesses in terms of the guys that they have. Not knowing what I'll be week in and week out can also be an advantage for us."

In the initial wave of free agency, the Broncos quickly made their top priorities clear in the open market. They formally completed a trade at quarterback to acquire Joe Flacco, signed a right tackle in Ja'Wuan James, and they added two defensive backs -- Jackson and Bryce Callahan.

And those two defensive backs fit coach Vic Fangio's criteria in the secondary makeover -- versatile players who tackle well.

Jackson, who will turn 31 in April, could be a risky bet. But Jackson, who didn't miss a game in the past two seasons and has never played in fewer than 12 in any of his previous nine years with the Texans, can play cornerback or safety, line up outside or in the slot, as needed, and more than one pro personnel director in the league declared him to be the best-tackling defensive back in the NFL last season when he finished with a career-best 87 takedowns.

Couple those numbers with five tackles for loss, 17 passes defensed, two forced fumbles, two interceptions and one welcome-to-the-NFL hit on Broncos rookie running back Phillip Lindsay last season, and the Broncos have the guy Fangio wants roaming alongside Chris Harris Jr.

"It gives us a lot of options," Fangio said. "Just from week to week we might be able to line him up where we feel he best fits to defend the team we're playing. He's smart enough to learn all the different positions. He's proven it in games and on tape that he can execute the positions, not just know what to do, but play them competitively and at a high level."

It also shows that the Broncos know their own divisional neighborhood as well. The Chiefs have Patrick Mahomes, the Chargers have Philip Rivers and Raiders coach Jon Gruden has gone all-in on offense already in this offseason with a trade for receiver Antonio Brown leading a pile of moves on offense.

The Broncos can bring edge pressure like few teams in the league with Von Miller and Bradley Chubb. And pairing Jackson and Harris gives Denver a versatile secondary.

Harris believes he can add an edge to the defense.

“I kind of pride myself on being physical, kind of imposing my will on the receivers or running backs if I get the chance," Jackson said. "I think those things throughout the course of a game can kind of change the game. It can spark your team or it can cause turnovers or things like that. Obviously those things can definitely work in our favor."

Harris, for one, ended the Broncos’ disappointing 6-10 season in 2018 -- the team’s third consecutive playoff miss since the Super Bowl 50 win -- saying the Broncos had to upgrade on defense.

With the No. 10 pick in the draft and a draft board heavy in defensive talent, Elway certainly will be tempted to draft a defender in the first round. In Elway’s previous eight drafts, the Broncos have used five of seven first-round picks on defensive players (in 2012 they didn’t pick until the second round and selected defensive end Derek Wolfe).

And Jackson added that defensive players simply want to play for Fangio, who had the Chicago Bears tops in the league in scoring defense and takeaways last season.

“I’m pretty good friends with (Bears cornerback) Kyle Fuller and has said nothing but great things about Coach Vic," Jackson said. “For me, just getting a chance to play with my eyes, be instinctive and react. I don’t know a [defensive back] in this league that doesn’t want to be in these types of defenses where they can kind of see the quarterback, read, react and make some plays on the ball."

What can defensive mastermind Vic Fangio do with Von Miller and Bradley Chubb?

By Jeff Legwold
ESPN.com
March 22, 2019

Just hours after Vic Fangio became the Denver Broncos' head coach, he was asked what he would be able to do with the team's defense.

Fangio acknowledged what he inherits with the Broncos is something of an embarrassment of riches. Perennial Defensive Player of the Year candidate Von Miller pairs with a guy who led all rookies in sacks this past season in Bradley Chubb.

Not bad. Not bad at all.

"Those are the kinds of players you always want to have," Fangio said. "I've said already Von Miller can be one of those rare players in this league, and I do really believe as good as Von as played in his career -- and he has done some really, really good things -- he can play even better."

When the Broncos selected the 60-year-old Fangio, they wanted his ability to assemble a top-shelf staff, his 30-plus years of NFL experience and his attention to detail. Perhaps what they wanted most is to see what a longtime linebackers coach could do with two of the team's most intriguing players.

"That's my position of expertise when I'm coaching a position, and those guys are going to get coached by their position coach, but they're going to get a little extra from me, too," Fangio said. "We're going to try to take them both to bigger and better levels."

Miller was in the room the day Fangio was introduced, one of many Broncos players who wanted to see for themselves what the new guy was about. Miller heard Fangio say he believed the seven-time Pro Bowl selection could still lift his game and find a little more.

And it was Miller who introduced himself to his new boss with, "Coach me, coach. Coach me."

The math is pretty simple, really. Through the years, Fangio has worked with the likes of Hall of Fame pass-rushers Rickey Jackson, Kevin Greene and Ray Lewis as well as Pat Swilling, not to mention what he did this past season with Khalil Mack, Leonard Floyd and rookie Roquan Smith as the Chicago Bears' defensive coordinator.

The Bears led the league in scoring defense, interceptions and takeaways while finishing tied for third in sacks. Mack, a former Defensive Player of the Year, had what many personnel executives in the league considered his best all-around season.

"We had a lot of great statistical numbers this past year in Chicago," Fangio said. "One that gets overlooked by most, but not by me, is that we were the second-least-penalized defense in the NFL this past year. ... What we're really talking about is execution. Discipline is a broad term that people use too loosely. If you play with good technique, you will avoid being penalized too many times."

Mack has called Fangio an “evil genius," and Miller certainly noticed Mack’s work with the Bears this past season -- 12.5 sacks, six forced fumbles and an interception return for a touchdown in 14 games. To that end, two of Fangio’s first additions to his Broncos staff were naming his defensive-backs coach with the Bears, Ed Donatell, as defensive coordinator and Brandon Staley, another former Chicago assistant, as his linebackers coach.

“Khalil, when he got to us, he didn’t know what to expect," Fangio said of the September trade of Mack from the Raiders to the Bears. “I think what he was alluding to in a little way was how quickly he was able to learn our system, be able to play immediately, play effectively and not hurt the team because of his lack of exposure to training camp, etc. I think, not to put words in his mouth, how easy it was to transition into our system that we believe is easy to learn."

Broncos president of football operations/general manager John Elway, who also thinks Miller can do more, said he expected Fangio to use a 3-4 scheme, at least as the team’s base defense.

“You look at the whole defense, obviously, Khalil Mack is a great player," Elway said. “But you look at the whole defense and what he did with everybody that he had there. They have some great players there, but you know, we have some very good players here, too, that I think mixes very well in this system. ... What he does fits our personnel and what he’s done -- I just look forward to see what he can do for us."

Ja'Wuan James looks to provide right answer at right tackle

By Troy Renck
KMGH
March 22, 2019

The Broncos knew the price would sting. The first wave of free agency comes with sticker shock. But the Broncos, let's be honest, were stuck.

Right tackle has been to the Broncos what third base was the Cubs after Ron Santo, what drummers were to Spinal Tap. Over the past five seasons, the Broncos have started 11 right tackles, among them Ty Sambrailo, Michael Schofield, Menelik Watson, Donald Stephenson, Allen Barbre, Jared Veldheer and Billy Turner. James boasted the best resume among free agents. After nearly trading running back C.J. Anderson for him last offseason, the Broncos signed James. He received a four-year, $51 million deal with a $12 million signing bonus and $32 million guaranteed.

The Broncos made the 26-year-old the highest-paid right tackle in NFL history. But if you can believe it, he's not even the top athlete in the family. He married Rainey Gaffin, a softball legend at Legend High School in Broomfield and the University of Tennessee. Gaffin won four straight titles in her prep career as a two-way player, and became an All-American for the Volunteers, finishing with 33 wins as a pitcher and a .334 career average with 51 extra-base hits.

"I think I will give it to Juan as the best. We will do races. I used to think I was fast, until I raced him, and said, 'This isn't fair.' He's pretty all-around talented. When he plays basketball, he's smooth in everything he does; so fluid, his shot, the way he moves," his wife said. "I aspire to be like that."

James, who has a contagious smile and easy-going demeanor, disagreed. No arm-twisting required.

"I am going to continue to say her. She has all the accolades. She was All-American, Gatorade National Player of the Year, all-SEC, she's up there," said James, who learned how to pitch a softball to better understand his wife's excellence. "So I will continue to say her."

For James, signing with Denver came with added benefits. His wife's family lives here, he has enjoyed visiting over the years, and he is joining a team that, until the last three seasons, was among the AFC's muscle-flexing contenders with a fervent fan base.

"I go back to my rookie year when I came here (with the Miami Dolphins). It was the closest thing to an SEC feel I have experienced since college," said James in his one-on-one interview with Denver7. "Everywhere you go, you see people wearing orange. You get so much support, and we are going to need that."

Before adding James, the Broncos executed what I believe could be their best offseason move, convincing Mike Munchak to leave Pittsburgh to coach the offensive line. Not only is he a Hall of Fame player, but he brings a reputation of developing linemen into Pro Bowlers.

"His knowledge of the game is unreal. Just talking to him for an hour or so, it got me excited and riled up," James said. "He's talked about things he's done in the past with other players, and what we are going to do now. He explained how he watched film on me and things I do really well, and things I need to improve. I can't wait to work with him in April."

Free agency has not been kind to the Broncos at right tackle. They tried to make shrewd decisions with second-tier players in Watson and Stephenson and got what they paid for. Last season, Jared Veldheer played fine before suffering a knee injury, and Billy Turner filled in capably. Veldheer, however, will be 32 in June, and Turner received an eye-opening, four-year, $28-million deal from Green Bay as Denver sought to keep him as a swing player.

James is young, entering his prime. The Broncos need him to halt the dizzying carousel.

"We really like him. He’s a good fit for us with what we want to do with the zone scheme and outside zone. He’s a physical guy and he plays hard. We’re excited about him," general manager John Elway said. "There is no question that hopefully he solidifies the spot, that's what we're planning on from him. We really feel good about the two young tackles that we now have (James and Garett Bolles) and what we’re doing. We’ll just continue to get better there.”

For James, the Broncos' money was impressive. So, too, was the fit. He sees Munchak's adaptable scheme setting a tone for the entire offense.

"I get to bring my athleticism, but also my physicality. We are going to run the ball, and we are going to run it all day," James said. "We have to do it longer the D-Line can. And I feel like we have to pride ourselves in that, and we will like the results."

Broncos bring back QB Kevin Hogan on 1-year deal

By Arnie Stapleton
Associated Press
March 22, 2019

The Denver Broncos are bringing back quarterback Kevin Hogan on a one-year deal.

Hogan was claimed by Denver off waivers from Washington last September and spent the rest of the season on the active roster. He didn't attempt a pass for the Broncos.

The 6-foot-3, 218-pound Hogan was taken by the Kansas City Chiefs in the fifth round of the 2016 draft. After being waived, he suited up for the Cleveland Browns in '16 and '17, where he threw for 621 yards, four touchdowns and seven interceptions.

Hogan will compete to be the backup to Joe Flacco, who was picked up by Denver in a trade with Baltimore. The Broncos shipped Case Keenum to Washington.

Broncos re-sign QB Kevin Hogan to one-year deal

By Aric DiLalla
DenverBroncos.com
March 22, 2019

The Broncos have re-signed free-agent quarterback Kevin Hogan to a new one-year contact, the team announced Thursday.

“I love the way that the culture is here,” Hogan said Thursday. “I got to spend a whole year with the guys in the locker room, and I know everyone works hard. It’s a special group of guys. I got to build a relationship with Coach Fangio way back when. He actually recruited me to college. I know that he’s going to bring the right stuff here. Just to be able to learn under [Offensive Coordinator] Rich [Scangarello], [Quarterbacks] Coach T.C. [McCartney] and the other coaches, I’m really excited. But mostly it’s the culture. It’s a winning culture, and I think that’s what’s going to happen.”

Hogan initially joined the Broncos in September when the team claimed him off waivers. He did not see game action last season.

The fourth-year player was drafted in the fifth round of the 2016 NFL Draft by the Chiefs before joining the Browns’ practice squad later that year. He started a game and played in eight total contests for Cleveland from 2016-17.

Hogan threw for 517 yards, four touchdowns and five interceptions in 2017. He recorded a 61.3 percent completion percentage and 71.9 quarterback rating.

The Stanford product joins Joe Flacco and Garrett Grayson as the quarterbacks currently on the Broncos’ roster.

“[Flacco] actually reached out to me today,” Hogan said. “I thought that was really nice of him. He didn’t have to, [but he’s] a real stand-up guy. He’s a Super Bowl MVP, and anything that I can do to help him, I’m going to do. But most importantly I know he’s going to help me grow as a player. I’m just so excited for that.”

Broncos to host official NFL Draft party at Broncos Stadium at Mile High

By Staff
DenverBroncos.com
March 22, 2019

The Denver Broncos will host their official Draft Party, presented by Ikon Pass, during the first round of the 2019 NFL Draft on Thursday, April 25, in the East United Club at Broncos Stadium at Mile High with gates opening at 5:30 p.m. Tickets for the event are now on sale through www.Ticketmaster.com and the event is expected to sell out.

Broncos fans will have the opportunity to hear exclusive interviews with current Broncos players in addition to watching live interviews with team personnel executives from just outside the 'War Room' and the team's first-round selection live from the NFL Draft in Nashville.

Supported by Broncos partners Ikon Pass, Bud Light, Swire Coca-Cola and Papa Johns, the event will feature numerous special guests including Broncos players and alumni, Denver Broncos Cheerleaders, Miles the Mascot and the Stampede Drumline.

Activities at the event also include:

Orange Carpet entrance with Broncos player and cheerleader photo opportunities
Q&A sessions with current Broncos players and alumni
Photo opportunity with the three Broncos Lombardi Trophies
Drawing featuring Grand Prize of a VIP Draft Experience and meet-and-greet with the team's first-round draft pick(s) at UCHealth Training Center on Friday, April 26.

General Admission tickets include one Bud Light Beer (for fans 21+), one concessions food voucher, complimentary soft drinks courtesy of Swire Coca-Cola and pizza provided by Papa Johns.

A VIP ticket option is also available. The VIP package includes advanced admission to a reception on the Bud Light rooftop at 5 p.m., an official New Era Broncos Draft Cap, exclusive meet and greet with current Broncos players and alumni, a private draft viewing space and Anheuser-Busch products throughout the evening. Two-hundred Ikon Pass holders will get the chance to attend the event and enjoy special perks that include "cutting the line" and exclusive raffle prizes throughout the evening.

"In addition to enjoying access to skiing and riding at 38 iconic destinations around the globe, this Broncos Draft Party is just another great reason to join the Ikon Pass," Erik Forsell, CMO, Alterra Mountain Company, said.

Purchased event tickets can be accessed via fans' Broncos Account Manager or the Broncos 365 mobile app. The stadium Ticket Office will be open until 7 p.m. in the event that attendees need assistance accessing their tickets. The stadium's clear bag policy will be in effect.

For more information, please visit www.denverbroncos.com/draftparty

Why the Broncos believe Joe Flacco is more than a bridge quarterback

By Zac Stevens
BSN Denver
March 22, 2019

Joe Flacco.

In some circles, that name reminds people of a player who was benched just last year for a quarterback whose biggest offseason task is learning to become a passer.

In others, he's viewed as a Super Bowl-winning quarterback.

Both, in fact, are true.

And because of that, there's been a divide among Broncos' fans in how they feel about their new signal caller. Inside of the facility in Englewood, however, there's a strong consensus about their new QB.

Joe is the guy. He's their guy. He's the answer at the most important position in all of sports.

"We're thrilled that you're here," John Elway said, as he introduced his newest quarterback in the same room he introduced Peyton Manning seven years before.

"Joe's the perfect fit for us—the fact that he's a winner, he's played in a lot of big games, and he has a lot of good football left in him at 34 years old. We feel like he's just really coming into his prime. We're excited about the fact that he's going to be our quarterback and think that, like I said, he's a perfect fit for us."

The Broncos don't just view Flacco as a Super Bowl winner, they believe he's just entering the prime of his career.

"It feels good because I definitely feel that way. It feels good to hear somebody say that," Flacco said. "I really just think that I am the guy."

Optimistic? Without a doubt. But there's something to it, too.

Last year, in the first nine games of the season, Flacco was off to one the best statistical start of his career, tossing 12 touchdowns to six interceptions. Then, an injury placed him on the sidelines, before Lamar Jackson grabbed the job and wouldn't let go, keeping Flacco on the bench for the remainder of the season.

Should there be injury concerns then?

Not at the spry age of 34, according to John.

"At 34 years old, we feel like he's really got a lot more football left in him. We're excited that he's coming here," Elway said over and over again, reinforcing the idea that Flacco has plenty left in the tank. "Getting a guy that I believe, at 34 years old, is still very young at the position that he's playing."

Don't ask if Flacco will finish out his three-year contract in Denver, ask how long his next contract will be for.

And there's justification for that, too. The average age of Denver's Super Bowl-winning quarterbacks is 38—Elway brought home the Lombardi at 37 and 38, and Peyton added his at 39.

Much like Manning, Flacco rarely missed any games due to injury, or for that matter any reason, until the season before joining the Broncos. In his first 10 seasons in the league, the 6-foot-6 quarterback missed a total of six games—all in 2015 when he tore his ACL and MCL, yet finished the game and led the Ravens to a game-winning field goal.

"I mean, shoot, with Tom Brady now, quarterbacks are playing until they're about 60-years old," Flacco joked, while highlighting he doesn't believe he's entering the twilight of his career. "I'm as healthy as I've ever been and I'm as physical as I've ever been. Obviously, any time something crazy can happen, but barring anything crazy happening, I'm as healthy as I can be and as physical and as ready to go as ever. I'm excited about what lies ahead for me and my future."

Last year, six quarterbacks above the age of 34 finished in the top half of the league in passer rating. While Patrick Mahomes, Carson Wentz, and Deshaun Watson are leading the new wave of NFL quarterbacks, the older guys aren't giving in just yet.

And the Broncos are putting their eggs in the basket of experience.

"Joe has won over 100 games as a starting quarterback in the NFL, and that includes the most road playoff wins in NFL history with seven," Elway explained, laying out his best case for his new quarterback. "If we recall, there was one four or five years ago that was pretty painful here in Denver. Hopefully, we'll have a lot more of those miracles on our side rather than against us. Anyway, with that being said, we're confident that he's a guy that can come in and get us turned around.

Well, what else is Elway going to say, some may think.

Actually, in 2016, when the Broncos traded for Mark Sanchez, Elway let the unhappy fans know that this was just the first move the team was going to make at the quarterback position. Not necessarily a ringing endorsement and far from the rhetoric Elway glowingly dished out about Flacco.

Additionally, BSN Denver learned that behind the scenes the belief in Flacco is even stronger than Elway's publicly stated, as folks within the organization view him as a guy who can be a top-10 quarterback.

Could the Broncos still draft a quarterback at No. 10 overall? Sure.

Could they move on from him after this year in pursuit of another veteran or quarterback in the draft? His ultra-team-friendly contract would certainly allow that.

But that's not the plan for a team that believes they have a top-10 quarterback with many, many years left in the tank.

“I’m not putting a number on how much time I’ve got left to play,” Flacco said, not placing a timeline on his career. “I want to play as long as I can, and hopefully they’re dragging me out of this building a long time from now.”

The Broncos don’t just hope so too, Joe. They’re planning on it.

Report: Colin Kaepernick, Eric Reid got less than $10 million in NFL collusion settlement

By A.J Perez
USA Today
March 22, 2019

Colin Kaepernick and Eric Reid received less than $10 million total to settle their collusion grievances against the NFL, The Wall Street Journal reported on Thursday.

The amount of the settlement, announced in February, has been a subject of speculation since the case was settled. Mark Geragos, the attorney for both players, noted in a statement then that “resolution of this matter is subject to a confidentiality agreement.”

The Wall Street Journal cited “people briefed on the deal” in reporting the payout, and noted it couldn’t determine how much each player would get or how much legal fees would cut into the settlement amount.

The settlement ended the grievance that alleged NFL owners had colluded to keep Kaepernick out of the league because of his pre-game protest – he kneeled during the national anthem – to draw attention to police brutality and racial inequality. Reid, a former teammate of Kaepernick's who also took a knee before games, filed a similar grievance claim last May.

Kaepernick‘s cut would be far less than his final year with the San Francisco 49ers, when he earned an estimated $14.3 million. Reid, who signed with the Carolina Panthers midway through the 2018 season, agreed to a three-year, $22 million extension to remain in Carolina last month.

Kaepernick remains a free agent.

A representative for Kaepernick’s legal team declined to comment when reached by USA TODAY Sports on Thursday, citing the confidentiality agreement included in the settlement.

In August, Stephen Burbank, the arbitrator who handled the case, denied the NFL’s motion for a summary judgment. The case would have been dismissed if Burbank approved the motion.

Burbank already had much of the evidence in the case, including the depositions of NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell and Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones. If the case was not settled, it was expected Burbank would have ruled on the grievance in the first half of this year.

2019 NFL Draft: Could Redskins find trade partner in Jets in an attempt to land Dwayne Haskins?

By Jason La Canfora
CBSSports.com
March 22, 2019

By most metrics, the New York Jets have been the most active team in the NFL since the start of the league year, spending big money in free agency and completing a trade for two-time Pro Bowl offensive lineman Keleschi Osemele. And they are far from done.

The Jets have let it be known that they are open for business with the third-overall pick in the draft, and I wouldn't be surprised if, for the second year in a row, they complete a draft pick swap well before the actual selection process begins. A year ago, if you recall, they made an aggressive, proactive move to deal with the Colts to move up to third overall to be in position to take the second quarterback in the draft (either Baker Mayfield or Sam Darnold, depending on whom the Browns selected with the top pick). Now, with Darnold in tow and perhaps on the cusp of a breakout season, the Jets are ready, willing and eager to move down out of the third spot to secure more draft capital.

League sources say Washington is already among the teams sniffing around, and with pretty much every GM in the league wholeheartedly convinced that QB Kyler Murray is going first overall, and San Francisco likely to take its top defensive player on the board second overall (early money is on pass rusher Nick Bosa), then the Jets very well could be sitting pretty with that third pick as an avenue for a QB-needy team to jump ahead of the Giants (sixth overall) to land Ohio State QB Dwayne Haskins. There is a readily-accepted drop-off in the quarterback class beyond that, and while the need is not as robust as in some past years, it only takes one team to make the move.

Would the Jets really be open to dropping down all the way to Washington's pick, way back in the middle of the first round (15th overall)? Yup. I truly believe so, for the right price. And that price would be steep. The Jets would be sacrificing a sure-fire blue chip prospect potentially in the process, but in a draft where some evaluators I've talked to believe there are 12-14 non QBs with absolute first-round grades, the Jets could still be in position to land one from that group even all the way back at 15.

Redskins owner Dan Snyder has made such blockbuster moves before (RGIII, anyone?) and his quarterback situation is arguably the most bleak in the entire league, with Case Keenum and Colt McCoy being rented for a year and with Alex Smith unlikely to ever play again, but due $54M in guarantees.

If Snyder falls in love with Haskins through this process – and, I'd point out that Haskins played prep football in Snyder's backyard and that his mentor, Shawn Springs, is a former Redskins cornerback whom Snyder thinks very highly of – then he will do whatever he thinks has to do to get him. History has shown us as much, and I hear Washington is very much intrigued by the strapping pocket passer, and you just know that Snyder would take some joy in leap-frogging the NFC East rival Giants in the process.

And, I will reiterate, this is not a situation where the Jets are inclined to believe the best deal has to come right before the draft. And patience is not exactly a hallmark of the Bruce Allen reign as head of Washington's football operations (losing, however, would be). So keep an eye on this one.

Outside of the Giants and Skins, it's hard to figure anyone else makes the jump. Some execs I've chatted with believe John Elway may be open to moving up for Haskins – his pact with Joe Flacco is on a year-to-year basis at this point in the contract – though, personally, I tend to think he does not go that direction. Miami seems to be targeting the 2020 draft to solve its quarterback riddle – at the very least, giving away a bunch of picks to leap up from 13th overall would shock rival GMs at this point – and Jacksonville is paying Nick Foles like he is on the franchise tag the next two years, so grabbing a QB in the top-10 would run counter to their win-now ethos (even if winning now seems like an impossibility to their counterparts).

It's been a while since Snyder has done something splashy, and his fanbase has become among the more beaten-down and hopeless in the league (for good reason), and getting a buy-in from them wont be easy. Moving up for a potential franchise QB who threw 50 TDs a year ago at Ohio State just might help with that.

News and notes

I've long chronicled the looming contractual conundrum facing the Seahawks over Russell Wilson, and am well on record that the time to go all out to extend him was last offseason. At this point, I frankly don't see much happening between the sides. I'm not sure there is even a deal that could be done, or a deal, if I was representing that player, that I would much consider signing, even at $40M per year. He's been remarkably durable, the franchise tag money in 2020 and 2021 would be huge and with this such a unique time in the history of the game – broadcast rights back on the negotiating table in a few years; a new CBA needed in a few years; the NFL about to embrace gambling money in a way unfathomable even a few years ago – I would be in no rush to even really talk about a new contract at this point. From everything I've gathered, this process hasn't even started and there's been no dialogue.

The Cardinals might as well start the full-scale shopping of Josh Rosen. And no sense limiting it to just the few teams that have an apparent QB need (really only Miami and Washington at this point). Their best bet may be with a team that has an aging starter in need of a potential heir. The free-agent QB market has been thoroughly picked through at this point, and Blake Bortles and Ryan Tannehill found new teams and the QB demand is what it is. Not much will cause it to change ahead of the draft, and do right by Rosen and get him to his new home sooner rather than later.

Heard some buzz about Wagner quarterback TJ Linta after his recent pro day. If the last name sounds familiar, yes, his father is Joe Linta, an NFL agent who helped make Joe Flacco the NFL's highest-paid player for a spell. Linta, who spent three years at Brown before transferring to Wagner for his final season, measures just under 6-foot-4 and has a big arm and has impressed scouts with his smarts and decision-making as well. Former NFL coordinator and QB coach Chris Palmer, who watched Linta go through a passing tree, said, "He clearly displayed a pro-level arm." Wouldn't be surprised if he is a late-round pick or priority un-drafted free agent at this point.

Broncos bring back backup quarterback Kevin Hogan

By Michael David Smith
Pro Football Talk
March 22, 2019

Kevin Hogan is starting another year as a backup quarterback in Denver.

Hogan, who was on the Broncos' roster last year but never got on the field for a game, has re-signed with Denver, Mike Klis of 9 News reports.

The 26-year-old Hogan entered the NFL as a fifth-round pick of the Chiefs in 2016. Kansas City cut him before that season and he was picked up by Cleveland, where he started one game in two years. He spent last offseason in Washington but didn't make the regular-season roster.

Joe Flacco is slated to be the starting quarterback in Denver this year. The Broncos may also draft a quarterback, and Hogan may have to compete to make the Broncos' roster.

Emmanuel Sanders: When I left Steelers, Kevin Colbert said I'm no Antonio Brown

By Michael David Smith
Pro Football Talk
March 22, 2019

Steelers General Manager Kevin Colbert may now rue the day he gave Antonio Brown a big contract two years ago. But he once wanted to save so much salary cap space for Brown that he openly told other players they couldn't get the contracts they wanted because they weren't as good as Brown.

That's the word from Broncos wide receiver Emmanuel Sanders, who says that when he left the Steelers to sign a three-year, $15 million contract with the Broncos in 2014, Colbert scoffed at the Steelers matching that deal and told Sanders he's not as good as Brown.

"The Steelers offered me a crappy deal. They offered me three years, $9 million, $1 million guaranteed," Sanders said on 104.3 The Fan. "I'll never forget when they offered me the deal, I declined the deal, I went into Kevin Colbert's office and said, 'I don't want to take the deal.' He looks at me and he goes, 'Who do you think you are, Antonio Brown?' I wanted to say, 'F-you.' I'll never forget that."

Sanders said Colbert disrespected him, and that's something he doesn't tolerate.

Competition Committee blows it; will ownership get it right?

By Mike Florio
Pro Football Talk
March 22, 2019

Only the NFL could react to a controversy that calls into question the legitimacy of a Super Bowl participant by implementing a fix that wouldn't have avoided the controversy.

That's what the Competition Committee has done, by recommending an expansion of replay to "include all fouls for pass interference, roughing the passer, and unnecessary contact against a player who is in a defenseless posture." The proposal won't apply where a foul isn't called, meaning that replay review won't be available when the officiating crew fails to call pass interference or unnecessary roughness against a defenseless receiver.

Meaning that replay review wouldn't have been available in the Rams-Saints NFC Championship, when Rams defensive back Nickell Robey-Coleman wiped out Saints receiver Tommylee Lewis.

The Competition Committee also has not proposed an AAF-style Sky Judge, which would make available visual evidence part of the first look, not part of the replay process. If available and properly implemented, that would have allowed for the on-field failure of the officiating crew to be rectified in real time.

There's still hope. The people who own the teams, and thus own the league, can reject the failure of the Competition Committee to fix the situation, and they can implement a rule that properly addresses the situation. They need to; for all the excuse-making and hand-wringing over "unintended consequences," the Competition Committee's proposal could tend to cause more flags to be thrown, since the protection afforded by this proposal becomes available only when penalties have been called.

So the ball is in your court, owners. The Competition Committee has failed. Let's see if you'll do what should have been done in the NFC title game and overturn the ruling on the field.

Competition Committee unveils two proposals to change replay rules

By Josh Alper
Pro Football Talk
March 22, 2019

The NFL has released this year's proposed changes to the league's playing rules and nine of them have to do with the replay review system.

Two of those proposals come directly from the Competition Committee while the other seven were generated by teams. Each of the proposals from the Competition Committee propose to amend the current replay rules for a one-year period.

The first of those proposals calls for fouls for pass interference to be reviewable. It also proposes expanding automatic replay reviews to include scoring plays and turnovers negated by a foul as well as any attempt for points after a touchdown. The second proposal would include pass interference fouls as well as penalties for roughing the passer and unnecessary contact against a player who is in a defenseless posture.

On the team side, Kansas City made a proposal to make personal fouls reviewable. Unlike the committee's recommendations, their proposed change would cover both penalized and unpenalized plays.

Washington offered a pair of proposals. One calls for making all plays that occur during a game subject to review while the other asks for personal fouls to be reviewable plays.

The Eagles proposed automatic reviews for all scoring plays and turnovers negated by a penalty. They also joined the Panthers, Rams and Seahawks in a proposal to make player-safety rules violations reviewable whether or not a flag is thrown on the field.

Finally, the Broncos made two proposals. One would subject fourth down plays spotted short of the line to gain or goal line to an automatic review. Their other proposal would make all extra point and two-point conversion attempts subject to automatic review.

Proposed changes by the Competition Committee generally have a better chance of being approved by league owners and we'll find out next week if the one-year trials they are floating are put into place.