

Joe Lombardi brings impressive coaching bloodlines, experience to Broncos offense

By Mike Klis

KUSA

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Joe Lombardi was born nine months after his grandfather died to a nation standing vigil in 1970.

Still, it must be pretty cool to be a grandson of the great Vince Lombardi.

“Unfortunately, he died before I was born so I never knew him,” Lombardi said Tuesday in his first press conference as the Broncos’ new offensive coordinator. “My peer group is probably a little young to really appreciate what he accomplished so it was never like a huge deal to me – I never felt like I was living with chasing a legend or anything. My older brothers had to deal with it a little bit more than I did.

“But it was always something where you’re proud of what he accomplished. If anything you knew that if you got in trouble people were going to notice you more than if other people got in trouble. It probably kept us in line a little bit as young kids. But you grow up in that environment, football gets in your blood, which is probably a big reason why I chose this profession.”

Vince Lombardi is widely recognized as the greatest coach in football history. In 1960, he took over a Green Bay Packers team that was the NFL’s worst at 1-10-1 the previous year and immediately led them to a 7-5 record. The Packers reached the NFL Championship Game in Lombardi’s second season when they lost a hard-fought contest to Chuck Bednarik’s Eagles.

Lombardi then won five NFL championships, including the first two Super Bowls, over his next seven seasons before retiring with an 89-29-4 record. After a year sabbatical, Lombardi became Washington’s head coach and again turned the team from 5-9 the previous year to 7-5-2 in his first season of 1969. He was diagnosed with cancer while coaching in his first and only season in Washington and died less than a year later on Sept. 3, 1970 at the age of 57. His son, Vincent T. Lombardi Jr., and his wife welcomed their fourth child, Joseph Philip, on June 6, 1971.

Joe Lombardi grew up in Seattle – his dad worked for the Seahawks for a time – and played his college ball as a tight end at the Air Force Academy. He served four years of active duty and still keeps his hair cropped military short. He then embarked on a coaching career that took him to four colleges, the XFL and four NFL teams before he hooked up for a third stint with Broncos head coach Sean Payton as a top offensive assistant.

Joe Lombardi ventured out on his own to be the offensive coordinator for the Detroit Lions from 2014-15 and the previous two years for the Los Angeles Chargers. A quarterbacks coach for Payton for 10 seasons over two stints in New Orleans, Lombardi is the Broncos’ offensive coordinator now, tasked with helping his head coach and quarterbacks coach Davis Webb deliver a comeback season for quarterback Russell Wilson.

“As you look at what happened last year, a lot of it was injuries,” Lombardi said of Wilson, who posted a career-worst 4-11 record and 27th-best passer ranking. “So, it’s about staying healthy. I don’t know what’s

going to happen, but for June 14, we're really happy with where he's at. There's some muscle memory that we have to overcome. He's used to doing things a certain way and we're presenting a new way of doing things.

"He shows up every day ready to work. He's the same guy every day—same attitude, and he's really fun to work with. I think the answer for him is what the answer is for everyone. Work hard every day, get your fundamentals down and understand what you're trying to accomplish. So far, it's been really good."

Having been in the Kansas City Chief-dominated AFC West the previous two years with Justin Herbert's Chargers, Lombardi knows as offensive coordinator that winning inside this division requires scoring to keep up. The Broncos' offense finished 32nd in scoring last season, so they have a long way to go if they want to keep pace on the scoreboard.

"That's a challenge," Lombardi said. "The Chiefs—you don't expect them to have any step back. They are a team that has been doing really well for years and scoring a lot of points. The last couple years, we had some shootouts with them and it's never over. We'll have to be on top of our game."

Broncos hire Joe Lombardi as OC, reuniting Sean Payton with former Chargers play-caller, longtime Saints coach

By Tyler Sullivan

CBS Sports

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Joe Lombardi is sticking around in the AFC West. The veteran coach has been hired as the newest offensive coordinator for the Denver Broncos, the team announced on Saturday. Lombardi, 51, had spent the last two seasons in Los Angeles as the offensive coordinator of the Chargers before being dismissed from his duties on Jan. 17.

The move to Denver reunites Lombardi with Sean Payton, who was recently acquired by the Broncos in a trade with the Saints and installed as the team's head coach. Lombardi coached under Payton from 2007 to 2013 in New Orleans as an offensive assistant and quarterbacks coach, and then again from 2016 to 2020 as the quarterbacks coach before taking the Chargers' OC job.

In a quirky turn of events, this is the second time that Lombardi has come back onto a Sean Payton-led staff after a two-season stint as an offensive coordinator. He left New Orleans back in 2014 to lead the Lions offense only to ultimately return just two years later. Now, after a two-season stint in L.A., he's back with Payton once more.

While Lombardi did find himself fired by the Chargers just over a month ago, his overall numbers in L.A. were not bad. The Chargers ranked fifth and 13th in the NFL in scoring over the past two seasons and fifth and eighth in third-down offense. He also helped Justin Herbert throw for over 5,000 yards in 2021 and then over 4,700 yards last year.

What proved to be his demise in Los Angeles, however, was in part due to the club's historic meltdown against the Jaguars on Super Wild Card Weekend as the team blew a 27-0 lead. Following the loss, Lombardi was criticized for ignoring the ground attack to burn clock and instead opted to continue throwing the ball, allowing Jacksonville more time to mount its comeback.

In Denver, Lombardi, alongside Payton, will look to improve a Broncos offense that struggled with Russell Wilson under center in 2022. Last year, the offense ranked 29th in DVOA and last in third-down conversions (29.13%).

Joe Lombardi reunites with Sean Payton as new Broncos offensive coordinator

By Grant Gordon
NFL.com
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Joe Lombardi's staying put in the AFC West and set for a third run with head coach Sean Payton.

Lombardi, the former Los Angeles Chargers offensive coordinator, is being hired as the Denver Broncos' new OC, the team announced Saturday.

Dismissed from the Chargers on Jan. 17, Lombardi will reunite with Payton once more.

The 51-year-old Lombardi was a New Orleans Saints offensive assistant and then quarterbacks coach from 2007-2013 under Payton. Following two years as the Detroit Lions' offensive coordinator, Lombardi was back in the bayou as the Saints QB coach from 2016-2020.

History is repeating itself as Lombardi is following another two-year OC stint by rejoining Payton, who was hired to helm the Broncos on Jan. 31.

Despite his firing, Lombardi's final statistics in L.A. weren't bad. The Chargers were a top-10 offense in yards in each of the last two seasons and No. 5 in points in 2021 before falling eight spots in 2022.

While Lombardi has struggled in his two OC runs, he's certainly had success as part of Payton's staff. He worked well with future Hall of Fame quarterback Drew Brees and was part of the Saints' Super Bowl championship run in the 2009 season.

He'll now team up with Payton in the hopes of turning around quarterback Russell Wilson's career after a monumental stumble during the QB's first year with the Broncos in 2022.

Lombardi got run out of Los Angeles, but his old boss Payton and the Broncos are welcoming him with open arms.