

Broncos Executive Director of Football Ops Kelly Kleine joins 'Nick and Cecil'

By Cecil Lammey

104.3 The Fan

June 1, 2022

On Tuesday's edition of 'Nick and Cecil' we were able to talk to Denver Broncos Executive Director of Football Operations Kelly Kleine. The Broncos hired Kleine a little over a year ago to work at the top of the scouting department and to serve as a Special Assistant to General Manager George Paton.

Kleine began working in the NFL as a public relations game day intern with the Minnesota Vikings in 2012. From there, she spent many years in the scouting department for the Vikings honing her craft and her eye for talent. She was a college scout mostly, working in the North and the Midwest scouting talent coming into the league. Now with the Broncos, Kleine is involved in college and pro scouting – working with Paton on everything from tracking data from practices to pro scouting and she was involved in the head coaching interviews this offseason.

She's one of the up-and-coming talents in the scouting community, and it wouldn't surprise me to see Kleine be the first female GM in the NFL someday soon.

Here are some highlights from our interview with Kleine:

Brought to you by the Letter "E"

I've written many times at DenverFan.com about the different energy around the team. Since quarterback Russell Wilson was traded to Denver, things have changed around the building. The team has no mystery about who the quarterback is or how far this team can go. So, to start off our interview with Kleine I had to ask her about the energy around the Broncos this offseason.

"Energy is the perfect word for it. It's the offseason, so we haven't lost any games yet but of course it's fun. It's fun to come in every day. We're growing as a team, we're growing as a group, and growing with our personnel and our coaches together. It's been really positive. We're pumped...everyone's pumped to come back to [training] camp and get rolling." Kleine said.

Women in Scouting

There is no doubt that football is a male-dominated industry. Most coaches are male, and certainly in the scouting community most are male as well. Kleine has been a trailblazer for females in the scouting world. Nick wanted to ask her about that journey and how the NFL is working to find more females for scouting roles. He also included his opinion (which I share) that Kleine could one day be the first female GM in the NFL.

“I’m not thinking that far ahead, but I appreciate that! It’s amazing to me. I started in the NFL 10 years ago, almost 11 years ago now. The amount of women in personnel and coaching has grown. It’s needed and it needs to grow a ton more. There are some really good women in the college ranks that want to move up, and we need to create more opportunities for them. The NFL has done a great job, teams are doing their own programs, we’re all just connecting with each other and trying to find more women.” Kleine said.

Importance of All Star Games

I talk about the Shrine Bowl and the Senior Bowl so much that listeners have made a drinking game out of it. I’ve gone to both games every year since 2007, and I fully believe those games are an important part of the scouting process. Kleine came up in the scouting ranks, and she knows the type of work that goes into scouting during those two weeks at the end of January when the NFL descends on these two All-Star Games. Because I’m a scouting nerd, I wanted to know what she thought of these games and how important they are to the pre-draft process.

“It’s so important because you get to see these guys compete – especially these lower level (FCS or Division III) guys. I remember seeing Quinn Meinerz last year at the Senior Bowl. Everyone was dying to see him compete against higher level competition, and he did a great job. I think that’s so extremely important. Just getting in front of these guys, getting to know them, talking to them, getting to know if they’re dedicated, if they’re a good kid – if they love ball. It’s good bonding for our scouts and personnel department too.” Kleine said.

Broncos' Kelly Kleine discusses trailblazing women in the NFL, her experiences in the league

By Shannon McCarriston

CBS Sports

May 19, 2022

The NFL is filled with trailblazing women, making history by being the first female to fill their role. Now more than ever, the number of women is increasing in the league.

One of these trailblazers is Kelly Kleine, Executive Director of Football Operations and Special Advisor to the General Manager for the Denver Broncos and the second-highest-ranking woman in NFL scouting history. Kleine said she loves seeing more women being hired by the NFL and says young girls seeing women fill these jobs gives them further proof that it is possible.

She said:

"I think I'm most proud of the number of women getting into football. It's so cool to see. I don't know if I had any part of that, but if I did, that's what I'm most proud of. Young girls can see women working in the NFL and know it's an option for them ... the progress that's been made is what I'm most proud of, and hopefully that continues to grow."

Women are often questioned in these roles. Kleine says this is far from justified and that women are just as qualified for the position.

She questions "A lot of men who are scouts didn't play football. Anyone can learn it if you put the time in ... If they could learn it, why can't I? There are general managers and coaches out there who never played either, so what's holding us back?"

Women have been making progress in the league from coaching positions, to referee jobs and the trailblazing is only set to continue.

Kleine says when she was first starting in the league, the women stood out because there were so few, but now it is becoming more normal to see women working for teams.

"In my first year, there were something like three women for 32 teams. We really stood out. The number of women has grown and this year, women are everywhere within the club scouting departments. It's incredible. It's only going to continue to evolve and now we need to keep elevating the women who are in," she said.

The NFL is doing a series called "Next Woman Up," where they highlight some of the women making an impact in the league.

The NFL website writes, "Women are rising up the ranks throughout professional football, earning positions of power in a space that for too long was ruled almost exclusively by men. We're seeing more and more women breaking barriers in the sport, but what are the stories beyond the headlines? Who are the women shaping and influencing the NFL today?"