

2022 BRONCOS SPECIAL SECTION | Broncos' Lloyd Cushenberry provides leadership off the field with charity work

By Vinny Benedetto
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Lloyd Cushenberry III has a way of using his hands for Denver's benefit. On the football field, that means getting the Broncos' offensive plays off to a smooth start with a clean snap before he sets out to protect Russel Wilson or open a running lane.

The Broncos center spends some of his time off the field boxing canned goods, chopping vegetables and serving meals at the Food Bank of the Rockies and Denver Rescue Mission. Cushenberry also is among the team leaders when it comes to the annual Turkey donation around Thanksgiving.

"Since my rookie year, I've been trying to do as much as I can," Cushenberry told The Gazette on Sept. 6, a day before another warehouse shift even as the team prepared to head to Seattle for the season-opener. "I love it."

The issue hits close to home in Carville, La. The Cushenberrys occasionally got help from family when food was in short supply. The youngest of three kids growing into a 6-foot-4, 315-pound frame probably didn't help matters.

"Our situation wasn't as bad as a lot of kids that are going through it, but it's not a good feeling, you know," Cushenberry said. "You come home from a long day, in the house all weekend, and you don't know what you is going to eat. As much as I can give back, especially during the holidays, I'm going to do it anytime."

Cushenberry opted to stay close to home for college. Louisiana State is roughly 30 minutes away, and he had an impact on and off the field in Baton Rouge. He was Joe Burrow's starting center as the Tigers went undefeated and won the 2019 national championship. He was a captain that season and was awarded the program's No. 18 uniform, which is given to the player who exemplifies what it means to be an LSU football player on and off the field. He's yet to be voted a captain at the NFL level, but the center earned a shoutout from Bradley Chubb, one of Denver's five captains for the upcoming season,

"I look at Cush as a leader," Chubb said. "I've tried to follow the things that he does. He's one of those guys that leads by example. He doesn't say too much and just goes out there and handles his business."

The 24-year-old has been the Broncos starting center in both of his first two professional seasons. While he's in line to start his third in a similar role, he doesn't want his on-field contributions to be the only thing associated with his name and number.

"I try to find an identity off the field," Cushenberry said. "I want people to know me as Lloyd, not just the guy (who wears) No. 79 on the field, you know. ... That's one thing I want to do more going into this year and moving forward – getting out in the community, helping people as much as I can and letting people know me as a person."

Center Lloyd Cushenberry III Seems to Have Already Earned the Trust of Russell Wilson & Nathaniel Hackett

By Keith Cummings

Mile High Huddle

July 19, 2022

Denver Broncos center Lloyd Cushenberry is a two-year starter, yet it has been suggested he could be pushed out of a job. Options are certainly available on the roster, with veteran Graham Glasgow capable of sliding inside, and both Quinn Meinerz and rookie fifth-rounder Luke Wattenberg having previous collegiate experience snapping the ball.

During his time at LSU, Cushenberry gained respect as a smart and trusted pivot for his then quarterback Joe Burrow. If Cushenberry is going to develop further as a pro, it's perhaps more a case of improving the physical side of his game rather than his already battle-tested football IQ. Gaining the confidence of his new quarterback Russell Wilson will be essential, but it appears that the center is managing to impress his superstar signal-caller through the twin pillars of hard work and availability.

"'Cush' came down to California, San Diego with all the receivers and was snapping every day," Wilson detailed. "The guy has probably snapped 800 snaps maybe more within that little period of time. That built trust. It's effortless with me and him. I think what's fundamental about trust is: No. 1, are you putting the work in; No. 2, are you at the right place at the right time? I think No. 3 is will you do whatever it takes to win? You do whatever it takes to win. I think that's really, really critical."

Protecting their star asset is a high priority for Denver heading into training camp, but that's standard practice. Wilson is also ensuring they all get on the same page during the workouts he's organized and hosted — as well as team-organized activities. That has helped Wilson's blocking group know exactly what the plan is pre-snap, and it's had the additional benefit of building trust between all parties involved.

"I think trust, when it comes to playing at the quarterback position and trusting your teammates and vice versa, I think the first thing is that you spend time on your work," Wilson explained. "These guys, I found trust in them in the first time met them when they came down to San Diego, and how much time we spend together and how much—like I'm drilling them and they're learning, doing everything, and they wanted more. They wanted more. So that trust was built right there."

Trust has been a recurring buzzword that Wilson and the new coaching staff have floated ever since GM George Paton pulled the trigger on the Wilson trade back in March. Degrees of difficulty will only rise for Cushenberry and Co. when Wilson does what he does best and goes off-script — so their heads will have to be on a swivel at all times. Head coach Nathaniel Hackett has gone on record stating his confidence in Cushenberry's wide-ranging skill set, so perhaps his hold on his coveted starting job is much more secure than some people think, especially when you add in the all-important factor of trust.

"He's great. He's a guy that you can do downhill stuff with like they have done in the past—the inside zone—but he can run off the ball? That's something that you want to take advantage of," Hackett said of Cushenberry. "He can reach his shade, which he has shown consistently up to this point, and I can't wait to get pads on so we can see even more."

Is the third year the charm for Broncos center Lloyd Cushenberry?

By Andrew Mason

104.3 The Fan

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Between recoveries from injuries and changing to an outside-zone based scheme, the Broncos' offensive line is in a state of flux during organized team activities.

It's at the center where stability can be found so far. At that spot, Lloyd Cushenberry's ups and downs over his first two seasons are well-documented. But his third year appears to be starting off with stability. And in Nathaniel Hackett's new scheme, he could have his best chance to maximize his skills.

"I love it so far," Cushenberry said. "We get to show our athleticism. We get out and run on angles, get the defense stretched a little bit. So, I'm loving it, and hopefully we can put it all together once the season comes."

It's the first significant experience Cushenberry has as a pro with outside zone after two years in Pat Shurmur's scheme.

"He's a guy that you can do downhill stuff with like they have done in the past — the inside zone — but he can run off the ball," Hackett said. "That's something that you want to take advantage of."

"He can reach his shade — which he has shown consistently up to this point."

Getting to the defensive lineman requires a different mindset in outside zone, something Cushenberry is using OTAs to learn.

"A lot of times, you get off the ball fast as an O-lineman, you kind of want to slow down and stay in front of the defender," he said. "But [I'm] just realizing it's OK to for the center to reach the shade fast and pin 'em, instead of just trying to keep him in front of you."

"You get on that angle, pin 'em and you've created the open space outside. So, just getting used to that, breaking bad habits. But it's been good so far."

One thing that helps: Cushenberry is a master of the offensive line's Kahoot! quiz games. The Broncos use Kahoot! in much the same way that elementary- and middle-school-aged children use it: for quizzes on concepts learned in the classroom.

"He wins every one of them when the whole group is in there," Hackett said. "That's a challenge to all of the offensive guys, because we're trying to figure out how to find someone to beat him."

Veterans Dalton Risner and Graham Glasgow have provided the sternest opposition so far, Cushenberry said.

“Dalton and I go back and forth,” Cushenberry said. “Of course, Graham. He knows a little about a lot. He knows everything. You ask him any questions, and he knows about it. Dalton and Graham are up there with me.”

Glasgow could provide competition at center once he completes his recovery from a fractured ankle. But that’s for another day two months for now — a time when Cushenberry’s true test arrives in the form of padded camp practices.

“I can’t wait to get pads on so I can see even more,” Hackett said of Cushenberry.

And that’s when Hackett and the Broncos will know for certain if the LSU product is their man in the middle for the outside zone.

“In my opinion, I think I fit in any scheme. It doesn’t really matter to me,” Cushenberry said. “But I’m liking this one so far. The past few years didn’t really work out for us, but hopefully this year is the turnaround.

“So, I’m loving the system that we have now.”

The early returns are promising.