

# Broncos offensive coordinator Bill Musgrave: Preferred style is “rugged”

By Ryan O’Halloran

Denver Post

Sept. 14, 2018

Only 11 NFL running backs in Week 1 gained at least 70 yards. The Broncos had two.

And only 19 running backs had at least 15 carries. Again, the Broncos had two.

Those statistics are football music for offensive coordinator Bill Musgrave.

On a team with proven performers in quarterback Case Keenum and receivers Demaryius Thomas and Emmanuel Sanders, the Broncos enter Sunday’s game against Oakland content to lean on rookie running backs Royce Freeman and Phillip Lindsay. Both players had 15 carries for 71 yards in the season opening win over Seattle last Sunday.

“We’re going to have to play our style to have any type of success against (Oakland),” Musgrave said after practice Thursday. “Our style is a rugged style. We have to play rugged. We have a rugged group.”

If Musgrave is using “rugged” as a public buzzword, it’s a good bet he’s using it in-house, too. T-shirts can’t be far behind.

“We’re not very fancy and as we saw the other day, we’re rough around the edges,” Musgrave said. “But we can overcome a lot if we play rugged.”

Freeman earned the starting spot over Devontae Booker.

“Royce did well,” Musgrave said. “He was solid for us. He’s someone that we trust. He’s done a super job day in and day out so we feel we can trust him and count on him.”

The same goes for Lindsay, who showed promise as more than a change-of-pace player, capable of running base offense plays between the tackles.

“They’re good players, both of the backs,” Raiders defensive coordinator Paul Guenther told Bay Area reporters. “(Freeman) is more of a one-cut runner and (Lindsay) has good speed and quickness coming out of the backfield on routes and on perimeter runs.”

# Broncos Briefs: Denver's Miller has respect for Oakland's Miller

By Kyle Fredrickson  
Denver Post  
Sept. 14, 2018

Long-time left tackle Donald Penn is playing on the right side and quarterback Derek Carr's blindside protector is rookie left tackle Kolton Miller. But the Oakland Raiders offensive line still has the Broncos' respect entering Sunday's game.

"They have the best offensive line in football in my opinion," Broncos linebacker Von Miller said after practice Thursday. "And they made it a whole lot better with the Kolton Miller pick and moving Donald Penn to the right side. Really, all five guys are Pro Bowl solid."

The interior of the Raiders' line is left guard Kelechi Osemele, center Rodney Hudson and right guard Gabe Jackson.

"It's always a challenge," Broncos coach Vance Joseph said of facing the Raiders' offensive line. "Miller was the best tackle in the entire draft and obviously Penn has been a good player for a long time. A very good, very experienced, very big, very tough and nasty offensive line."

Henderson cut. The Broncos gave up on practice squad receiver Carlos Henderson a day after he practiced for the first time since last week's league suspension. Henderson was a 2017 third-round pick.

Henderson did not report for training camp and was waived after the preseason. He cleared waivers and was signed to the practice squad. Joseph said Henderson's release was "just a football decision."

"It's part of what you do with your practice squad," Joseph said. "You keep breaking guys in and out to try to find the best fits for your future and guys who can play for you if someone gets injured."

Hall of Fame initial nominees. The Pro Football Hall of Fame released its initial list of 102 modern-era nominees for the Class of 2019 and the Broncos are well represented.

Cornerback Champ Bailey (first year of eligibility) leads the group that also includes safeties John Lynch, Steve Atwater and Dennis Smith, kicker Jason Elam, cornerback Ty Law, running back Clinton Portis, linebacker Karl Mecklenburg, receiver Rod Smith, center Tom Nalen, defensive lineman Neil Smith and coach Dan Reeves.

The nominee list will be reduced to 25 semifinalists in November and 15 finalists in January.

Last month, Broncos owner Pat Bowlen was named a contributor finalist and he advanced all the way to the final vote.

Joseph's message. During his initial team meeting on Wednesday, Joseph stressed how the Broncos can play better than in their win over Seattle.

“His message was, there is a standard and level we hold ourselves to as far as being a Bronco and he reiterated that,” defensive lineman Zach Kerr said. “I think guys came out ready to practice and it’s Raider Week – – you don’t have to really say too much when the dudes in black and silver are coming in.”

Footnotes. Nose tackle Domata Peko had a veteran’s day off and defensive end Derek Wolfe was limited with an abdominal strain. “He’ll be fine,” Joseph said. ... Joseph on punter Marquette King, who faces his former team on Sunday: “He’s punting the ball fine. He did a great job against (Seattle’s Tyler) Lockett last week with directional punting the ball and putting the ball on the sidelines so our gunners can make plays. He’s totally bought into our system of how we punt and he’s been a nice add to our team.”

# Champ Bailey among 12 former Broncos nominated for 2019 Pro Football Hall of Fame

By Kyle Fredrickson

Denver Post

Sept. 14, 2018

Champ Bailey is one step closer to having a bronze bust in Canton.

Bailey — a 12-time Pro Bowl selection with 52 career interceptions (four returned for touchdowns) — was one of 12 former Broncos players to receive a nomination Thursday for entry into the 2019 modern-era Pro Football Hall of Fame. This is the first year Bailey, a Denver cornerback from 2004-2013, is eligible for induction. Broncos owner Pat Bowlen was named a contributor finalist for the 2019 class.

Bailey joins former Broncos in safety John Lynch (2004-2007), safety Steve Atwater (1989-1998), wide receiver Rod Smith (1995-2006), linebacker Karl Mecklenburg (1983-1994), safety Dennis Smith (1981-1994), center Tom Nalen (1994-2007), kicker Jason Elam (1993-2007), cornerback Ty Law (2009), running back Clinton Portis (2002-2003), defensive end Neil Smith (1997-1999) and coach Dan Reeves (1981-1992).

A total of 102 former players earned nominations. The list will be trimmed to 25 semifinalists in November. Fifteen finalists will be announced in January.

# Broncos tracker: Raiders coach Jon Gruden impressed with Denver's defense

By Ryan O'Halloran & Kyle Fredrickson

Denver Post

Sept. 14, 2018

1:20 p.m. — Jon Gruden on Broncos: "This is as good a defense in pro football, I believe."

As ESPN's lead game analyst, Jon Gruden watched the Broncos' defense for years. Now as the Raiders' coach, Gruden has spent the week game-planning for them.

"I like this defense," Gruden told Denver reporters. "Obviously, they've done a great job in recent years with Von Miller and a lot of other characters. In their base defense, I see (Bradley) Chubb playing on the strong side and Von playing on the open side, where he's very dangerous."

The Broncos had six sacks in last week's win over Seattle, including three by Miller.

"They can still load the box with eight defenders because of their talented corners," Gruden said. "And the pressure, the threat of Chubb, is a problem in your pass protection because you don't want to isolate the wrong guy against Chubb. We know what kind of future he has and you always have to be careful with Miller. This is as good a defense in pro football, I believe."

— Ryan O'Halloran

8:00 a.m. — Behind enemy lines

To get some intel on the Raiders, we turned to Jerry McDonald, beat writer for the Bay Area News Group. Follow him on Twitter @Jerrymcd.

Here are five questions and McDonald's answers:

1. Eighteen combined catches for a tight end (Jared Cook) and a running back (Jalen Richard) last week. Were the Rams taking Cooper/Nelson away or should Raiders fans be concerned?

There is no doubt the Raiders were looking toward Cook and Richard as match-up advantages to exploit against the Rams and were avoiding going at Aqib Talib and Marcus Peters. That said, the Raiders made no attempt to get Cooper involved with quick throws, bubble screens and the like. I wouldn't expect that to continue.

2. The Raiders' pass rush looked impotent against the Rams. What gives Gruden and Co. hope that it will improve?

Hope the rookies get better. Three of them — tackle P.J. Hall, tackle Maurice Hurst and end Arden Key — had major roles in the rotation. Now Hall has a foot in a boot and likely won't face Denver. They'll also need to consider dialing up some more pressure in the form of blitzes. Jon Gruden's reasoning is that the Rams were running so well in the second half with Todd Gurley and that the Rams do so much with jet sweeps and the like (eye candy, he calls it) it makes it tough to get a pass rush. Getting the Broncos in second-and-10 instead of second-and-4 is a must.

3. Rookie first-round pick Kolton Miller started at left tackle in Week 1. What were the reviews on him?

Miller had a hold that negated a 16-yard completion to Cooper, but for the most part he was pretty solid in his NFL debut. The Rams are more of an interior pressure oriented team however with Aaron Donald and Ndumukong Suh. The game in Denver, on the road, is a big, big test. If he can hold up there, the Raiders have something to feel good about.

4. The Khalil Mack Trade is less than two weeks old. What was the locker room like after that and have they recovered?

I think the locker room is fine. They're happy Mack got his money, and I think for the most part NFL players tend to their business. Nobody benefits professionally or in their pocket book if they go catatonic because one of their teammates was traded. On the field, it's a different story. Those draft picks aren't rushing the passer any time soon this season.

5. The Raiders' 155 yards in penalties were the most by a team in Week 1. Bad technique? No discipline? Poor officiating?

A number of false starts drove Gruden crazy and are inexcusable. The yardage was inflated by a pair of legit pass interference penalties that went for 87 yards (37 yards and 50 yards). Venture to guess that won't happen again this season if corners find the ball sooner. Strange note — Raiders led 13-10 at halftime and had 10 penalties for 145 yards. In the second half, they had one penalty for 10 yards and were outscored 23-0. Bring on the flags?

# Mack-Raiders: How often has a team traded its best player?

By Ryan O'Halloran

Denver Broncos

Sept. 14, 2018

What would have been the locker room reaction if the Broncos had traded All Pro linebacker Von Miller a week before the regular season?

Safety Will Parks' eyes widened at the thought of his team trading their best player.

"That's crazy," he said. "I can't even put that in my mind."

Imagine how Khalil Mack's now-former Raiders teammates felt over Labor Day Weekend. Oakland's best player, he was a preseason holdout because of a contract dispute. The Raiders threw their hands up and flipped Mack to the Bears for a package that included first-, second-, third- and sixth-round picks.

Mack is no longer the Broncos' twice-a-year problem, such as Sunday when Denver hosts Oakland. The Broncos play Chicago every four years.

"Good for us, I guess," Broncos coach Vance Joseph said. "He's with Chicago. We don't play Chicago."

Mack is 27 and had 40 1/2 sacks in four years for Oakland.

"Honestly, I was shocked," Miller said. "I always felt like Khalil and (the Los Angeles Rams') Aaron Donald and (Houston's) J.J. Watt were untradeable guys. And then they traded him. A guy like Khalil, he only comes around once every lifetime. You want to keep guys like that."

In theory.

How rare is it for a team to trade its best player?

Former newspaper columnist Dan Daly, who has written "The Pro Football Chronicle," and "The National Forgotten League," was enlisted for perspective.

Just some of the names Mack is connected with: Quarterback Fran Tarkenton, pass rusher Jared Allen, cornerbacks Dick "Night Train" Lane and Mike Haynes and running backs Ollie Matson, Herschel Walker and Eric Dickerson.

Way back in time, three franchise quarterbacks were traded from 1958-61: Two-time NFL champion Bobby Layne (Detroit to Pittsburgh) for one player and two first-round picks, Norm Van Brocklin from the Rams to Philadelphia for two players and a first-round selection and Y.A. Tittle from San Francisco to the New York Giants in 1961 for one player.

A recap of some other notable Best Player Traded deals:

1937: Chicago traded All Pro end Bill Hewitt to Philadelphia shortly after he turned 27 years old. He had announced his retirement to work for the Illinois Central Railroad because of a salary dispute with Bears owner George Halas. All the Bears received were the rights to Olympic shot-putter Sam Francis. Hewitt played four seasons with the Eagles (one All Pro nod).

1946: Running back Bill Dudley had just been named NFL MVP and was 25 years old. But he despised Steelers coach Jock Sutherland and intended to retire. Hewitt was traded to Detroit for three players and a first-round pick. Dudley failed to rush for more than 402 yards again a season.

1954: Lane had 14 interceptions as a rookie in 1952 for the Rams. But two years later, at age 26, he was traded to the Chicago Cardinals. He was later traded to Detroit. Lane finished his career with 58 interceptions.

1959: Future NFL commissioner Pete Rozelle was the Rams' general manager and traded seven players, a second-round pick and a player to be named later to acquire the 28-year old Matson from the Cardinals. Matson's streak of five consecutive All Pro selections ended with the trade.

1967 and '72: Tarkenton was involved in two monster trades. The Vikings traded the 27-year old Tarkenton to the Giants in '67 for two first- and second-round picks apiece. The Giants traded him back to Minnesota in '72 for three players and one first- and second-round pick apiece. Upon his return to the Vikings, he played in three Super Bowl losses.

1983: Haynes, 30, was sitting out the season for New England until he was traded late in the year to the Los Angeles Raiders for first- and second-round picks. Haynes teamed with cornerback Lester Hayes to help the Raiders upset Washington in the Super Bowl.

1987: A blockbuster in-season trade involving Dickerson, 27, going from the Rams to Indianapolis for a package that included six draft picks. Dickerson helped the Colts to a division title that year.

1989: The lopsided trade of all lopsided trades. The Vikings acquired Walker from Dallas believing he was the final piece to a championship puzzle. He lasted 2 1/2 years. Dallas received a haul of draft picks and players that created the foundation for a three-time Super Bowl champion.

2009: Allen was coming off an All Pro season at age 25 when Kansas City traded him with a sixth-round pick to Minnesota for one first, two thirds and one sixth. Allen would have at least 11 sacks in all six seasons with the Vikings.

And now Mack. It doesn't happen often a team trades its best player. And it will loom over Raiders coach Jon Gruden.

"It's unfortunate we don't have him," Gruden said. "But we feel we did the right thing for this football team, for the future of the Raiders and this building process. I know we have to prove (it was the right decision), but so does he."



# Bronco notes: Carlos Henderson cut after one practice

By Mike Klis

9 News

Sept. 14, 2018

After going through all the commotion that was Carlos Henderson, the Broncos decided after one practice they didn't want him, anymore.

A third-round draft pick in 2017, Henderson got off to one of the worst starts in NFL history. He never got on the field as a rookie, as his struggles during the offseason and a thumb injury led him to season-ending injured reserve.

He then was arrested in January on a marijuana possession charge after he was unable to eat the evidence without detection. Henderson then failed to report to training camp.

After asking for mercy upon John Elway's court, Henderson was brought back on the Broncos' practice squad, but was immediately suspended one week because he reached a plea deal on the marijuana charge.

Henderson was reinstated this week and went through practice Wednesday. He must not have impressed. He was released Thursday.

"We've had four different moves on practice squad this week, so it's just a football decision and it's part of what you do with your practice squad," said Broncos head coach Vance Joseph. "You kind of keep breaking guys in and out to try to find the best fits for your future, and guys who can play for you if someone gets injured. It's purely a football decision. That's all I can say about that."

The Broncos are not expected to fill Henderson's vacant practice squad spot this week. Bringing back receiver River Cracraft to the practice squad next week is a possibility.

Hall of Fame nominees include 13 former Broncos

The Pro Football Hall of Fame announced 102 modern-era nominees for consideration on the class of 2019 ballot.

The list includes these 13 former Broncos: Running back Clinton Portis, receiver Rod Smith, center Tom Nalen, guard Chris Hinton (a Bronco for a week, then traded for Elway), defensive ends Neil Smith and Simeon Rice, linebacker/defensive end Karl Mecklenburg, safeties John Lynch and Steve Atwater, cornerbacks Champ Bailey and Ty Law, kicker Jason Elam and coach Dan Reeves.

This group will be trimmed to 25 semifinalists later this year, and then 15 finalists for vote on the eve of Super Bowl LIII in Atlanta. Only five modern-era candidates can be elected.

## A Jake and nothing Butt

The world was mean way before social media came along.

One reason why kids go to school in the first place is to learn how to soften their innate cruelty.

"I remember in kindergarten I would get terrorized, and that's like when you take everything personally," said Jake Butt, the Broncos' tight end. "I hated the first-day-of-class roll call, because they'd always call out 'Butt'. I'd just get beet red and I'd come home to my dad and tell him that I wanted to change my last name.

"He'd laugh and tell me, 'You're going to have fun with this someday.' So, here we are. We're having a lot of fun with it."

Butt and his family have turned any last-name teasing into good-natured fun. For Jake Butt, his attitude about his last name turned in junior high.

"I was getting bigger than everybody, so I could just laugh at them," he said. "Probably like seventh or eighth grade."

## Bronco Bits

Broncos defensive end Derek Wolfe was limited with a slight abdominal strain. Defensive tackle Domata Peko Sr. was given a vet day off. ...

Broncos offensive coordinator Bill Musgrave talking about Case Keenum's interceptions: "Joe Gibbs once told me that when I was a young coach, younger, a good quarterback knows what to do when it's there, but the great ones know what to do when it's not there. And that's what we've just got to get in our system. We're just scratching the surface. Has Case gotten enough turns at these concepts to know what to do when it's not there? Probably not. It's learning on the fly."

# McManus deserves credit for Broncos' opening win

By Mike Klis

9 News

Sept. 14, 2018

Brandon McManus has his kicking groove back.

"Last year, I never felt I lost my groove," he said this week. "The stats showed that I lost it. I'm always confident out there every time I come on the field."

Including his perfect postseason of 2015, McManus was 44 of 44 on field goals from inside 40 yards in the 2015-16 seasons. He then missed three field goals from inside the 40 last year, and overall he slumped to a .750 conversion rate after posting .857 and .853 the previous two years.

McManus has been true again this year. He was 9 of 9 in field goals and 8 of 8 in extra points during the preseason until he missed a final, 57-yard field goal attempt at Arizona.

In the regular-season opener against Seattle last week, the Broncos don't win 27-24 if not for McManus. He made field goals of 51 and 53 yards while Seattle's Sebastian Janikowski missed from 46 yards.

Do the math in the Broncos' 3-point victory and McManus won the game.

"D.T. won it with that catch," McManus said of Demaryius Thomas' tiptoe, end zone snag for the game-winning score. "I'll take some credit."

# The Broncos defense still has a problem — and the Raiders won't provide an easy solution

By Nicki Jhabvala

The Athletic

Sept. 14, 2018

Will Dissly lined up in a three-point stance, his 6-foot-4, 265-pound frame hunched over the line as Broncos rookie Bradley Chubb awaited his first step.

As quarterback Russell Wilson fielded the snap and dropped back to fake a handoff, Dissly lurched forward and took off, grazing Chubb before blowing past him and across the middle of the field for the catch. Dissly's ankles slipped through Chubb's grasp, his shoulders bounced off safety Justin Simmons, his arms shed a tackle by Darian Stewart and his legs kept going and going and going until linebacker Brandon Marshall finally pushed him out of bounds at the 5-yard line.

It was no mistake to have Chubb, the Broncos' 6-4, 269-pound rookie, in coverage against Dissly. But the plan wasn't followed to a T.

Dissly's zig-zagging 66-yard catch-and-run left five Broncos in his wake because of multiple missed tackles. He finished the game with 105 receiving yards and a touchdown, becoming the first rookie tight end in history to top 100 yards and have a touchdown in his debut, twisting the knife a little more for a Denver team that prides itself on being among the league's best passing defenses.

Of course, Dissly isn't the first tight end to find success against the Broncos. And the Broncos are well aware of the issue.

"Please don't ask me about the tight ends," defensive coordinator Joe Woods said jokingly Thursday.

But they still haven't been able to correct the problem.

Over the last few years, the Broncos' defense has either led the league with the fewest passing yards allowed or ranked among the top four, but tight ends have long been their Achilles' heel.

Former Cowboys tight end Jason Witten gained 97 yards and a touchdown in Week 2. The Bills' tight ends added 70 yards and a touchdown the next week. The Giants' Evan Engram recorded 82 yards and a touchdown in Week 6. The Chargers' Hunter Henry had 73 yards in Week 7, Kansas City's Travis Kelce had 133 yards and a score a week later, and Rob Gronkowski and the Patriots' tight ends amassed 123 yards and a touchdown in Week 10.

On the whole last year, the Broncos allowed only 3,395 receiving yards, the third fewest in the league. But tight ends accounted for 1,023 of those (63.9 yards per game), which were the third most in the league. After the catch, opposing tight ends picked up a league-high 426 yards.

The start to 2018 hasn't been much better, as Dissly and Nick Vannett combined for 116 yards, including 69 yards after the catch, which rank 28th and 31st, respectively in the NFL.

Although the Raiders have a different look, they pose another tough test for the Broncos' defense.

In Oakland's opening loss to the Rams, 10th-year tight end Jared Cook had nine catches for 180 yards, the most by a tight end in Raiders history and tied for the sixth most in NFL history.

"We can't walk in here on Monday and say we didn't contain him," coach Vance Joseph said. "If we don't contain him, it's going to be a long day for us. ... We have to have a plan to bracket him and to play a safety over top of him like he's a receiver. Hopefully we can rush the passer, speed the quarterback up and kind of help us cover these guys."

Cook, like Raiders running back Marshawn Lynch, is a difficult one to stop.

Standing 6-4, 254 pounds, Cook is built like a power forward but with the hands of a receiver, the speed of a running back (he ran a 4.5-second 40 at the combine) and an athleticism (41-inch vertical) few can match.

He's a mismatch nightmare; linebackers can be too slow, and safeties and corners too small.

"He's definitely a problem," Woods said. "Right now they have a bunch of weapons. You talk about Amari Cooper, you talk about Cook, Jordy Nelson, they bring (Martavis) Bryant back and obviously the running back, Jalen (Richard) out of the backfield. We're going to have our hands full for sure."

Woods said the Broncos plan "to do a little bit of everything" to try to slow Cook, but going back to basics will come first. The Broncos missed seven tackles last week, including a couple by Simmons, an otherwise textbook tackler.

"We feel like we do a good job of tackling," Woods said. "I just really felt like the guys were pressing. I don't know. It was the first game, there was a lot of energy, the fans were great, and it just felt like a lot of guys did some things that were uncharacteristic in terms of how they played."

"I really just tried to settle the guys down and told them, 'Just do your job. That's all that's required.' "

# New-look Raiders present Broncos' young backs a prime opportunity

By Tyler Polumbus

The Athletic

Sept. 14, 2018

It's Raiders week, baby! OK, maybe the rivalry isn't what it used to be, but I'm Denver born and bred and this game still makes my blood boil.

The Raiders opened with a 33-13 loss to the Los Angeles Rams on Monday, but I believe Oakland is capable of pulling off a few upsets this year.

The offense is led by Derek Carr, who was once viewed as one of the most promising young quarterbacks in the league. His last year or so has been up and down, but he went 20-of-24 in passing and led a sharp-looking uptempo offense in the first half against the Rams.

The second half is when things took a turn. Carr tossed two interceptions for a total of three on the night and the Raiders' offense sputtered.

But the Raiders showed more in one half against the Rams than they did the previous season. Those first two quarters proved coach Jon Gruden has his guys playing fast and efficiently.

Running back Marshawn Lynch only had 11 carries for 41 yards, but he did go "Beast Mode" on a 10-yard touchdown run, rumbling through a host of defenders. Gruden described the run as "vintage Marshawn Lynch" and I expect him to receive a much heavier workload against the Broncos.

Defensively the Raiders have been historically weak against the run for close to two full seasons. But against the Rams, the Raiders showed two sides to their run defense. In the first half they looked solid in containing Rams running back Todd Gurley (he had only 19 rushing yards on four carries), but the dam busted in the second half as Gurley finished with 108 of his team's 140 rushing yards (5.4 per carry). The Broncos should be licking their chops at the opportunities to run the football this weekend. Royce Freeman, Phillip Lindsay and Devontae Booker should have big games.

Keys to a Broncos victory:

1. Solve their defensive problems against tight ends.

It is no secret that the Broncos have long had issues defending opposing tight ends in the passing game. The problem persisted last week against the Seahawks. Will Dissly, who is known as a blocking tight end, had 105 receiving yards and a touchdown against the Broncos.

This week they face the challenge of trying to contain Raiders tight end Jared Cook. Cook had a monster week against the Rams, recording nine catches for 180 yards, a franchise record for a tight end. Cook is 6-foot-5, 254 pounds and presents a significant matchup problem for the Broncos. Look for safety Justin Simmons to come down in the box often and go one-on-one against Cook.

2. Win the turnover battle.

It is not every day that a team is able to overcome three interceptions and find a victory, but somehow the Broncos did it last Sunday. That is not sustainable though. The quickest way to let an inferior Raiders team in the game is to hand them the football a couple of times.

The turnover ratio is the single most important stat in football. Consider that, dating back to 2012, the Broncos have won a franchise-record 32 consecutive games when winning the turnover battle, which is the longest active streak in the NFL.

Keenum had three picks against the Seahawks, but the defense kept it even with three takeaways. The Broncos have to protect the football and let the Raiders be on the short end of the stick in the turnover ratio.

3. Run the football — a lot.

After one week, the Raiders' run defense ranks 25th (140 yards allowed) in the NFL and the Broncos' rushing offense ranks seventh (146 yards). The Broncos should keep the ball on the ground all day, especially on first down.

Normally I like to see a healthy balance of run and pass on first down. But if the Broncos can do as the Rams did and average more than 5 yards per carry, Keenum will be well set up to protect the football. Keenum can throw quick passes off three steps for the majority of the game if they dominate first down on the ground.

The goal for Denver should be a lofty 175 rushing yards Sunday.

# Broncos release receiver Carlos Henderson

By Troy Renck

KMGH

Sept. 14, 2018

Carlos Henderson's second chance ended before the Broncos second game.

After Henderson missed the entire preseason, the Broncos attempted to salvage the receiver's time in Denver by signing him to the practice squad. He joined the group Monday, and was released Thursday per an NFL source, ending his time with the Broncos before he played a down.

Henderson stayed away from training camp as he dealt with personal and family issues. He returned prior to the fourth preseason game. The Broncos cut him from the active roster, but brought him back to the practice squad after he served a one-game suspension for violating the NFL's personal conduct policy following an arrest for marijuana possession.

Henderson told Denver7 he appreciated the lifeline on the practice squad, but it was short-lived. The Broncos continue to move on from several members of the disappointing 2017 draft class. Henderson is gone, and cornerback Brendan Langley (third round) and receiver Isaiah McKenzie (fifth) remain on the practice squad, while running back De' Angelo Henderson is with the Jets practice squad. Those responsible for salvaging the class include Garrett Bolles, Jake Butt and backup quarterback Chad Kelly.



# Von Miller follows up three-sack games with solid performances

By Troy Renck  
KMGH  
Sept. 14, 2018

Von Miller admitted shock after Oakland traded superstar Khalil Mack. He was a Raider of a Lost Art, a player capable of providing a pass rush and wrecking a game plan.

He was, um, Von.

Now as the Broncos prepare to face the Centrum Silver and Black, the focus shifts squarely to Miller. He opened the season with three sacks in the win over the Seahawks. He talks of reaching 30 -- an unrealistic number -- but is 20 out of the question?

In a word, no.

Miller owns five three-sack games in his career. After his previous four, Miller netted a sack. Carrying the momentum into this week remains critical for a defense looking to remind folks it belongs among the elite.

"Of course we have that chip on our shoulder," outside linebacker Shane Ray said.

Miller will face a difficult test in right tackle Donald Penn. But when Miller is right, no left tackle -- or right tackle for that matter -- can stop him. Miller enters Sunday with 5.5 sacks in his last seven games against the Raiders.

"It's a huge challenge. Penn's a strong guy, a big guy and one of the better tackles in the league for I don't know how long. The Oakland Raiders have the best offensive line in football, in my opinion. I'm sure you all would say Dallas Cowboys, this team or that team, but to me the Oakland Raiders have the best offensive line in football," Miller said. "And they made it a whole lot better with the (tackle) Kolton Miller pick and moving Donald Penn to the right side. Really all five guys are really Pro-Bowl solid, offensive lineman."

Miller wrote a diary of havoc Sunday. It played out according to script. Defensive coordinator Joe Woods continues to place emphasis on freeing up Von for sacks. Better personnel with tweaks in the scheme should help.

"It's a little bit of both. Von, we all know, is just a different type of player. Athletically, he's gifted. He can do it all. The thing we want to do is we wanted to create more balance in terms of what we were doing this year -- in terms of our pass rush," Woods said. "With (Bradley) Chubb, Shane (Ray), Shaq (Barrett), they give us the ability to do that. So, if teams want to slide a protection his way, put chippers his way, then we've got to win on the other side to make them play honest. I think the plan that we had worked out for us."

Dancing with the Stars II

The pupil becomes the teacher. Von Miller can now teach DeMarcus Ware how to excel on the big stage. Ware helped Von realize his potential, capping with his Super Bowl 50 MVP honors. Now Von can help Ware, the Broncos pass consultant, maximize his moves on "Dancing With The Stars." Ware is a contestant on the upcoming season. Von made it through several weeks, before missing out on the mirror ball.

"He told me he was going to be on Dancing with the Stars. I didn't say anything, but he told me. He told me a while back. So, I've been kind of giving him pointers," Miller said. "It's Dancing with the Stars. Everybody's going to dance. They want to feel a connection. They want to feel a story. They want to feel the charisma and they want to have a connection with the contestants on Dancing with the Stars. It's not all about dancing. I know it's called Dancing with the Stars, but dancing is probably just, in my opinion, like 50 percent of it. DeMarcus, he needs to show them that personality. He has to make people laugh and have a story and connection with the fans. I know he's going to be able to do that, so he'll have a great stint on Dancing with the Stars."

Bradley Chubb will definitely watch his coach a few times. His mom is a big fan of the show. He wondered how Ware's back would hold up? I thought the same thing. So I asked Von.

"Troy, all he has to do is the salsa, not rush the passer," Miller said. "He will be fine."

# Von Miller misses Khalil Mack, Case Keenum sure won't

By Arnie Stapleton  
Associated Press  
Sept. 14, 2018

Von Miller might be the only one at Denver Broncos headquarters lamenting Khalil Mack's startling trade from the Oakland Raiders to the Chicago Bears.

"I mean, honestly, I was shocked," Miller said. "I always felt like Khalil and Aaron Donald were untradeable guys. J.J. Watt, I thought guys like that were untradeable. Then they traded him. A guy like Khalil, he only comes around once every lifetime. You want to keep guys like that."

The Broncos' star linebacker said it's "going to be a little weird" Sunday not seeing his friend, whom he's trained with the last two summers, when the Raiders (0-1) visit Denver (1-0), where Mack once collected five sacks in a single half.

"He's talented," Broncos QB Case Keenum said, "but I'm pretty sure they're going to play 11 guys. They're not just going to put 10 out there without him."

Raiders new/old coach Jon Gruden said he's been asked aplenty about the trade that sent shockwaves through the NFL and smiles across locker rooms across the AFC West.

"And rightfully so," Gruden said. "He's a great guy. He's a great player. It's unfortunate we don't have him. But we feel we did the right thing for this football team, for the future of the Raiders and for this building process."

"I know we've got to prove it. But so does he."

Mack began doing just that Sunday night at Green Bay, fresh off signing a six-year, \$141 million contract, \$26.5 million more than Miller got in 2016 in the shadows of his Super Bowl 50 MVP performance.

Hours after Miller wrecked Seattle's game plan by sacking Russell Wilson three times and snaring the ball out of power back Chris Carson's arms for a forced fumble and fumble recovery, Mack burst into the NFC North conversation with a pick-6 and a strip sack of backup QB DeShone Kizer in which he, too, snatched the ball from his opponent.

Whereas Miller's showing led to a 27-24 Denver victory, Mack's dominant debut was rendered a footnote when Aaron Rodgers returned from a knee injury at halftime to lead the Packers back from a 20-point deficit for a 24-23 win.

One night later, the Raiders lost 33-13 to the Rams, barely touching quarterback Jared Goff just over a week after trading their star pass rusher to the Bears for a package that included two first-round picks. Bruce Irvin had the only sack when Goff held the ball too long.

Mack is still on the Raiders' minds.

Quarterback Derek Carr said he misses his friendship more than his play on the field.

"We still text, and we still talk all the time, but not seeing him every day is weird," Carr said. "I think that was the hardest part."

Other subplots as the Broncos seek their sixth straight 2-0 start:

#### KING STING

Broncos punter Marquette King didn't want to talk about Gruden this week, but he made it clear he had hard feelings over his release from the Raiders this spring.

He said he never had a chance to speak with Oakland's coach before getting jettisoned.

"I just saw him on car commercials and stuff," King said. "I get to see him two times a year."

And that was certainly a factor in King's decision to come to Denver.

"I just wanted to find the best place that I thought I would fit," King said. "I think there is somewhat of a revenge factor in there, too."

#### BRYANT BACK

Broncos coach Vance Joseph said Martavis Bryant's re-signing with Oakland only adds to Denver's already stiff challenge Sunday.

"Absolutely. He's a guy that's a vertical threat. I faced him in Cincinnati when he was in Pittsburgh for six games. He caught a 98-yard touchdown on my secondary, so I won't ever forget that," Joseph said.

#### PRESSURE POINT

After trading Mack, there were questions about how the Raiders would generate a pass rush. The results weren't good in the opener as Oakland had one sack and four quarterback pressures against the Rams.

The Raiders had more pressures in every game last year with Mack leading the defense.

Gruden said playing better defense on first and second down will give Bruce Irvin and Arden Key more chances to get to the QB on third down.

"You have to get them on third-and-long when you can cut loose your blitzes and some of your great rushers," he said.

#### HOUSE OF HORRORS

Gruden has had little success in Denver in his career, losing all five trips to the Mile High City. Gruden lost every year with Oakland from 1998-2001, and again with Tampa Bay in his final year as a coach there in 2008.

In all, Gruden's teams are 1-9 against the Broncos, with the one win coming in Oakland in 2001. The Raiders won 38-28 on Nov. 5, 2001, behind three TD passes by Rich Gannon.

He has fond memories of that lone victory over Denver.

"That was the greatest win of my career as the Raiders coach, beating the Broncos," Gruden said, "because I knew how far we'd come in just a few years."

# Von Miller, DeMarcus Ware switch roles for dance floor

By Arnie Stapleton  
Associated Press  
Sept. 14, 2018

Von Miller has received plenty of instruction over the years from DeMarcus Ware, his idol-turned-mentor in Denver when they won a Super Bowl together and now his tutor as a part-time pass-rushing consultant for the Broncos.

Now, Miller's the one giving Ware some pointers, not on the football field but on the dance floor.

Ware is going to compete on "Dancing with the Stars" this fall .

That's something Miller did in the spring of 2016 while basking in the attention that came his way following his Super Bowl MVP performance.

Miller said Thursday that Ware confided in him a while back that he was going to be on the show this fall.

"So, I've been kind of giving him pointers," Miller said. "I've been telling him what I wish I would have done and some of the stuff that I picked up on that would have made my stay on 'Dancing with the Stars' better. I gave those pointers to DeMarcus and he'll be great with those."

Miller and his partner, Witney Carson, were eliminated in Week 7 about midway through the spring season in 2016.

Miller likes Ware's chances to make it a lot farther, suggesting his movie star looks and charm will connect with viewers.

"It's not all about dancing," Miller said. "DeMarcus, he needs to show that personality. He has to make people laugh, have a story and a connection with the fans. I know he's going to be able to do that, so he'll have a great stand."

Miller said he still keeps in touch with Carson.

"I talked to Witney two days ago, on Tuesday. She introduced me to her new dance partner and told me that DeMarcus was with Lindsay (Arnold) and who was I going to vote for?" Miller recounted.

"So, obviously I had to lie and say I was going to vote for Witney when obviously I'm going to vote for DeMarcus," Miller added with a laugh.

"No, I'm going to vote for both. I can vote for both."

Notes: The Broncos juggled their practice squad, re-signing WR/KR Isaiah McKenzie and releasing fellow 2017 draft pick Carlos Henderson, a third-round WR who skipped training camp because of undisclosed personal reasons.

# Way Back When: Craig Morton helps Broncos come of age vs. Raiders

By Jim Saccomano  
DenverBroncos.com  
Sept. 14, 2018

The rivalry between the Denver Broncos and Oakland Raiders spans nearly six decades, and some of Denver's earliest triumphs came at Oakland's expense. When the Broncos won the American Football Conference for the first time and advanced to Super Bowl XII, it was by virtue of a win over the Oakland Raiders.

The date was Jan. 1, 1978, and it was truly one of the most memorable games in team history. Quarterback Craig Morton, who led the team that year, still remembers it well.

He had a nagging hip pointer which he had suffered late in the season and he hit it once again in the divisional round win over Pittsburgh the previous week.

The veteran quarterback spent the week before the AFC Championship Game in the hospital.

"It was really the week of my life," Morton says. "Nothing like that had ever happened to me before. We were about to play for the right to go to the Super Bowl, and I had to go to the hospital. ... Not only did I have to go in, but I was there all week."

It should be noted that one of the game's sidebars is that this changed the way injuries were reported in the NFL. The Broncos kept Morton's hospital stay a secret from the press all week — which led directly to a new NFL injury-reporting policy.

"[Head coach] Red [Miller] came and gave me the game plan on Wednesday, and we talked a little bit about it," Morton said. "Then, [wide receiver] Haven Moses came over and we talked a little bit about some of the patterns, some of [what] we were going to try to do to take advantage of some of the things the Raiders were doing.

"But I really didn't think I was going to play. I didn't have a clue because I couldn't even walk."

That all changed on Sunday morning when Morton left the hospital.

"Sunday morning it was very, very cold, but it was sunny," Morton says. "A lifelong friend of mine, Leon Hewley, came to the hospital and picked me up. I got up and I could barely walk. He said, 'What are you thinking?' I said, 'I don't know if I can do this or not.' Leon said, 'You've worked your whole life to do this. You cannot afford not to play.' He said, 'You know, you just have to do this.' I said, 'Well, get me to the stadium.'"

Morton arrived at the stadium early, spent an hour and a half in the whirlpool and otherwise just laid on the training table.

Eventually he went to his locker and got dressed, except for his shoes. The venerable quarterback could not touch his feet.

“Red [Miller] came over to me and said, ‘What do you think?’” Morton says. “And I said, ‘Coach, if you can tie my shoes, I’ll play.’ So the head coach tied my shoes. I wonder if any quarterback has ever said that for a championship game.”

That season, Morton had been the final piece of the puzzle for the Broncos, and he played like it against the Raiders.

He told Moses to “go to the corner” against Oakland safety Jack Tatum. Moses was the team’s star wide receiver and the other half of what had become known as “The M & M Connection.” He caught it and went 74 yards down the east sideline for a touchdown.

That gave Denver a 7-3 lead, which the team never relinquished.

The Orange Crush defense played inspired ball against the Raiders and held Oakland scoreless for the rest of the first half. In the third quarter, fullback Jon Keyworth scored to expand the lead to 14-3.

Denver’s final points came on a 12-yard pass from Morton to Moses, as the future Ring of Fame duo connected once again.

That’s when the Raiders scored 14 fourth-quarter points and cut the lead to 20-17.

Morton knew his work wasn’t done.

“On the last drive we had to make a first down because they had started coming back,” Morton said. “I’ll never forget that last running play for us, when [running back] Otis Armstrong’s hand came up out of the mass of people, signaling that he had made the first down, with that No. 1 sticking up. That was phenomenal. The gun sounded, and people went berserk.”

Morton finished the game with a remarkable stat line considering the circumstances. He completed 10 of 20 passes for 224 yards and two touchdowns. The Raiders had knocked him down twice, but as he remembers now, “remarkably, both times it was on my ‘good’ side, which allowed me to keep playing.”

His leadership that day and throughout the year made Morton the AFC’s Most Valuable Player for 1977.

On that day, Denver earned the first of its eight AFC Championships. While the franchise has been one of the NFL’s premier teams since, nothing is quite like that first win.

The Denver Broncos had never been in the playoffs before 1977, and on Jan. 1, 1978, Morton did something in the most extreme of physical circumstances that ties him forever to everything that this franchise has become.

And the fact that it came against the Broncos’ arch-rival Oakland Raiders only made it all the sweeter for Broncos Country.



# Broncos invite fans to support Team Super Bowlen at 2018 Walk to End Alzheimer's on Saturday

By STAFF

DenverBroncos.com

Sept. 14, 2018

The Denver Broncos and the family of Owner Pat Bowlen invite all Broncos fans to support Team Super Bowlen at the 29th annual Alzheimer's Association Walk to End Alzheimer's on Saturday at Denver City Park (2001 Colorado Blvd.). The event will begin with a ceremony at 9 a.m. before all participants begin the two-mile walk at approximately 9:15 a.m.

Team Super Bowlen, led by the Bowlen family, has again joined the Colorado chapter of the Alzheimer's Association to raise money for Alzheimer's research, support and care. Fans are encouraged to help Team Super Bowlen reach its fundraising goal and join the walk on Saturday.

The Bowlen family announced in July 2014 that Pat Bowlen is one of many Coloradoans living with Alzheimer's disease. Pat Bowlen's wife, Annabel, courageously shared her personal battle with the disease in June.

The event draws close 10,000 participants annually and has set a goal of raising \$1.35 million in 2018. Those interested in joining Team Super Bowlen or donating to the cause can visit the team's page at [dbron.co/endalz](http://dbron.co/endalz).

The Broncos raised \$40,614.31 on Saturday, Aug. 4, at Alzheimer's Awareness Day during training camp at UCHHealth Training Center. Fan donations online and at training camp (totaling \$20,307.15) were matched dollar for dollar by the team to support the Alzheimer's Association. The event made history as the largest fundraising day for the "Walk to End Alzheimer's" in Colorado.

## ABOUT THE 2018 ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION WALK TO END ALZHEIMER'S

This year, the Alzheimer's Association of Colorado has set an ambitious – but achievable – goal of being the No. 1 Walk to End Alzheimer's in all of the United States. Typically ranked among the top five Walks around the nation, the Denver Walk annually draws in excess of 10,000 people—Alzheimer's caregivers, persons with the disease, family members and supporters—for the two-mile walk around Denver City Park.

For the 29th annual Denver Walk to End Alzheimer's, the fundraising goal is set at \$1.35 million. Organizers believe it could be a conservative estimate.

The Denver Walk is one in a network of 11 Alzheimer's Association of Colorado Walks across the state that serve as the Association's primary source of funds to provide education, care and support for persons with Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers—all at no charge. The Alzheimer's Association is also the largest non-governmental source of funds for research to address the deadliest disease without a prevention, treatment or cure.

Alzheimer's disease facts:

Alzheimer's is the nation's sixth-leading cause of death.

More than 5.7 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's, with more than 14 million expected to have the disease in 2050.

Nearly \$1 of every \$5 in Medicare funds is spent on people with Alzheimer's and other dementias. By 2050 that is projected to be \$1 of every \$3.

Colorado Alzheimer's facts:

71,000 Coloradans are living with Alzheimer's today.

Alzheimer's rates are projected to jump 33 percent to 92,000 by 2025.

An estimated 247,000 volunteer Colorado caregivers provided 277 million hours of unpaid care in 2017.

# Champ Bailey among 13 Broncos nominated for Pro Football Hall of Fame's modern-era Class of 2019

By Ben Swanson  
DenverBroncos.com  
Sept. 14, 2018

Of the 102 former NFL players and coaches announced Thursday as nominees for the 2019 Pro Football Hall of Fame class, 13 have Broncos ties — including first-time candidate Champ Bailey, who retired in 2014 after 10 seasons with the team.

Bailey is joined by seven Ring of Famers: wide receiver Rod Smith (1995-2007), center Tom Nalen (1994-2008), linebacker/defensive end Karl Mecklenburg (1983-94), safeties Steve Atwater (1989-98), Dennis Smith (1981-94) and John Lynch (2004-07), kicker Jason Elam (1993-2007) and former head coach Dan Reeves (1981-92).

Defensive end Neil Smith, who won two Super Bowls (XXXII and XXXIII) and spent three years with the Broncos, is also a nominee. Running back Clinton Portis, who spent two years in Denver and earned a Pro Bowl selection in 2003, is also nominated. Former Broncos Ty Law and Simeon Rice, who spent a season or less with the team, were also selected.

One other nominee — former offensive lineman Chris Hinton — also was briefly a Bronco, but he never played a game for Denver. The Broncos drafted Hinton with the fourth-overall pick in the 1983 NFL Draft, but they traded him to Baltimore before the season started in the deal that brought John Elway to Denver.

Brief summaries of each nominee's career stats and accolades are below:

Steve Atwater

Career stats: 167 games, 166 starts, 1,356 total tackles, 24 interceptions, one defensive touchdown, 5.0 sacks

Super Bowls: Two wins (XXXII, XXXIII), three appearances (XXIV, XXXII, XXXIII)

Individual accolades: Consensus All-Rookie selection, two-time First-Team All-Pro (1991-92), one-team Second-Team All-Pro (1996), eight-time Pro Bowler (1990-96, 1998), NFL 1990s All-Decade Team, Ring of Fame inductee (2005)

Champ Bailey

Career stats: 215 games, 212 starts, 812 total tackles, 52 interceptions, four defensive touchdowns, 3.0 sacks

Super Bowls: One appearance (XLVIII)

Individual accolades: three-time First-Team All-Pro (2004-06), two-time Second-Team All-Pro (2000, 2012), 12-time Pro Bowler (2000-07, 2009-12), NFL 2000s All-Decade Team

Jason Elam

Career stats: 263 games, 436 field goals made, 540 field goals attempted, 80.7 field-goal percentage, career long of 63 yards, 675 PATs made, 679 PATs attempted, 99.4 PAT percentage

Super Bowls: two wins and two appearances (XXXII, XXXIII)

Individual accolades: three-time Second-Team All-Pro (1995, 1998, 2001), three-time Pro Bowler (1995, 1998, 2001), Ring of Fame inductee (2016)

Ty Law

Career stats: 203 games, 189 starts, 53 interceptions, seven interceptions returned for touchdowns, 5.0 sacks

Super Bowls: Three wins (XXXVI, XXXVIII, XXXIX), four appearances (XXXI, XXXVI, XXXVIII, XXXIX)

Individual accolades: Two-time First-Team All-Pro (1998, 2003), five-time Pro Bowler (1998, 2001-03, 2005), NFL 2000s All-Decade Team

John Lynch

Career stats: 224 games, 191 starts, 26 interceptions, 13.0 sacks, 15 forced fumbles, 9 fumble recoveries

Super Bowls: One win and one appearance (XXXVII)

Individual accolades: Three-time First-Team All-Pro (1999-2001), one-time Second-Team All-Pro (2002), nine-time Pro Bowler (1997, 1999-2002, 2004-07), Ring of Fame inductee (2016)

Karl Mecklenburg

Career stats: 180 games, 141 starts, 1,145 total tackles, 79.0 sacks, five interceptions

Super Bowls: Three appearances (XXI, XXII, XXIV)

Individual accolades: Four-time First-Team All-Pro (1985-87, 1989), six-time Pro Bowler (1985-87, 1989, 1991, 1993), Ring of Fame inductee (2001)

Tom Nalen

Career stats: 194 games, 188 starts

Super Bowls: Two wins and two appearances (XXXII, XXXIII)

Individual accolades: Two-time First-Team All-Pro (2000, 2003), one-time Second-Team All-Pro (1999), five-time Pro Bowler (1997-2000, 2003), NFL Alumni Offensive Lineman of the Year (2003), Ring of Fame inductee (2013)

Clinton Portis

Career stats: 113 games, 108 starts, 2,230 rushes, 9,923 rushing yards, 75 rushing touchdowns, 247 receptions, 2,018 receiving yards, five receiving touchdowns, three passing touchdowns

Individual accolades: One Second-Team All-Pro (2008), NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year (2002), two-time Pro Bowler (2003, 2008)

Dan Reeves

Coaching record: 190 wins, 165 losses, two ties, 11-9 playoff record, three AFC Championship wins and one NFC Championship win

Career stats: 100 games, 39 starts, 535 rushes for 1,990 yards, 25 rushing touchdowns, 129 receptions, 1,693 receiving yards, 17 receiving touchdowns

Super Bowls: As a head coach, four appearances (XXI, XXII, XXIV, XXXIII); as an assistant coach, one win (XII) and three appearances (X, XII, XIII); as a player, one win (VI) and two appearances (V, VI)

Individual accolades: two-time AP NFL Coach of the Year (1993, 1998), Ring of Fame inductee (2014)

Simeon Rice

Career stats: 174 games, 161 starts, 122.0 sacks, five interceptions

Super Bowls: One win and appearance (XXXVII)

Individual accolades: Four-time First-Team All-Pro (1996, 1999, 2002, 2003), three-time Pro Bowler (1999, 2002-03), NFL Defensive Rookie of the Year (1996)

Dennis Smith

Career stats: 184, games, 170 starts, 1,171 total tackles, 30 interceptions, 15.0 sacks, 17 fumble recoveries, one defensive touchdown

Super Bowls: Three appearances (XXI, XXII, XXIV)

Individual accolades: One-time Second-Team All-Pro (1989), six-time Pro Bowler (1985-86, 1989-91, 1993), Ring of Fame inductee (2001)

Neil Smith

Career stats: 191 games, 162 starts, 104.5 sacks, 582 tackles, 30 forced fumbles, four interceptions, two defensive touchdowns

Super Bowls: Two wins and appearances (XXXII, XXXIII)

Individual accolades: One-time First-Team All-Pro (1993), three-time Second-Team All-Pro (1992, 1995, 1997), six-time Pro Bowler (1991-95, 1997), NFL 1990s All-Decade Team

Rod Smith

Career stats: 183 games, 158 starts, 849 receptions, 11,389 receiving yards, 68 receiving touchdowns

Super Bowls: Two wins and appearances (XXXII, XXXIII)

Individual accolades: Two-time Second-Team All-Pro (2000-01), three-time Pro Bowler (2000-01, 2005), Ring of Fame inductee (2012)

# Ex-Raiders punter Marquette King on Jon Gruden: 'Who's that?'

By Tom Schad  
USA Today  
Sept. 14, 2018

Punter Marquette King said that he signed with the Denver Broncos this offseason in part because of the "revenge factor" — an opportunity to play his former team, the Oakland Raiders, and the coach who abruptly cut him, Jon Gruden, at least twice a year.

But when asked about Sunday's matchup between the two teams, and a chance to face off against Gruden for the first time, King was coy.

"Who's that?" King told Mike Klis of KUSA, a Denver television station. "I don't know who you're talking about."

But he's looking forward to facing the Raiders, right?

"I'm looking forward to every game," King replied.

King, who was a second-team all-pro in 2016, signed a three-year contract with Denver this spring after being released by the Raiders. His departure came months after Gruden, the ballyhooed coach-turned-television analyst, was given a massive contract to rejoin the Raiders and return to the sidelines this year.

King has said that he never even had a chance to meet Gruden before he was released. NFL Network reported that the Raiders cut him in part because of his salary (he was due to make more than \$2 million in 2018) but also "the organization's belief that the punter needed to show greater maturity on and off the field."

The 29-year-old King said after being introduced in April that the Broncos have embraced his personality.

"The cool thing about the Broncos is the people that work at the Broncos encourage you to be yourself," he said, according to KUSA. "That is real cool. Players play a lot better when they can let their hair down and be themselves. It's cool."

# Panthers owner David Tepper: It's 'dead wrong' to call players unpatriotic over protests

By Lorenzo Reyes

USA Today

Sept. 14, 2018

Carolina Panthers owner David Tepper defended NFL players for their work in communities across the country and fired back at critics who repeatedly blast the league, most notably President Donald Trump.

“These are some of the most patriotic people and best people,” Tepper told CNBC Thursday in an interview at Carnegie Mellon University when asked about the attention given to social inequality protests during the pregame playing of the national anthem. “These are great young men. So to say that (they aren't patriotic) makes me so aggravated and angry. It's just wrong, it's dead wrong.”

Though Tepper didn't name Trump, who has been outspoken in his criticism of the NFL – going as far as saying players who don't stand for the national anthem should be suspended or released – he referred to him in a follow up question from CNBC, asking about the protests as a point of debate.

“We're talking about it?” Tepper said. “I wasn't talking about it. There's a red-headed guy in D.C. that likes to talk about it, but I don't want to mention his name.”

NFL players' protests started with former San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick's decision in 2016 to first sit and then kneel during the anthem. Kaepernick spearheaded a movement that has seen other players get involved in pushing for criminal justice reform and creating programs that funnel resources into impoverished communities.

“It's the pledge of allegiance, one of the most patriotic things you can do,” Tepper said. “It's about justice for all. Now listen, everybody's standing this season, because I think people understand that it's what you do in the community, it's what you do out here.”

NFL owners passed a revised anthem policy in May that mandated players either stand on the field for the song or remain in the locker room. After blowback from the NFL Players Association, however, the policy was put on hold as discussions between the league and the union continue.

During last weekend's kickoff of the regular season, only a handful of players protested, though the work and programs players continue to do in communities remains strong. In his interview with CNBC, Tepper lamented that more attention isn't given to those efforts as much as the attention given to the protests.

“You've got a lot of people that do a lot of good things,” Tepper said. “So I think maybe the league could do more, maybe they can maybe they can't, saying how much good the players do. Get that message out more.”

# The NFL's Penalty Surge

By Andrew Beaton  
Wall Street Journal  
Sept. 14, 2018

A dream matchup pitting the reigning Super Bowl champion Philadelphia Eagles against the previous year's runner-up, the Atlanta Falcons, was supposed to be a celebration of the NFL's opening day. Instead, it marked a different kind of occasion: Flag Day.

The 26 penalties in the Eagles' win on Sept. 6 were a historical outlier—the second-most ever for a game in an opening week. Yet as Week 1 of NFL play rolled out over the coming days, the game looked less and less like an outlier. This year's openers featured an usually large load of yellow laundry littered on NFL fields.

Week 1 games averaged 15.9 accepted penalties per game. Though it's just a one-week sample, it's an astronomical figure compared with previous norms. This year's figure is a 19% spike over last year, and higher than any full season in the last two decades. (And, in case you're wondering if teams tend to be sloppier at this time of year, there's no meaningful indication that there are usually more penalties during the first week.)

For the NFL, this comes at a vexing moment. Prime-time ratings for the season's first week continued to tumble from recent years, with drops for the rain-delayed opener, and both Sunday and Monday nights' games. And presumably not many people enjoy turning on games to see them constantly interrupted by officials.

Part of the issue is that the league implemented rule changes before the season to protect players, as part of its stated efforts to make football safer. Chief among the changes is a new rule that prohibits players from lowering their heads to initiate contact.

But those same rules have drawn the ire of fans, players and coaches for toning down the violent nature of the game.

These controversial new rules accounted for part of this increase, but not necessarily because of the helmet rule. While the new helmet rule was whistled 60 times in the preseason, according to ESPN Stats and Info, it resulted in just one penalty in Week 1.

Instead, another new rule turned out to be perhaps more confusing and frustrating in the first week of games. That rule says defensive players can't land on quarterbacks with their full body weight. Again, this was designed to protect players. Still, it is proving befuddling because its critics say it's antithetical to basic tackling fundamentals, which involve using one's body to take an opposing player to the ground.

There were five such penalties last week—including one that the NFL's chief official says was called incorrectly. That came during a crucial moment in the Cleveland Browns game against the Pittsburgh Steelers. Browns defensive end Myles Garrett, the No. 1 pick in the 2017 draft and one of the league's best rising pass rushers, took down Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger on third-and-7, with the pressure leading to an incompletion. Garrett, afterward, was whistled for the flag under the new rule.



So instead of facing fourth-and-7 and being forced to kick a field goal, Pittsburgh scored a touchdown on the next play. The game ended in a 21-21 tie.

“Even though there is some body weight on [Roethlisberger],” Al Riveron, the NFL’s head of officiating, told NFL.com, “this is not what we would consider contact that rises to the level of a foul.”

A league official said the league has no plans to revisit the rules in response to the first week’s surge in penalties and that roughing the passer is a point of emphasis after many clubs during the off-season indicated to the Competition Committee that they wanted protecting quarterbacks to be a priority.

In total, 5.9% of the penalties called in Week One were for roughing the passer. Only 3.1% of penalties were for roughing the passer over the course of the 2017 season, according to Stats LLC, and marked the most significant growth of any variety of penalty versus last season.

For the league, this could be a resurgence of a trend. From 2008 to 2015 penalties per game rose from 11.20—the lowest in the last two decades—to 13.85 amid previous points of emphasis and changes, including ones designed to protect the quarterback and discourage dangerous hits. But in 2016 and 2017, the rate dropped by about half a penalty per game.

It’s possible the flood of penalties last week was nothing more than a season-opening blip. It’s also possible these numbers could decrease as players become accustomed to the new rules.

But it’s also possible this could buoy headwinds the league has tried to thwart. Namely, penalties take time. Officials confer, players and coaches complain and then the penalty gets announced. And now there may be more of them to make games take even longer.

# Children Should Avoid Tackle Football Before High School, Report Says

By Rachel Bachman  
Wall Street Journal  
Sept. 14, 2018

Children shouldn't play tackle football before high school, according to recommendations released Wednesday by the Aspen Institute.

Scientists believe children are particularly vulnerable to brain injury in collision sports like football in part because of their still-developing brains, according to a 27-page report on the future of football by the nonpartisan, nonprofit think tank. It recommended that USA Football, Pop Warner, and other youth football organizations focus on flag football before age 14.

"USA Football and the Aspen Institute's Sport & Society program share the same end goal of advancing and growing youth sports to include positive experiences, focus on skill development and improve safety measures, and a progression of sport development that leads to better and smarter athletes," said Melinda Whitemarsh, USA Football senior director of communications and public affairs.

Pop Warner didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Young people have still-developing brain circuitry, relatively large heads and weak neck and shoulder muscles compared with adults, the report said. It also noted that although hard-plastic helmets are very effective at preventing skull fractures, "medical experts recognize they do not prevent concussions nor subconcussive trauma."

Participation in flag football has surged in recent years, and last year surpassed tackle-football participation among children ages 6-12, according to the Sports & Fitness Industry Association. Even NFL quarterback Drew Brees has gotten into the game, launching a flag-football league. Though flag football carries injury potential of its own, it is thought to carry a lower risk of serious head injury.

Wednesday's recommendations represent a more cautious approach than the Aspen Institute took even three years ago. In 2015, the Institute advised that all youth sports adopt policies that "eliminate or greatly reduce head contact at the 12-and-under level."

A 2017 Boston University study linked beginning tackle football before age 12 with increased risk of depression, cognitive impairment and behavior problems over time. Groups calling for delaying tackle football until age 14 include the Boston-based Concussion Legacy Foundation and a group of mothers whose sons played youth football and later were diagnosed with chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), a neurodegenerative disease linked to repetitive brain trauma, according to the Aspen report.

Tackle football remains the most popular high school sport by a wide margin, as 1,067,970 athletes played it last year, according to the National Federation of State High School Associations. But participation declined for the fourth consecutive year at a time when many sports are growing.

Though the calls to delay the start of tackle football are increasing, they're not new, according to the Aspen report. In 1907, the Journal of the American Medical Association condemned tackle football participation for anyone under age 18, calling it "no sport for boys to play." The report also said that until the 1950s and '60s, tackle football before high school was uncommon.

# Von Miller prepares for Derek Carr's quick release

By Mike Florio  
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In Week One, the Broncos faced a quarterback who has significant running skills. In Week Two, Denver hosts a quarterback about whom the defense is leery for another reason.

"People don't really want to play Derek [Carr]," linebacker Von Miller told reporters on Thursday. "He's not going to give you a chance to rush the passer. I think the average time to throw the ball to throw the ball last year was 2.5 seconds. They had Derek throwing it in 2.2 on Monday. He's going to get the ball out very quick and he's very accurate with his throws. They have a great offensive line, a great running back and great coaches over there. Pretty tough team that we're going up against. We know that the ant pile is going to be stirred up a little bit, with the game they played the other day. It's going to be tough one, but we're looking forward to it."

So how does a pass rusher deal with a quarterback who gets ride of the ball quickly?

"Hands up, get your hands up," Miller said. "Try to get them third and long. I mean, at third and long you've got to take your time and throw the ball anyways. If you're throwing the ball quick on third and long, we've got great corners. We've just got to let those guys spread. Three and outs happen when you throw the ball quick and don't just want an incomplete ball. Yeah, we've just got to get our hands up and hopefully he'll hold it. Rush like he's going to hold the ball."

Carr may end up holding the ball a little longer this week, given that he's quite possibly now thinking about trying to get the ball to receiver Amari Cooper, given that coach Jon Gruden publicly bemoaned the team's failure to find Cooper more frequently "for whatever reason."