

Garett Bolles, Denver Broncos offensive line pass first test against Seattle

By Kyle Fredrickson

Denver Post

Sept. 12, 2018

The Broncos aimed to use training camp and preseason games to prepare for every possible scenario. Some facts of NFL play simply can't be simulated. Case in point: The first complete game with Denver's retooled offensive line.

The combination of left tackle Garett Bolles, left guard Ron Leary, center Matt Paradis, right guard Connor McGovern and right tackle Jared Veldheer attempted to build chemistry as Denver's starting unit throughout its offseason program and exhibition play. Teammates and coaches raved about improvement but until the regular season started, no one was sure how the unit would play.

Sunday's 27-24 season opening victory over Seattle provided a baseline.

"It's the first time you're actually playing a full game out there," Veldheer said. "You get a lot more ebb-and-flow. There are some lulls you have to fight through."

All five starters played all 74 snaps in the victory and committed zero penalties. That was an encouraging sign for Denver's contrasting offensive tackles, each with something to prove. Bolles is a 2017 first-round draft pick whom the Broncos need to improve in Year 2, and Veldheer, a ninth-year pro making a return from ankle surgery, is in first season with the team.

Coach Vance Joseph said Veldheer "played really well" Sunday and Bolles "did some good things. He had a couple mental things he's got to clean up." The overall impression, though, was a good one.

"As far the tackles, we played really well," Joseph said. "We had one sack, and the one sack was on quick-game — the ball should've probably (been thrown) in the flat. ... If we're going to win games, keep (quarterback) Case (Keenum) clean and help Case play better and better each week; we've got to run the football and protect Case. So far, so good with those guys playing so well for us."

Veldheer added: "Obviously, there's a lot of stuff that we want to keep cleaning up. But doing enough things to get some good yardage out there is good."

Bolles balanced learning with success last season. He landed on the Pro Football Writers Association's All-Rookie team but also led the Broncos with 15 penalties (10 holding, four false starts and one unnecessary roughness). Bolles told reporters he's done addressing his play in 2017. Instead, he'll describe the time he now spends after practice with Veldheer to refine small details that led to costly mistakes as a rookie.

"Understanding that if you want to be the best, you've got to practice the best and do things the best way. I feel like we do a great job with that," Bolles said. "It starts with (offensive line/guards coach Sean) Kugler and (offensive line/tackles coach Chris) Strausser and their preparation. It's a special thing. I'm excited to see where this goes, because we're right on track and we're heading in a good direction."

The Broncos are also taking a new approach in best coaching to Bolles' elite size (6-foot-5, 297 pounds) and unusual skill set. The results showed improvement in Week 1. Bolles did not allow a quarterback pressure in pass protection, per the Denver Post's game charting, while Veldheer allowed one. Seattle's one sack was the result of inside pressure.

"(Bolles) is a long, athletic tackle. We're coaching him to set quicker and not give as much ground — to use his quickness on guys," Joseph said. "If you're facing a great rusher and you give him space, he can bully you or he can run around you. We're getting Garrett on guys quicker so he can use his feet and his great quickness to stand in front of guys quicker. It's preventing him from being so soft in the pocket like he was last year."

Next up is an Oakland team on short rest from a 33-13 defeat Monday night to the Rams. In Jon Gruden's coaching return, the Raiders sacked quarterback Jared Goff once and gave up 108 yards on the ground to running back Todd Gurley. Denver's blend of veteran offensive line leadership between Veldheer, Paradis and Leary paired with budding talents in McGovern and Bolles bodes well for the future.

Most importantly, there is no confusion about roles.

Broncos Insider: Vance Joseph explains how Denver sacked Russell Wilson six times

By Kyle Fredrickson

Denver Post

Sept. 12, 2018

Seahawks quarterback Russell Wilson ran away — a lot — Sunday at Broncos Stadium at Mile High.

The final damage in a 27-24 Broncos' victory: six sacks.

"They made a couple plays obviously," Wilson said. "I take the blame for some of those for sure. It is just playing ball, trying to go for it, trying to find something and make something happen."

Denver's sack party included a wide range of contributors: safety Darian Stewart (half), linebacker Bradley Chubb (half), linebacker Von Miller (three), linebacker Shaquil Barrett (one) and cornerback Chris Harris (one). Here's how Broncos coach Vance Joseph described the team's approach to taking down one of the NFL's most elusive passers.

"We had a great rush plan between (defensive line coach Bill) Kollar and (assistant defensive line coach) Chris Beake," Joseph said. "We knew it was going to take all four guys rushing together to contain Russell Wilson. It was really more of the plan than it was those guys not chipping Von because they chipped Von a lot. He was chipped probably 75 percent of his rushes. Then, when he wasn't chipped, he beat the kid clean and made some sacks. We had a great plan for running games to the chip, which freed Von up. It was really Kollar, (defensive coordinator) Joe (Woods) and those guys having a great plan to free him up off the chips."

Broncos Week 2 opponent: Raiders Scouting Report

By Ryan O'Halloran
Denver Post
Sept. 12, 2018

Coach: Jon Gruden (fifth year with Raiders — 38-27 regular season, 2-2 postseason; 12th year overall — 95-82 regular season, 5-4 postseason).

Record: 0-1.

Last week: Lost 33-13 to the Los Angeles Rams.

Next week: at Miami.

OFFENSE

Play caller: Coach Jon Gruden.

Analysis: Gruden, 55, is back in coaching after spending the last decade in the ESPN booth. He returned to the Raiders in January for a reported 10-year, \$100 million contract. Gruden called the plays during his first stint in Oakland (1998-2001) and his time in Tampa Bay (2002-08). He is a West Coast Offense disciple, working under Mike Holmgren in Green Bay. ... Greg Olson is the offensive coordinator. He coached for Gruden in Tampa Bay. ... In Monday's loss to the Rams, Oakland gained 395 yards, but QB Derek Carr had three interceptions that led to 13 Rams points. ... Running backs and tight ends accounted for 24 of Carr's 29 completions. ... Gruden used six different personnel groupings, led by 3WR-1RB-1TE (46 out of 74 snaps), but also 19 snaps with at least two tight ends on the field. ... The only receivers to play were Amari Cooper (69 snaps), Jordy Nelson (72) and Seth Roberts (47). ... Carr posted only the second three-INT game of his career (the other was in 2015 against Kansas City). Carr took a low hit from Rams DT Aaron Donald (who was penalized) in the first half and looked uncertain in the pocket, throwing it away one time although pressure wasn't present and then a fundamentally poor interception that appeared to be a throwaway attempt. Carr is 3-4 all-time against the Broncos (1-2 at Mile High) with nine TDs and four INTs. ... The Raiders will use three RBs: Veterans Marshawn Lynch and Doug Martin and 24-year old Jalen Richard. ... Lynch is an all-time bruiser, able and willing to carry the pile for more yards. Lynch's last 1,000-yard season was 2014 in Seattle. ... Martin had two 1,400-yard years with Tampa Bay (2012 and '15), but was allowed to leave in free agency. ... Because Lynch was ill and the Raiders fell behind, Richard led the backs in playing time (37 snaps) and caught a career-high nine passes. ... FB Keith Smith played seven snaps on Monday. ... Carr's best weapon was TE Jared Cook, who tied a career-best nine catches and his 180 yards were his most in a game. He will line up at the traditional TE spot, but also in the slot and by himself on one side opposite three WRs. He was so effective against the Rams that CB Aqib Talib was occasionally assigned to him in the second half. ... Derek Carrier and Lee Smith are the other tight ends. ... Look for the Raiders to prioritize Cooper and Nelson against the Broncos. Cooper had one catch for nine yards and Nelson three catches for 23 yards. ... The fourth overall pick in 2015, Cooper started with two 1,000-yard seasons but slipped to 680 last year. ... Nelson, who spent his first nine years in Green Bay and had four 1,200-yard seasons, signed with Oakland after the Packers cut him. ... The Raiders have spent money and draft picks on their offensive line. RG Gabe Jackson and LG Kelechi Osemele each have a \$10.5 million salary cap number (tied for second on the team). RT Donald Penn is at \$5.275 million. C Rodney Hudson and rookie first-round LT

Kolton Miller close out the starting five. ... Miller held his own in his NFL debut. Jackson was beat by Donald's swim move for a sack. ... The Rams rushed four on 39 of Carr's 46 drop-backs.

DEFENSE

Play caller: Coordinator Paul Guenther.

Analysis: Guenther, 46, joined the Raiders after 13 years with Cincinnati. He was the Bengals' coordinator from 2014-17 and Broncos coach Vance Joseph led the defensive backs for the first two years. ... The Raiders run a 4-3 scheme. ... Oakland allowed 5.4 yards per carry to the Rams, including 108 yards on 20 carries by RB Todd Gurley. ... The Raiders rushed five or more players at Rams QB Jared Goff only six times in 37 drop-offs and had one sack (DE Bruce Irvin) and one other hit (DE Arden Key). ... The starting DL on Monday: Justin Ellis and second-round pick PJ Hall inside and Irvin and Frostee Rucker outside. The rest of the rotation is Key (third-round pick) and Fadol Brown at end and fifth-round rookie Maurice Hurst inside. ... The Raiders try to mix up their third-down pressure looks, aligning Irvin inside of the defensive end. ... Irvin is their best pass rusher now that Khalil Mack is in Chicago. ... At linebacker, OLB Tahir Whitehead played all 63 snaps on Monday and made a team-high seven tackles. Derrick Johnson, the former Chief, played 39 snaps and Marquel Lee 24 snaps. ... The Raiders overhauled their secondary in the offseason after finishing 28th in passing yards (241.1) and last in interceptions (five) in 2017. ... New at CB are Rashaan Melvin, Leon Hall and Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie. New at safety is Marcus Gilchrist. ... FS Reggie Nelson played all 63 snaps against the Rams and Gilchrist played 59. ... Hall and former first-round CB Gareon Conley led the corners in playing time, followed by Melvin. ... Signed late in camp, Rodgers-Cromartie played 20 snaps and his work included a 51-yard pass interference call. ... Former first-round S Karl Joseph couldn't get on the field (seven plays).

SPECIAL TEAMS

Coordinator: Rich Bisaccia.

Analysis: Bisaccia, 58, was Gruden's special teams coordinator in Tampa Bay from 2002-08 and was kept on for two more years. He has also led the special teams in San Diego (2011-12) and Dallas (2013-17). ... The Raiders changed kickers in early August, releasing Giorgio Tavecchio (16 of 21 on FG last year) and signed veteran Mike Nugent, a 14-year veteran who wade field goals of 24 and 48 yards in Week 1. ... Only one of Nugent's four kickoffs were touchbacks. ... Fifth-round rookie P Johnny Townsend averaged 41.5 yards net on four kicks in his NFL debut. ... LS Andrew DePaola injured knee against the Rams. TE Lee Smith replaced him as the snapper. ... Former Giants and Cowboys special teams ace Dwayne Harris returned punts and kicks in Week 1.

Emmanuel Sanders' 10-catch, 135-yard opener result of offseason work

By Mike Klis

9 News

Sept. 12, 2018

There were 33 food tents set up in the grassy area outside the stadium's Ring of Fame Plaza, but the longest line of patrons formed outside the one where Emmanuel Sanders was positioned.

With all due respect to the outstanding fare served at the Taste of Broncos on Monday night, this particular line wasn't there for the delectable.

People wanted a selfie taken with the Broncos' hottest receiver and Sanders obliged them all with a smile.

"You see the fans out here, we have sold out games, the city treats us so well, we've got to treat them the same way they treat us," Sanders said during an interview break with 9News. "I wear my heart on my sleeve and it means a lot to me to put it on, be healthy and be there and make those plays, see that thing (stadium) erupt. I'm hungry for the fans, I'm hungry for my family, I'm hungry for myself. I want to win."

Those 10 catches for 135 yards with a touchdown scamper worthy of a flip weren't a season-opening fluke for Sanders. He had been putting forth a 10-135 effort since organized team activities (OTAs) began in late-May and continued with his 10-135-caliber training camp.

Sanders has always been a practice guy -- he catches hundreds of extra balls on the side through the week. But that hunger he referred to has been perceptible. Turns out, 10-135 didn't come from criticism about his age (although maybe a little) or that the guaranteed portion of his contract expires after this season (he is under contract for a non-guaranteed \$10.25 million salary in 2019) or that the Broncos drafted two possible heir apparent receivers in Courtland Sutton and DaeSean Hamilton.

No, Sanders said, the motivation behind 10-135 was last year's disappointing 5-11 record and 47-catch/555-yard production. A year he didn't want to repeat, especially after he averaged 11 wins, 85 catches and 1,190 yards in his first three seasons with the Broncos.

"Last year, going through a losing season and being hurt, I was motivated all off season," Sanders said. "Making sure I'm eating right, taking care of my body so we can try and turn this thing around. I know what it's like to be a Bronco. I've been a Bronco for five years and having a losing season is not how you be a Bronco."

Sanders' huge opener helped the Broncos defeat the Seattle Seahawks, 27-24, on Sunday afternoon at Broncos Stadium at Mile High. A day later and standing just outside the stadium, Sanders reflected on there is a different feel to the team in 2018.

The Broncos won their opener last year, too, and thought they were headed for a deep playoff run after their 3-1 start, only to be eliminated eight terrible weeks later. This year's 1-0 Broncos are much more optimistic their offense will carry its share yet guarded against another letdown.

"We can't get complacent," Sanders said. "I mean (Monday) I came in to work and those young guys were joking around -- they don't understand you can get on a high but in two games you can go from 1-0 to 1-2. We can't allow that to happen. We have to keep on trying to get better, keep on producing as an offense, keep on limiting the explosive plays on the defensive side of the ball and keep getting better.

"The veteran guys, we're responsible for keeping these guys in line, and we're doing it. At the end of the day, we want a winning season. We want to win a Super Bowl, but we want a winning season, we want to win a lot of games around here, we want to dominate."

How the Broncos' offseason moves have, so far, sparked a change in LT Garrett Bolles

By Nicki Jhabvala
The Athletic
Sept. 12, 2018

Garrett Bolles didn't want to be rude, but he had to step in. Monday afternoon, following the Broncos' season-opening win over the Seahawks, the second-year tackle sat at his locker and fielded question after question about his play, his improvement, his line's play and what changed.

Because something — some things — clearly did.

In recent years, the Broncos' offensive line has been a patchwork unit, rotating faces and names because of injury and performance, and suffering unwanted results. The edges especially have caused trouble, with spotty protection and a slew of penalties. And Bolles, well, Bolles couldn't escape the interrogation.

"I'm done talking about last year," he told the crowd of reporters hovering over his locker.

Bolles, the only player in the Broncos' class of 2017 to start every game last year, was thrown into the fire at left tackle. He was drafted in the first round to fill a need, following the exit of Russell Okung, and for the most part he did OK. Decent. Not great.

The blemishes on his record came with penalties — he led the league with 10 flags for offensive holding — and the mental mistakes often typical of first-year players. The pro game is different. The playbook is bigger. And the defenders staring him down across the line are bigger, better, faster, stronger.

But the blemishes on the record of the Broncos' line as a whole last year prompted significant changes to the staff and starting five that, on a certain level, were all geared to help Bolles even more.

Chris Strausser, previously the team's assistant offensive line coach, was appointed the primary offensive line coach with a specialization on the tackles. Sean Kugler, the barrel-chested former head coach at the University of Texas-El Paso, was hired to work with the interior linemen, the guards and centers.

Coach Vance Joseph has said the switch was geared toward development. Teams, including the Broncos, typically have two defensive backs coaches that specialize in cornerbacks and safeties, respectively. Why not do the same for the offensive line, where there's a lot of information to digest and a steep learning curve, especially for offensive linemen transitioning from the spread in college.

"Having two coaches, one for guards and centers and one for tackles, I think it's made us an all-around cohesive unit," Bolles said. "It's not just the first guys getting better. It's all of us getting better. It's all of us working the same things."

But the coaching for Bolles specifically has changed, too, Joseph said.

Bolles was drafted after only one year of experience in FBS football, and although he had the frame — 6-foot-5, 297 pounds — and the quickness and the mindset for the position, his technique was raw. In the offseason, he packed on about 10 pounds of muscle and when OTAs began, the Broncos' coaches went to work.

"We're coaching him to set quicker and not give as much ground — to use his quickness on guys," Joseph said. "If you're facing a great rusher and you give him space, he can bully you or he can run around you. We're getting Garrett on guys quicker so he can use his feet and his great quickness to stand in front of guys quicker. It's preventing him from being so soft in the pocket like he was last year."

The Broncos further bolstered the line by acquiring 6-8 right tackle Jared Veldheer, promoting Connor McGovern to right guard and moving Ron Leary, once an anchor on the Cowboys' offensive line, back to his usual left guard spot.

"Playing O-line is like playing the secondary," Joseph said. "Things move and we have audibles that we have to communicate down on the line, so being next to Leary, who is a smart player and an experienced player, helps him play cleaner."

It's a new look for the Broncos' line. The hope is that it will lead to a new outcome.

If preseason and Week 1 are indications of how the remaining 15 games will go, Bolles and the line are on a promising track. The starting five played all 74 snaps Sunday against Seattle and allowed one sack and only five total pressures, the sixth-fewest in the league. The offense picked up 470 net yards, including 146 rushing and — even better — Bolles and Veldheer didn't accrue a single penalty.

Although he loathed to discuss the past, Bolles couldn't help but to acknowledge the changes. The game has slowed, he admitted, and results have followed.

"I did what I was supposed to last year. I thought I played really well," he said. "But I didn't play like everyone knew that I could, from upstairs, to my teammates to my coaches. They expected more out of me and I expected more out of myself. I'll be the first one to tell people that.

"When they brought in coach Strauss to be my tackle coach and coach Kugs — they feed off one another — it really made a big impact on my life as a player, from film work to practice to how to take notes to how to study film. It's been a huge thing for me. But I also take accountability for myself. If I want to get better, I need to put in the time and the effort and really study the game. And that's what I've been doing. I feel like it paid off (Sunday)."

Broncos re-sign special teams ace Shamarko Thomas

By STAFF

Associated Press

Sept. 12, 2018

The Denver Broncos filled their roster vacancy Tuesday by re-signing safety Shamarko Thomas, who was with them in training camp.

After spending his first four seasons in Pittsburgh, Thomas led the Buffalo Bills with nine special teams tackles in 12 games last season.

Following his release from the Colts during the preseason, Thomas signed with the Broncos, who had just placed safety Jamal Carter on IR with a torn hamstring. But Thomas didn't make the initial 53-man roster.

Thomas, who has 38 career special teams stops, replaced wide receiver/kick returner Isaiah McKenzie, who was released Monday.

The Broncos also made some practice squad moves, signing defensive lineman Niles Scott and releasing nose tackle Kyle Peko and defensive end DeShawn Williams.

Scott is a rookie from Frostburg (Maryland) State who competed in training camp with the 49ers.

The Broncos (1-0) host the Raiders (0-1) on Sunday at Mile High Stadium.

Broncos' offensive line revisions good thus far

By Jim O'Connell

Colorado Springs Gazette

Sept. 12, 2018

Revamping the offensive line has become an annual rite of spring in Denver. This time, it appears to be paying off.

Rediscovering a balance that was elusive almost all last season, the Broncos rushed for 146 yards — all but 4 of those from rookies Phillip Lindsay and Royce Freeman — and passed for 329 yards in their 27-24 win over Seattle. The Broncos' 470 yards of offense were their most since Peyton Manning retired after the 2015 season.

It all started up front, where all five O-linemen played all 74 snaps and drew zero penalty flags.

"Offensive line was incredible," said quarterback Case Keenum, who was sacked once. "It was awesome to watch those guys. There were some plays where I had so much time in the pocket. I'm going to be so excited to watch the film and see those guys play."

The Broncos allowed a whopping 52 sacks last season, an average of more than three a game, prompting several changes in the offseason.

Coach Vance Joseph replaced O-line coach Jeff Davidson with two coaches, one (Chris Strausser) to focus on the tackles and another (Sean Kugler) to tutor the centers and guards.

General manager John Elway jettisoned oft-injured Menelik Watson despite a nearly \$7 million salary cap hit and traded for ninth-year right tackle Jared Veldheer.

They moved guard Ron Leary back to his natural left side, making room for Connor McGovern, their strongest lineman, on the right side and giving a big assist to second-year left tackle Garrett Bolles.

And their anchor — center Matt Paradis — participated in the entire offseason program for the first time since college after undergoing double hip surgery two years ago.

The tackles didn't commit a single penalty, something that was a common occurrence last season.

"Jared played really well and Bolles did some good things. He blocked his guy. He's got a couple of mental things he's got to clean up, but as far as tackles, we played really well," Joseph said. "We had one sack and the one sack was on the quick game and the ball should have probably been in the flat.

"So, offensive line-wise, I've been really, really pleased from preseason until now how they've played in the run game and the pass game," Joseph said.

One thing the Broncos are doing to help Bolles, an athletic but raw tackle who only played one season of major college football at Utah, is not setting up so deep. That allows him to better use his athleticism to counter edge rushers, who don't have as much of a running start, either.

“He’s a long, athletic tackle, so we’re coaching him to set quicker and not give as much ground, to use his quickness on guys,” Joseph said. “If you’re facing a great rusher and you give him space, he can bull (rush you), he can get around you. So, we’re getting Garrett on guys quicker, so he can use his feet and his great quickness to stay in front of guys and that’s preventing him from being so soft in the pocket like he was last year.

Bolles said playing next to Leary is a godsend and getting instruction from the two-coach system has helped him take a big jump from his flag-filled rookie season.

“I have a great group of dudes. The O-line room is special. This team is special and we’re going to go in the right direction as long as we put in the work and the effort.”

Phillip Lindsay nominated for NFL Rookie of the Week after debut vs. Seattle

By Ben Swanson
DenverBroncos.com
Sept. 12, 2018

Phillip Lindsay's dreamlike start to his career could earn him league-wide accolades after just one week.

After recording 102 yards from scrimmage (71 rushing, 31 receiving) and a receiving touchdown in his NFL debut, Lindsay received a nomination for NFL Rookie of the Week. Fans can vote for Lindsay's bid for Week 1 honors on NFL.com.

Lindsay, who was signed by the Broncos after going undrafted, is the only nominee who wasn't a first-round pick. Giants RB Saquon Barkley (picked No. 2 overall), Jets QB Sam Darnold (No. 3 overall), Browns CB Denzel Ward (No. 4 overall) and Vikings CB Mike Hughes (No. 30 overall) round out the list of nominees.

The Denver native and former Colorado Buffaloes star has become a reliable part of the running back rotation and a key special teams member since joining the team as a college free agent. Lindsay and fellow rookie Royce Freeman posted near-equal performances in the running game. Each running back averaged 4.7 yards per carry on 15 rushes for 71 yards. Lindsay also had a tackle on special teams.

Following Lindsay's performance against the Seahawks, Head Coach Vance Joseph said that even he was surprised by Lindsay's ascent.

"I think we're all surprised because you just never know about young guys as far as coming into this league and playing — playing confident, playing with a toughness, playing with an IQ to play in this league," Joseph said Monday. "He's done all three: He's tough, he's smart, he's a playmaker and it doesn't seem too big for him. I've been really impressed with him from Day 1. From Day 1, rookie camp, he's come in with swagger and confidence, and it hasn't changed."

Mason's Week 2 power rankings

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
Sept. 12, 2018

1. L.A. Rams (1-0)
2. Philadelphia (1-0)
3. Minnesota (1-0)
4. New England (1-0)
5. Jacksonville (1-0)
6. Carolina (1-0)
7. Pittsburgh (0-0-1)
8. Baltimore (1-0)
9. Kansas City (1-0)
10. L.A. Chargers (0-1)
11. New Orleans (0-1)
12. Green Bay (1-0)
13. Atlanta (0-1)
14. Denver (1-0)

One of the most promising aspects of the Broncos' Week 1 win was their ability to control the football. Their offense finished second in avoiding three-and-outs (14.3 percent of their drives ended without a first down). Their defense was fourth in forcing them (46.7 percent).

15. Washington (1-0)
16. Tampa Bay (1-0)
17. Seattle (0-1)
18. Cincinnati (1-0)
19. Houston (0-1)
20. Dallas (0-1)
21. N.Y. Jets (1-0)
22. Chicago (0-1)
23. Miami (1-0)
24. Tennessee (0-1)
25. San Francisco (0-1)
26. Arizona (0-1)
27. Oakland (0-1)
28. N.Y. Giants (0-1)
29. Cleveland (0-0-1)
30. Indianapolis (0-1)
31. Detroit (0-1)
32. Buffalo (0-1)

Broncos sign S Shamarko Thomas to active roster, Niles Scott to practice squad

By Aric DiLalla
DenverBroncos.com
Sept. 12, 2018

The Broncos signed veteran safety Shamarko Thomas on Tuesday to fill out their 53-man roster, the team announced.

Denver also released NT Kyle Peko and DE DeShawn Williams from their practice squad and signed DL Niles Scott to the practice squad.

Thomas spent time in Denver during the preseason after the Broncos placed Jamal Carter on injured reserve.

Thomas was later released when the Broncos trimmed their roster to 53 players.

The sixth-year player has appeared in 60 career regular-season games and four postseason contests.

In addition to providing depth at the safety position, Thomas could be a candidate to help the Broncos on special teams. Thomas led the Bills in special teams tackles during his nine games in 2017.

Scott is a 6-foot-3, 280-pound rookie from Frostburg State. The college free agent spent time in San Francisco's offseason program.

Under the Headset: Special Teams Coordinator Tom McMahon

By Ben Swanson
DenverBroncos.com
Sept. 12, 2018

As the Broncos' new special teams coordinator, Tom McMahon has been tasked with overhauling the unit to be more fundamentally sound and also more explosive. With a punt return for a touchdown in the preseason opener and top-10 rankings in yardage allowed per punt and kick return, it appears he's already off to a good start. Before the season began, we sat down with McMahon to learn about what kind of teacher he tries to be and how he thinks the Broncos can be successful on special teams in 2018.

BS: As a new coach, what have you come to really enjoy about the organization?

TM: "The biggest thing I enjoy is the expectation to win, to be honest with you. It's nice to come in and know you're expected to win. You have everything you need to win, and that's the best thing about it. The city of Denver expects you to win, so not only here but out in the community. I'd rather have that than hope. Hope's tough to go with. I'd rather have the expectations."

BS: When you moved and moved your office, what's one thing you needed to have in your new office?

TM: "The biggest thing I need to have, is I need to have that disc that has all my stuff on it — video so I can teach. We're teachers — that's the number one thing — so if you don't have the stuff that you can teach your system off of, it makes it really, really hard."

BS: When it comes to the return game, what do you like about the group of guys you have here?

TM: "The thing I like is, well, number one, they know how to run a track; number two, they've got good burst, they've got some ability to make the first [tackler] miss; and then the biggest thing you look for in a returner that I think most of these guys have is they have the ability to create their own return. Great returners are going to have to, once or twice a game, create something out of nothing. It's just part of it. There's good football players covering, so I think all these guys have the ability to create, and that will give us plus yards."

BS: Though it may seem like a simple thing, why is catching and securing a punt so difficult, especially in the game, as compared to practice?

TM: "I think the biggest thing is it's like life. You've got to focus to focus on the task, rather than the situation. There's a lot of situations in football — the wind or this, that and the other — so the number one thing is you've got to focus on the task. And the task of catching a football is simple: It's catching with your eyes. So you'll hear us out on the field a lot/ When we catch a ball, you hear the players say words or 'blank.' What they're doing when they go to tuck it, catching all the way down through it with their eyes, if they see 'Wilson' on it, they say words. If they just see the leather on it, they say, 'blank.' So, it's just that. And the other thing is we call it, 'squeezing grapes,' getting your elbows in. I tell them there's a grape between each armpit. Get those elbows in, and if you get your elbows wide, the ball's

going to drop through. Those are the two biggest fundamentals. At the end of the day, focus on the task. Some of these guys get caught up in the big world. You don't need to do that."

BS: What kind of talent is Marquette King?

TM: "He's a great talent. He's very, very talented. I love the way he works. He didn't pooch the ball great last week — two touchbacks — but he comes out and works to fix it. He wants to fix it — very, very competitive. He's got a very fast leg. Like, super fast. It's one of those [situations] where the potential's there and he's just got to keep working."

BS: Personality-wise, what's it like to work with him?

TM: "Awesome. Very professional. The biggest thing is, in this building, he knows I know the most important thing is our production. We owe it to this football team. Those guys are the quarterbacks when we walk into the special teams room — him, Brandon and Casey. So he's very, very professional, knows what we've got to do each day. We field punt one day, we pooch the next day. He goes in there every day and gets 50 holds before we do any type of field goal work. So, I love the way he works."

BS: For you, what do you find to be key to creating successful returns like the one you had in the preseason opener?

TM: "Just focus on their eyes. When our eyes are wrong, when the returner's eyes are wrong, we're in trouble because we're going to drop the ball. When our eyes are wrong, we're going to lose the hip, and if we stay on that hip, we call it, 'hand the baton.' If we never lose that hand on the hip of our opponents, we've got a chance. It's all eyes."

BS: Is there a coach you'd describe as the most influential in your development as a coach?

TM: "Yeah, coach Petrino — coach Bob Petrino Sr. — was my head coach in college at Carroll College, and he got me my start there at Carroll. He got me a chance to go to Utah State and be a GA [graduate assistant], and then I went to Louisville with his son, Bobby. So that Petrino family really kind of got me started. But every single head coach, every single assistant I've worked with in my career have been really, really good to me."

BS: I've seen how hands-on you are as an instructor. What do you really value about that part of being a teacher?

TM: "I think the biggest thing is, for me, the word 'believe' is not really a great word. I like the word 'conceive.' So I think when a player can see — because the word 'see' is there — if they can conceive it, they can visually see what you want, they'll do it. There's a difference between, 'Coach, I believe in what you're saying. I'll do it,' but if they can't see it, they can't execute it. So that's why I want to be hands on. I want them to see exactly what I want them to do, because these guys are such great players. They'll do what you want as long as they see it. If they don't have an understanding of it, they can't do it."

Broncos, Cheerleaders Play 'Family Feud' At Children's Hospital Colorado

By STAFF

CBS Denver

Sept. 12, 2018

On Tuesday, the Denver Broncos spent time off the field to come together for kids battling serious illnesses.

Players and cheerleaders teamed up with employees at Children's Hospital Colorado to play Family Feud.

The game tested everyone's Broncos and kid knowledge. Brandon McManus says it's always been his dream to play the game, but playing the game for the kids is better than the real thing.

"Their faces light up, you know? It's more impactful for us than it is for them you know, seeing their favorite Broncos players. Anytime we can come out here and tell the kids we care about the community that we play in, it really helps us and makes us feel good," McManus, the team's place kicker, said.

This is the second year the hospital has hosted the event.

'Monday Night Football' ratings down from 2017

By Jay Busbee
Yahoo Sports
Sept. 12, 2018

Prime-time ratings decline

Ratings for the New York Jets vs. Detroit Lions game came in at 7.5, while Los Angeles Rams vs. Oakland Raiders clocked at 7.0, marks which denote the percentage of homes in the country tuned into the game. That's down 4 percent from 2017, but it's worth noting that last year's totals were affected by Hurricane Irma coverage ... meaning the decline could be even more significant. Those totals were down from 2016.

It's part of a trend of declining ratings for prime-time games; both "Sunday Night Football" and "Thursday Night Football" this past week saw declines from 2017.

Are protests the reason for the decline?

Probably not. While it's indisputable that the protests during the national anthem have had a negative effect on the perception of the NFL, that's a very different matter than the ratings for the league. Plenty of people who have negative perceptions of the league as a result of protests weren't NFL fans in the first place. Plus, saying that protests harmed "MNF's" ratings doesn't take into account the fact that ratings for Sunday's daytime games were as much as 23 percent better than last year.

More likely, the declining ratings are a result of larger factors. The games both stunk, for one thing; the stench of both the Lions and the Raiders will linger for weeks. Plus, ratings are down for every form of television, not just NFL. And it's worth noting that the NFL's ratings still dwarf those of any other program on television.

There's no reason whatsoever for the NFL to celebrate the decline of ratings for its flagship football program. But then again, there's no reason to assume this is a herald of impending doom, either.

Bottom line: watch the games if you want to, don't if you don't.

Broncos bring back Shamarko Thomas

By Josh Alper
Pro Football Talk
Sept. 12, 2018

The Broncos have brought safety Shamarko Thomas back to the team.

Thomas signed with the Broncos this summer, but failed to make the cut to 53 players in Denver. The team announced that he re-signed with the team on Tuesday.

Had Thomas been on the roster for Week One, the Broncos would be on the hook for his salary for the entire season.

Thomas opened up training camp with the Colts, but he was released shortly after being ejected from the team's first preseason game for an illegal hit. Thomas also dealt with an eye injury after signing with Denver in August.

The Broncos had an open roster spot after cutting wide receiver Isaiah McKenzie on Monday.

Paxton Lynch works out for Eagles

By Charean Williams

Pro Football Talk

Sept. 12, 2018

The Eagles worked out quarterback Paxton Lynch, Field Yates of ESPN reports.

Lynch had workouts in Buffalo and Detroit last week.

Philadelphia has three quarterbacks on its roster — Carson Wentz, Nick Foles and Nate Sudfeld.

The Broncos waived Lynch on Sept. 3 after two unsuccessful seasons. Denver selected him in the first round of the 2016 draft, and Lynch started only four games and had a 76.7 passer rating with four touchdowns and four interceptions.

Philadelphia also worked out former Ravens linebacker Albert McClellan, per Yates.