

# Broncos' Brandon Marshall says he'll donate \$300 per tackle to address "critical social issues" in Denver

By Nicki Jhabvala

Denver Post

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In an Instagram message posted Wednesday morning, Broncos linebacker Brandon Marshall further explained his decision to kneel for the national anthem last Thursday and reaffirmed his commitment to try to effect change in the local community.

Marshall, who has spoken of the "end game" with his protests, pledged \$300 for every tackle he makes this season to Denver organizations and programs to address "critical social issues."

"I plan to be involved with several other organizations that benefit the Denver community and others through the services, awareness and funds they provide for these critical social issues," he wrote, alongside a photo of him with Denver police chief Robert White. "And I will donate 300 dollars for every tackle I make this season to those programs. You can track these contributions on social media through #TackleChange."

Last season, Marshall finished second on the team with 101 total defensive tackles, plus another special-teams tackle. A repeat this season would result in \$30,600 in donations.

While Marshall is still formulating the list of organizations and programs he wants to help, the notion of having a list and of initiating a meeting with White has given him a framework for his "end game."

"That's part of the end game, but that's only one part of it," he said. "I'm going to continue to think of different things and continue to come up with different solutions."

Marshall met with White for nearly an hour Tuesday at Denver police headquarters to learn more about policing, locally and nationally. White, in response to Marshall's list of questions, provided him with three reports on policing and said he will supply him with another list of ways in which he can work with the department. Among the suggestions will be joining an officer on a ride-along, and testing out the department's simulator to gain a better sense of what officers face in shoot and don't-shoot scenarios.

"I took a lot," Marshall said of the meeting. "A better understanding of what they go through and the different trials and tests that it (takes) to be a police officer. And he kind of got my side of it, as well, so I think it was a good meeting."

"I'll definitely go in the simulator. I'll probably do a ride-along, as well, but I'm going to take my teammates with me and we're going to do the simulator."

Last Thursday, before the Broncos' season opener against the Carolina Panthers in Denver, Marshall became the latest among a string of players to sit or kneel for the anthem to protest police brutality and social injustice in the country. The movement, started by San Francisco quarterback Colin Kaepernick, has come with consequences for the athletes, especially Marshall, who has faced pushback on social media and has lost two endorsement deals.

Although Marshall lost Air Academy Federal Credit Union and CenturyLink as sponsors, he said he is in talks for an endorsement deal with RushCard, a prepaid Visa card founded by hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons in 2003.

Marshall has said he plans to kneel again for the national anthem Sunday when the Broncos host the Indianapolis Colts at Sports Authority Field.

“I don’t have a timeline. Whenever I stand up, I’ll stand up and I think it’ll be a good thing,” Marshall said. “I’ll think it’ll make an impact. I’m trying to do things in the community, as well. So when I do stand up — because kneeling was really just to bring attention to the issue. An awareness factor. A symbol, so to speak. Just like the flag is a symbol. That’s really not what everything’s about. It’s not about kneeling. It’s about other things. It’s about doing donations, I’m going to do some other things to back up the kneeling.”

# Broncos' Darian Stewart, Brandon Marshall fined for Cam Newton hits

By Nicki Jhabvala  
Denver Post  
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The NFL fined Broncos safety Darian Stewart \$18,231 and linebacker Brandon Marshall \$24,309 for their hits on Panthers quarterback Cam Newton last Thursday.

Stewart said he was expecting a fine on the play, which was penalized during the fourth quarter for roughing the passer but nullified by Newton's intentional grounding. Per the league's schedule of fines, \$18,231 is the minimum issued for a first offense of roughing.

"I am upset about it, but it's still football," Stewart said. "It's not going to change the way I play the game. I guess they got a job to do, too. ... I will definitely appeal it."

Marshall has said he, too, expected a fine for his third-quarter hit on Newton and admitted it appeared as though he launched at Newton's head to try to tackle him. The fine of \$24,309 is the minimum for "impermissible use of the helmet (including illegal launching)."

"That's a huge fine," Marshall said. "I know what it looked like, but that's a lot of money. So, yes, I'm upset about it. I wasn't expecting that amount. Truth be told, I was expecting (Stewart) to get more than me."

Marshall said he will "absolutely" appeal the fine, as well.

NFL commissioner Roger Goodell told The Washington Post on Monday that officials "missed at least one" illegal hit by Broncos defenders, who had at least four helmet-to-helmet hits against Newton in Denver's season-opening victory.

"The one call that I'm aware of that they missed when he was moving back to the offensive line, back to the line of scrimmage, and he pulled back up and went to (being) a passer," Goodell said, referring to Marshall's hit. "He gets that passer protection when he's in the passing mode. But the defender used a technique that we've been trying to get out of the game, frankly. He left his feet and went to the head. It's ultimately all about the technique that's used, that's coached. And we want to make sure it's not."

The latest two fines, coupled with cornerback Bradley Roby's \$24,309 fine for a hit against the Los Angeles Rams in the preseason, brings the Broncos' total money lost in fines to \$66,849.

# Indianapolis Colts at Denver Broncos: 3 things to watch

By Cameron Wolfe

Denver Post

September 15, 2016

## Don't count out Luck

Indianapolis has shown a propensity to fall behind early, often big, before embarking on comebacks. That's what happened with the Colts Sunday against Detroit as they went down 21-3 late in the second quarter. The Colts then outscored the Lions 25-7 to tie the game early in the fourth quarter, but their defense ultimately gave up the victory.

10 of Luck's 35 career wins have been fourth quarter comeback victories, the same amount as Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers although the latter has seven more years of NFL experience. If the Broncos get up early, they can't afford to cruise to the finish line.

## Overcoming history

It hasn't been the Chiefs or Patriots who have been the Broncos' toughest opponents over the past few years, it's the Colts. Indianapolis has won three of its past four meetings against Denver since 2013 and five consecutive before that from 2005-2010 when Peyton Manning was the Colts' quarterback. The Colts knocked off the undefeated Broncos 27-24 in Indianapolis last November.

"They just got our number to be honest," running back C.J. Anderson said. "It's just something about what they do. They really don't change anything up. It's just something about them wanting it more than us. That's what it comes down to this weekend. We just have to want it more."

## Quick flags

The Broncos drew much scrutiny for their helmet-to-helmet hits on Panthers quarterback Cam Newton last Thursday. It'll be interesting to see if referees are flag happy on any hard or borderline hits Denver doles out, particularly on Colts quarterback Andrew Luck.

Denver's defense has maintained it will stay aggressive and play its game. That means it will be fast-moving, hard-hitting and attacking the quarterback.

# Trevor Siemian's first start, moving forward, shows "he's mature beyond his years"

By Cameron Wolfe  
Denver Post  
September 15, 2016

The Broncos didn't waste time getting quarterback Trevor Siemian comfortable. For his first NFL pass Thursday night against the Carolina Panthers, Siemian stood in the pocket, calm under pressure, side-armed a bubble-screen pass around a defender to Demaryius Thomas for a 11-yard completion. And with that, and the rest of the game, Siemian's role was confirmed.

He managed the game well. He got the ball to his playmakers. And most important, it was apparent Siemian's first start wasn't too big for him.

"I wanted to get the first completion," Siemian said. "Once you get that, you get into the flow of the game. You're playing ball again."

Despite throwing two interceptions, he was relatively accurate and efficient, completing 18 of 26 passes for 178 yards and a touchdown. He made some strong throws and smart scrambles to help bring the Broncos back from a 10-point deficit, and ultimately a 21-20 victory over Carolina.

Siemian blended into the offense and coach Gary Kubiak's system. If Panthers kicker Graham Gano would've made his 50-yard field-goal attempt to win the game, Siemian wouldn't have been the main reason the Broncos lost. After Gano missed it, Siemian wasn't the main reason they won.

Siemian earned enough respect with his performance that opponents are likely to view him as a potential weapon rather than just a young weakness they can exploit. Count Indianapolis coach Chuck Pagano among those impressed with his Week 1 performance.

"I saw a young man that looks like he's been playing for a long time. He's mature beyond his years," Pagano said. "He's a perfect fit, is what I saw, for coach Kubes' system."

Siemian showed off his athleticism, scrambling three times against Carolina when his initial reads weren't open, gaining 22 yards, including a third-down conversion and a 11-yard rush around the right edge. It's another dynamic that Pagano said they saw and have to be prepared for Sunday. Siemian attributed that more to the game's circumstance rather than a role he wants to take on more as a running quarterback.

"No. Absolutely not," he said. "Don't be spreading that around, please."

Kubiak expressed pride in Siemian's first performance, but he also pointed out the mistakes the Broncos made despite the victory. The starting point is turnovers — a battle lost 3-1 against Carolina.

Siemian's first interception, which came on an outside screen pass to Emmanuel Sanders, was created by a great defensive play by Panthers defensive tackle Star Lotulelei to bat the ball in the air for linebacker Thomas Davis to intercept. Siemian's second interception came while he was hit on a deep

pass to Sanders, allowing the trailing cornerback Bene Benwikere to make the play. These two crucial mistakes in Panthers' territory were forced errors by a tough Panthers defense.

"Obviously, he had two decision issues that we have to clean up," Kubiak said. "He never got rattled. He was down. Being down 10 bothers some guys in this league. You're going to get down in this league sometimes, but you have to maintain your composure."

This week's challenge might be a little easier for Siemian. The Colts' defense comes into Sunday's game limping after giving up 39 points and 340 yards passing to the Lions and quarterback Matt Stafford in a home loss. It also sustained several injuries in the secondary.

Already missing star cornerback Vontae Davis, who suffered a serious ankle injury in the preseason, the Colts' starting cornerback Patrick Robinson (concussion) and starting safety T.J. Green (knee) also are in jeopardy of missing Sunday's game. Cornerbacks Darius Butler (ankle) and Antonio Cromartie (hamstring) are banged up, too.

Pagano said the Broncos will be a difficult challenge for his squad. The matchups might be favorable for Siemian to attack in the passing game and put up good numbers, but he seems comfortable simply fitting into Kubiak's system.

"I just have to understand that we have a great team," Siemian said. "I'm not going to be trying to do too much."

### Siem's card

*Breaking down Broncos quarterback Trevor Siemian's first career start by location and distance of his passes:*

Location/distance	Att.	Com.	Pct.	Yds	TDs	INTs	Rating
Left sideline	1	1	100.0	12	0	0	116.7
Left	9	9	100.0	106	1	0	152.8
Middle	3	1	33.3	5	0	0	42.4
Right	3	2	66.7	0	0	1	30.6
Right sideline	10	5	50.0	55	0	1	27.1
Pass behind line	7	5	71.4	35	1	1	82.4
Pass thrown 1-10 yds	14	9	64.3	78	0	0	78.9
Pass thrown 11-20 yds	5	4	80.0	65	1	0	79.2

# Demaryius Thomas hobbled at practice, as Broncos try to get him square to face Colts

By Nick Groke  
Denver Post  
September 15, 2016

Demaryius Thomas hobbled his way through a Broncos practice Wednesday at Dove Valley with limited field time. And the Broncos are trying desperately to get him square to face the Indianapolis Colts on Sunday in Denver.

The Broncos' No. 1 wide receiver continually rapped a fist at his injured left hip during practice and, at one point, he stopped to take a knee after running a hard route. Thomas was involved for only about 33 percent of the Broncos' practice, coach Gary Kubiak said.

"I know he's sore. He's been sore," Kubiak said. "But we've had a few days extra (after a season-opening Thursday game). Now it's a matter of working through it."

Thomas injured his hip in the first quarter against the Carolina Panthers last Thursday night. He did not practice with the team Monday. The Broncos' medical personnel gave him a clean diagnosis after he received an magnetic resonance imaging test Friday. Thomas sought a second opinion Monday, according to ESPN. Thomas returned to the field for the first time in six days Wednesday, but looked in pain for parts of practice. Thomas declined to talk, but said he will update his progress Thursday.

"He looked OK with what we asked him to do," Kubiak said. "We're going to take it a step at a time this week. We knew we had him set for certain plays at practice and tomorrow we'll pick it up."

Thomas returned to Thursday's game and played through pain for 44 snaps, about 76 percent of the Broncos' offensive plays. He caught four passes for 48 yards. He was the Broncos' leading receiver last season, with 105 receptions for 1,304 yards.

Kubiak said he is planning on Thomas playing Sunday.

"I'm expecting him to be there," the coach said. "DT has been through some of this before."

Fowler in full. Wide receiver Bennie Fowler returned from an elbow injury for a brief spell to begin practice, but he sat out the bulk of plays, so the Broncos officially listed him as "did not participate."

"I know DT is struggling with his hip right now," said Fowler, who was in uniform with a brace still on his right elbow. "But I can't rush it at all."

Fowler said he will continue to wear the brace for "a week or two."

Footnotes. Tight end Jeff Heuerman (ankle) also had limited field time. Offensive lineman Ty Sambrailo (elbow) practiced in full... Veteran defensive end Vance Walker underwent surgery Tuesday to repair a torn anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee. He will miss the season on injured reserve... Denver was No. 1 among all major television markets with a 46.9 rating for Week 1 in the NFL.

# Value of the Denver Broncos up 25 percent since 2015, Forbes says

By Denver Post Staff  
Denver Post  
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The value of the Denver Broncos has risen nearly 25 percent since last year, increasing to \$2.4 billion from \$1.94 billion last year, according to Forbes' 2016 assessment of the NFL's most valuable teams.

But it's not because of the Super Bowl 50 win.

According to the magazine's annual guesstimate of values — looking at equity and debt, historical transactions and offers to buy and invest in teams that are in play, and adjusted for teams moving into new stadiums — the average value of the 32 NFL teams rose 19 percent over the past year to an average of \$2.34 billion.

And so-called portability — Forbes' description of a lucrative stadium deal — was a big reason. The 32 teams share equally TV money and national sponsorship dollars, as well as a third of ticket proceeds, the magazine reported. That means, at least for Forbes' purposes, the rankings are highly influenced by stadium revenue, such as luxury suites and advertising.

The No. 11 Broncos' annual revenue was estimated at \$387 million last year with operating income of \$82 million, up from \$346 million last year and operating income of \$66 million — pocket change compared to the \$700 million in revenue and \$300 million operating income for the Cowboys.

Forbes attributed \$192 million of the Broncos' to the value of the team's brand and another \$292 million to the stadium. Perhaps the home team will rise in the rankings once it finds a buyer for naming rights to Mile High Stadium. The name of failed retailer Sports Authority remains on the building, but the team paid in bankruptcy court for the right to control which company becomes the next naming sponsor — and how much it will pay.

America's team, the Dallas Cowboys, was at the top of the heap, valued at \$4.2 billion, up just 5 percent from \$4 billion last year. Forbes cited the team's new \$1.5 billion team headquarters and practice facility — really a 91-acre mall — as the reason the Cowboys likely will remain the most valuable team for years. The Cowboys were No. 1 last year, too.

The ranking also reports annual revenue and operating income, net of revenue sharing and stadium debt service — culled from the teams, public documents, sports bankers, credit-rating agencies, network executives and media experts, such as SNL Kagan. Revenue from non-NFL events (think concerts) was included only when it flowed to an entity controlled or owned by the team owner.

The value of the No. 17 Minnesota Vikings climbed 38 percent last year to \$2.2 billion, in part because of the premium fans pay just for the right to buy a season ticket, plus the \$10 million per year U.S. Bank is paying to have its name on the \$1.1 billion Minneapolis stadium that the team will play in for the first time this year (the team owes more than \$600 million on that bill). The team's annual revenue was pegged at \$306 million, with operating income of \$51 million.

## Broncos rising

The Broncos gained franchise value by about 25 percent from 2015 to 2016, according to a valuation performed by Forbes magazine. Where the Broncos rank among the top 12 most valuable franchises in the NFL:

Rank and team ... Valuation ... Revenue

1. Dallas Cowboys ... \$4.2 billion ... \$700 million
2. New England Patriots ... \$3.4 ... \$523
3. New York Giants ... \$3.1 ... \$444
4. San Francisco 49ers ... \$3.0 ... \$446
5. Washington football ... \$2.95 ... \$447
6. Los Angeles Rams ... \$2.9 ... \$317
7. New York Jets ... \$2.75 ... \$423
8. Chicago Bears ... \$2.7 ... \$385
9. Houston Texans ... \$2.6 ... \$416
10. Philadelphia Eagles ... \$2.5 ... \$407
11. Denver Broncos ... \$2.4 ... \$387
12. Miami Dolphins ... \$2.38 ... \$359

# Brandon Marshall: We started the conversation. But action speaks loudest.

By Brandon Marshall  
Denver Post  
September 15, 2016

Editor's note: Broncos linebacker Brandon Marshall offers his perspective on social inequality in the United States and what went into his decisions to kneel during the national anthem last Thursday and to meet with Denver Police Chief Robert White on Tuesday to discuss ways to effect change. Marshall is a fifth-year player who was the recipient of the Broncos' 2015 Community Ambassador, the Darrent Williams Good Guy and the Ed Block Courage awards for his contributions on and off the field.

There was some hesitance initially, because I knew what it would look like. I knew all the scrutiny I would get. I knew the endorsements I could potentially lose. And I definitely thought about how my team would look at me. All of that came into my mind, but I still felt like this was important.

Last Thursday, when I decided to kneel for the national anthem before our game against the Panthers, I knew it was a big stage — the biggest stage. But I also knew I needed to step up and become part of the movement against social injustices.

As I was on one knee last week, I could see all the cameras shifting toward me. I could see people snapping pictures, and I knew when I got back to my phone that I would have a ton of messages awaiting my response. It was the longest national anthem I can remember.

After the game, coach Gary Kubiak told me he wanted to talk to me the next morning. So I went into his office and he said the Broncos support me and that they have my back and that they want me to keep being me. He didn't say anything about football, because he didn't have to. I'm a grown man. I have an obligation to still do my job on the field. He supports me because he supports everyone being an individual and being themselves. A lot of my teammates, too, said they respected me for it.

I know a lot of players feel like this is a good movement, but not everybody is going to take a stand. My first year in the league, I didn't know if I would have a platform because I was repeatedly getting released. Now I have a tremendous platform, so when I do have conviction about these issues, I know it's the right thing to do to use it.

But even before I took a knee, I knew it would just be the beginning. The knee was just to bring awareness. It's a symbol. What's the point of protesting without any action? We've started a conversation now, and as much as anyone wants to believe there's equality and that there is no discrimination in this country, there is. We may not be able to stop it entirely, but we can bring awareness and begin to correct the injustices, be it sexism, ageism, racism — all of it.

So shortly after I took a knee, I started talking to people to figure what I can do and how I can do it.

There has been a lot of negativity, and I expected that, but I try to not read into it too much. A lot of the backlash is a diversion from the real issue, something I was reminded of firsthand this summer.

I was in Miami with three others at a restaurant and there was a shooting. Everybody ducked under the table out of fear, and a cop came in and told us it was fine, that it was just fireworks. We knew that wasn't the truth.

We began to leave the only way we knew, but there was a lady in regular street clothes directing traffic, telling us, "Go this way, go this way!" At a serious, scary moment a lady I didn't know was telling me which way to go, and I didn't trust it.

We went our own way, and she yelled to the cops, "Stop him! Get him!" When I turned around, about five officers rushed toward me to take me down. They tried to take me down up top, then they tried to grab my legs. One of the cops pointed a Taser at my chest. They handcuffed me and I heard one say, "Take him in for resisting."

I was in the back of the police car headed to the station when one of the officers radioed in and said, "Bring him back." They told me, "Look, we're not going to take you in as long as you keep this between us."

I don't regret anything I've done. This process has made me rethink things, too, and now I know that I have the power to effect change, not only locally but also nationally.

I will donate \$300 for every tackle. Every single tackle. I'm compiling the list of local organizations and programs that I will donate to. Denver Police Chief Robert White suggested some during our meeting Tuesday. But I'm going to take my time to find the right organizations, because I want to make sure it gets into the right hands. I want to do this right.

One person can make a change. Colin Kaepernick started the fire, and I believe it takes other people's participation to keep it burning.

# Marshall on fine: 'That's some people's salaries after taxes, that's crazy'

By Mike Klis

KUSA

September 15, 2016

After blasting Carolina quarterback Cam Newton in the helmet four times last Thursday, the NFL blasted back at the Denver Broncos today, hitting them where it hurts professional athletes most.

In the wallet.

I thought the league got it exactly right.

First, they didn't fine Von Miller or Shaq Barrett. Their hits to Newton's head were deemed accidental.

The biggest fine, correctly, went to Broncos' linebacker Brandon Marshall. He got docked \$24,309.

PREVIOUS STORY: Broncos' Marshall, Stewart fined for hits on Cam Newton

"I wasn't expecting that amount," Marshall said. "Truth be told I was expecting Stew to get more than me. But I guess his was more justified. But \$24,000 and someone was saying that it wasn't enough. I'm like, 'What you mean that's some peoples' salaries after taxes'. That's crazy."

Safety Darian Stewart was fined \$18,231.

"I felt like he was running with the ball, I was just trying to make a play," Stewart said of Newton. "He had been doing that the whole game. I was just being aggressive but not really trying to aim for the head."

Marshall and Stewart may think those fines are hefty -- and they will appeal in hopes of getting their fines reduced -- but they got no more than the minimum for first-time offenders. Marshall will pay a steeper penalty because he fell under the category of launching and illegal use of his helmet. Stewart was a straight roughing the passer infraction.

"I know what it looked like," Marshall said. "I know it looked bad. But that's a lot of money.

Marshall's been giving away money left and right this week. He lost two endorsements because of his protest that involved kneeling during the National Anthem (although he is expected to pick up one endorsement), he got fined, and then he set up a charitable fund where he will give \$300 for every tackle he makes this year to social issue groups. The league gives revenue from fines, by the way, to retired player funds.

Some hits to the wallet hurts less than others.

Now about the Broncos' reputation. Four hits to the quarterback's head has brought claims of dirty play.

"They call it dirty but we just call it Bronco football," said cornerback Aqib Talib. "We're playing full speed to the whistle. ... We only get to play one way and that's full speed so we're going to play full speed. Things happen, sometimes guys duck ... sometimes things happen but when you're playing full speed some things might happen."

# Broncos' Marshall, Stewart fined for hits on Cam Newton

By Mike Klis

KUSA

September 15, 2016

They knew it. They knew it.

And unfortunately for the bank accounts of Brandon Marshall and Darian Stewart, they got it.

Marshall, a Denver Broncos' inside linebacker, and Stewart, the team's starting free safety, said Monday they expected to get fined by the NFL for their helmet strikes of Carolina quarterback Cam Newton in the season opener last Thursday.

"Do I think I'll get fined? Yeah," Stewart said. "Do I think deserve to be fined? No. At the end of the day, he had the ball like he was running."

Stewart was penalized 15 yards for his hit that left Newton shaken with 36 seconds remaining, although because the quarterback was flagged for not getting his pass to the line of scrimmage, the infractions offset.

Stewart then learned Wednesday he was fined \$18,231.

Marshall's blast on Newton appeared malicious, even if he said it wasn't intentional. He launched his body with two feet and his helmet struck Newton's helmet. Incredulously, Marshall wasn't penalized.

He was Wednesday when he was fined \$24,309 by the league. Marshall admitted Monday his blast of Newton didn't look good.

"It didn't," Marshall said. "I don't want to say too much because I know they're going to fine me...I'm going to talk to them."

Marshall and Stewart have said they will appeal their fines.

Two other Bronco players, Von Miller and Shaq Barrett, struck Newton in the helmet during Denver's 21-20 win Thursday, although their hits appeared unintentional and neither player was fined.

# Pro Football Hall of Fame nominations include 10 with Bronco ties

By Mike Klis

KUSA

September 15, 2016

Among the 94 modern-era nominees for the Pro Football Hall of Fame class of 2017, 10 have connections to the Denver Broncos.

Betcha can't name all 10. Without, you know, help from the Internet. You can probably get nine, but no way the tenth.

Here are the first two Broncos' nominees: Running back Terrell Davis and safety John Lynch. They were both modern-era finalists last year who made it inside the top 10 in the voting, although only five can be elected.

They both could be among the next five in line – although Davis may have to watch out for first-year nominee LaDainian Tomlinson.

Others with Bronco ties who were nominated: Rod Smith, receiver; Tom Nalen, center; Karl Mecklenburg, linebacker; Steve Atwater, safety; first-year eligible Brian Dawkins, safety; Ty Law, cornerback; Dennis Smith, safety; and Dan Reeves, coach.

No way you got Law, who played his first 10 seasons with the New England Patriots and 15th and final season with the Broncos in 2009 (he played in just seven games).

The 94 nominees will be narrowed to 25 in November and then the 15 finalists will be named in January.

Those final 15, plus senior committee finalist Kenny Easley and contributors Jerry Jones and Paul Tagliabue will be presented to 46-member Hall of Fame voting committee on the eve of Super Bowl 51 in Houston.

Lynch has been a top 15 finalist three consecutive years; Davis the past two years and Atwater last year.

# Don't look now, but fullback Andy Janovich is Broncos' impact rookie

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN.com

September 15, 2016

Years ago, former Tennessee Titans general manager Floyd Reese might have summed up the search for an NFL fullback best with his experience on the matter.

"First off, nobody, as in nobody, grows up thinking, 'I want to be a fullback,' or wanting to flat-head it up in there, play after play, and block linebackers, defensive tackles, whatever," Reese once said. "It's hard to find guys who do it in college and it's really hard to find guys who can do it well in this league."

The Denver Broncos might have done just that with one Andy Janovich. The Broncos saw what Janovich did at the position at Nebraska, projected it into their offense, and wanted a fullback badly enough in these pass-happy times to make Janovich a sixth-round draft pick in April.

And in his first regular-season game, Janovich showed what he could mean to Denver's offense.

"Andy, people saw what he can do," said Broncos running back C.J. Anderson. "Maybe they didn't know about it before, but they know about it now."

During the team's offseason program, training camp and the preseason, coach Gary Kubiak vowed the fullback would have an important place in the Broncos' offense. And it did, with Denver in a two-back set on 37.7 percent of its snaps in the opener against the Carolina Panthers, penalty snaps included. Janovich repeatedly made key blocks in front of Anderson, and he did it against one of the more accomplished groups of linebackers in the league.

He also now, courtesy of a 28-yard touchdown run in the second quarter, sports a 28-yards-per-carry average and has scored on his only career attempt.

"That was huge," Anderson said. "He just tossed the ball to the ref, but I was like, 'That's your first touchdown.' I had to run out there and get the ball and give it back to him. I was excited for him."

Added Janovich: "I've said, I was positive I was going to get caught from behind."

It was all in stark contrast to 2015, when the Broncos had eight games in which they didn't use a two-back set, and for the season had two backs in their offensive formation just 25 times. With Peyton Manning retired and Brock Osweiler departed in free agency, it was something Kubiak said would change in the offense.

The Broncos like the portion of the playbook that opens up with a two-back set and, in Kubiak's mind, it makes defenses honor the line of scrimmage more and can open things up in man coverages down the field. It also forced the Panthers to respond, for the most part, in their base defense, which helped quarterback Trevor Siemian in his first NFL start because it meant Siemian was seeing more traditional defensive looks.

As a result, Siemian was efficient against a stout Panthers defense and the Broncos pounded out 148 yards rushing with all three of their touchdowns coming from running backs: Janovich's run to go with rushing and receiving scores by Anderson.

It got the attention of Indianapolis Colts coach Chuck Pagano as he has prepared to face the Broncos on Sunday.

"They do such a great job of getting you turned and getting you running up front, and the offensive linemen do a great job of getting to the second level and they get you to over-pursue -- and they create some vertical run lanes in your defense and there's seams in there," Pagano said. "They hit those seams, and the next thing you know that ball carrier is in your defensive backfield and you're doing everything you can to get him on the ground.T

"The different play-action that comes off of it gets you slowed down and gets you guessing a little bit. It's a huge challenge, it's tough to defend."

The Detroit Lions rushed for 116 yards in Week 1 against the Colts in a game that leaned decidedly toward the pass; the two teams combined for 86 attempts, 725 passing yards and seven touchdown passes. But the Lions rushed for 87 of those yards in the first half, when they built a 21-3 lead.

"Our offense is a little different, teams are going to game plan us a little different because we have a fullback," Anderson said. "We know that going in, but we've also been talking about it since OTAs, minicamp and training camp and the preseason, how people would attack Andy."

# Terrell Davis leads eight former Broncos on list of nominees for Hall of Fame

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN.com

September 15, 2016

Former Denver Broncos running back Terrell Davis and former safeties Steve Atwater and John Lynch lead a group of eight Broncos on the list of modern-era nominees for Pro Football Hall of Fame's Class of 2017.

It means the eight Broncos have made it past the first step toward enshrinement. The list of 94 players, released Wednesday night, will now be reduced to 25 players by the Hall's board of selectors in the coming weeks and the list of 25 semifinalists will then be reduced to 15 finalists.

The 15 finalists will then be debated at a meeting of the selectors the day before Super Bowl XLI and as many as five modern-era finalists will be selected for enshrinement. Davis, Atwater and Lynch were all finalists for the Class of 2016 and Davis has been a finalist in three consecutive years.

However, this year's list of nominees features several accomplished players in their first year of eligibility, including former San Diego Chargers running back LaDainian Tomlinson and former Miami Dolphins defensive end Jason Taylor.

Other former Broncos among the nominees were Rod Smith, Tom Nalen, Karl Mecklenburg, Brian Dawkins and Dennis Smith.

With eight Super Bowl trips -- that's more title-game trips than losing seasons in Pat Bowlen's tenure as owner -- the Broncos are vastly under-represented in the Hall of Fame with just four players enshrined: John Elway, Gary Zimmerman, Shannon Sharpe and Floyd Little.

Davis has been a vigorously-debated candidate in recent years. His career was cut short by a knee injury he suffered in 1999, but his 78 career games are more than six running backs already in the Hall of Fame.

Davis' 142.5 yards rushing per game average in the postseason is highest in league history for backs who had a rushing attempt in at least five postseason games. Overall the Broncos won 91.7 percent of regular-season and postseason games in Davis' career when he rushed for at least 100 yards.

And Davis and Jim Brown are the only two backs in league history to average more than 100 yards per game rushing in a career in regular-season and postseason games combined. Davis is also one of just 12 players to have won a league MVP award and a Super Bowl MVP award.

# When it comes to football C.J. Anderson says mom knows best

By Jeff Legwold  
ESPN.com  
September 15, 2016

Most of the Denver Broncos running backs will say the coaches always want a little more, no matter how well they played.

But C.J. Anderson may even have a tougher critic of his on-field work: his mother, Neva. As Anderson tells it, his mom knows best and is always ready for a little postgame analysis.

"You should hear my mom after games," Anderson said Wednesday. "Matter of fact, I should record the conversation. That and I've got a bunch of family and friends, who've been watching me play since I was very young. They always let me know what I could have done better and what I could've done to help the team in certain situations."

Asked to give an example of what his mom's critique would be, Anderson said: "I'm not going to tell you that because it's not all rated PG for kids."

Anderson is the team's unquestioned lead back to start the season for the time in his four years with the Broncos. His opening night work was good against the Carolina Panthers as he finished with 92 yards rushing on his 20 carries to go with 47 additional yards receiving -- including a 25-yard catch-and-run touchdown on a screen pass from quarterback Trevor Siemian.

Last season, when Anderson rushed for 43 or fewer yards in each of the Broncos' first six games, Anderson credited his mom for helping him turn the corner a bit when she told him he "didn't look happy" when he was playing in games.

"She definitely said I looked happy [after Thursday's win], but she definitely said on a couple runs I should've went here and should've went there," Anderson said. "And then you watch the tape and I don't know how she sees it ... but she's been doing this through my older brother for a very long time and now through me, so she's been around the game for a while."

Anderson's place in the offense has taken on a far higher profile than it had in his first three seasons with the team. The Broncos matched the \$18 million offer sheet to Anderson from the Miami Dolphins in the offseason because the Broncos saw him as a lead back.

And Siemian said Wednesday he sees more efforts like Thursday's in the offense's future.

"I think C.J. and the guys up front and [fullback] Andy [Janovich] did a heck of a job and that's going to help out any quarterback," Siemian said. "If we can continue to do those things going forward and throwing the ball I think we'll be all right."

Anderson was asked if any game has earned a perfect grade from his mom and he quickly offered: "Oh, no, the coaches never give me a game where they say I did everything great. If I can get one day my mom to say 'Hey, you were 100 percent on my sheet,' I might retire."

# Broncos LB Brandon Marshall to donate \$300 for each tackle

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN.com

September 15, 2016

Denver Broncos linebacker Brandon Marshall, who was the only Broncos player to kneel during the national anthem before last Thursday night's season opener, announced Wednesday he will donate \$300 for each tackle he makes this season to Denver charities.

Marshall made his announcement on Instagram, posting with a picture of himself and Denver police chief Robert C. White. Marshall met with White on Tuesday.

In part, Marshall's announcement said:

"On Thursday, Sept. 8, I took a knee for the National Anthem to take a stand against social injustice. My intent was not to offend anyone but rather to simply raise awareness and create some dialogue toward affecting positive change in our communities. In the last week, I've had a lot of productive conversations with people I respect, including Chief White of the Denver Police Department. I really appreciate all of them taking the time to listen to me and offer some insight and feedback on ways we can all make a difference. I've also had a lot of time to personally reflect on important issues such as race and gender equality, the treatment of our military veterans, our relationship with law enforcement, educational opportunities for our youth, and many more. I recognize and applaud the significant progress that has been made in these areas made possible only through the hard work of so many dedicated leaders. But, it's clear there is so more work to be done by all of us. Together, we all need to Stand Up for change. This starts with me."

People will be able to track the donations on social media with #TackleChange, Marshall said.

Marshall told reporters on Wednesday afternoon that his visit with White was productive.

"I think I grasped, have more understanding of what they go through, the trials and tests of what it is to be a police officer," he said. "And he kind of got my side as well, how some people are feeling as well."

Marshall said earlier this week that in the days since the season opener, he's heard from people on both sides of the debate. He has lost two endorsements as a result of kneeling during the anthem -- the Air Academy Credit Union as well as the communications company CenturyLink -- and said he intended to keep kneeling.

"It's not going to make me lose any sleep," Marshall said of the lost endorsements. "I understand there will be things that come up, criticism and support. I just have to do what I think is right."

Marshall and San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick were teammates at the University of Nevada. Kaepernick started the debate when he did not stand for the national anthem in a preseason game.

# Colts' Chuck Pagano calls Trevor Siemian 'perfect fit' for Broncos

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN.com

September 15, 2016

Less than a year ago, Indianapolis Colts coach Chuck Pagano talked about the degree of difficulty involved in preparing for a Denver Broncos offense with Peyton Manning at quarterback.

Manning was in his 18th NFL season last November and had seen "about everything" defenses could do.

This week, Pagano finds himself at the other end of the spectrum in preparing to face a Broncos quarterback in Trevor Siemian who will make his second career start Sunday. As a result, the bulk of the Colts' information will come from Siemian's first career start -- the Broncos' 21-20 victory last Thursday over the Carolina Panthers.

The early returns were favorable in Pagano's mind.

"He's a perfect fit, that's what I saw for [Broncos coach Gary Kubiak's] system," Pagano said on a conference call Wednesday. "And it reminds me of all the times that, you know, I've had to face Coach Kubes and that offense ... it's a great system, it's extremely difficult to defend and [Siemian] did a nice job and it looks like they got a guy that's more than capable."

Siemian was 18-of-26 passing for 178 yards, with a touchdown and two interceptions against the Panthers. Kubiak has since praised Siemian for his "calm" during the times the Broncos were "in position for points."

The Broncos advanced to the Panthers' 30-yard line or deeper on six possession, scoring three times to go with a Devontae Booker fumble and Siemian's two interceptions.

"I saw a young man who looked like he's been playing a long time, he's mature beyond his years," Pagano said. "I think he managed the game well, I think he made good decisions. There's a couple plays he'd like to have back, but he went through his reads, went through his progressions, he's got arm talent. Obviously he's bright. ... Again, he was very efficient, he was accurate and he's athletic enough to extend plays."

Siemian also ran five times for 20 yards.

Sunday's game will be the fifth time in four seasons the Broncos have faced the Colts, including Denver's loss in the AFC divisional game to close out the 2014 season.

# NFL fines Broncos' Darian Stewart, Brandon Marshall for hits to Cam Newton

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN.com

September 15, 2016

Denver Broncos safety Darian Stewart and linebacker Brandon Marshall will have to open their checkbooks in the wake of the team's 21-20 victory over the Carolina Panthers in last Thursday's NFL season opener.

Stewart has been fined \$18,231 by the NFL, sources told ESPN, for his helmet-to-helmet hit on Panthers quarterback Cam Newton that came with just under 40 seconds remaining in the game. Stewart was flagged for roughing the passer on the play, but Newton was also flagged for intentional grounding on the same play, offsetting the penalties.

Marshall, whose hit in the third quarter was not flagged, was fined \$24,309 for impermissible use of a helmet, a source told ESPN.

"That's a huge fine, I know what it looks like, it looked bad, but that's a lot of money, so yes I'm upset about it," Marshall told reporters on Wednesday.

Replays clearly showed the contact, but Stewart said after the game that he believed he was playing within the rules.

"I thought I got him with my shoulder, too," Stewart said. "But he's a hard player to tackle, he's so big, and when he runs, he leans like a running back, coming right at you."

Stewart and Marshall's fines raise the Broncos' season total by defensive players to three. Cornerback Bradley Roby was docked \$24,309 for unnecessary roughness as a result of a hit on Los Angeles Rams wide receiver Duke Williams in a preseason game last month.

And more Broncos could be added to the list, given the league was reviewing several hits on Newton from the opener, including contact made on other plays by linebacker Von Miller and Roby.

NFL vice president of officiating Dean Blandino said Tuesday he believed one penalty had not been flagged for a hit on Newton in the game that should have been. That play is believed to be Marshall's hit.

Blandino, who issues a weekly highlight tape to officiating crews with points of emphasis for the upcoming week, included the Stewart and Marshall hits on this week's tape in an effort to help officials distinguish what's legal and what's not, according to ESPN NFL Insider Ed Werder.

Several members of the Panthers and Newton's father, Cecil, said the reigning NFL MVP was treated unfairly by the officiating in the game.

The NFL and the NFL Players Association each said earlier in the week they would investigate how the concussion protocol was enacted in Newton's case to see if the quarterback was checked quickly and thoroughly enough during the game.

Broncos coach Gary Kubiak has defended his players against criticisms that the team is playing "dirty."

"I disagree," Kubiak said Monday. "We play hard, we're going to continue to play hard."

Said Marshall: "We're not dirty. When I think of dirty, I think of stepping on somebody's ankle at the bottom of the pile, twisting somebody around. We just play hard, man. We hit hard. We play fast ... we play faster than any defense in the league, in my opinion. Look at some of the dirty plays in the league. There's a lot of dirty players. That's not our M.O."

The Broncos weren't the only team to be fined. Panthers guard Trai Turner was also fined \$9,115 for taunting, a source told ESPN NFL Insider Adam Schefter.

# Biggest injury questions for all 32 NFL teams

By NFL Nation staff

ESPN.com

September 15, 2016

## AFC EAST

### Buffalo Bills

The Bills listed Sammy Watkins as questionable for Thursday's game against the Jets, but he insists his sore foot won't keep him out of action. If he can't play, the Bills are likely to use a mix of Greg Salas and Marquise Goodwin in his place. Left tackle Cordy Glenn is out because of an ankle injury, and 2014 second-round pick Cyrus Kouandjio will receive his third career start in Glenn's place. -- Mike Rodak

### Miami Dolphins

The Dolphins put starting defensive end Mario Williams, who didn't finish last week's game, in concussion protocol. Williams didn't practice Wednesday, and his status is in question for Sunday's game against New England. If Williams cannot play, Cameron Wake will get more reps in his place. Wake played just 29 snaps as a situational pass-rusher but would have to increase his workload with a shorter rotation at defensive end. -- James Walker

### New England Patriots

Linebacker Dont'a Hightower was not present at Wednesday's practice after he injured his knee on the second series of the opener. He played through the injury, but his status bears monitoring this week. Meanwhile, tight end Rob Gronkowski and left tackle Nate Solder, both of whom missed the season opener because of hamstring injuries, were limited participants in Wednesday's practice. Unless this changes in the next two days, it likely means they will be questionable for Sunday's home opener against the Dolphins. If Gronkowski doesn't play, the Patriots will once again rely on Martellus Bennett as the top tight end option; he played 69 of 71 offensive snaps in the season opener. -- Mike Reiss

### New York Jets

The Jets are in good shape for Thursday night against the Bills. The only two notable injuries are defensive end Muhammad Wilkerson (ankle, toe) and linebacker David Harris (shoulder), both of whom are questionable. The team expects both to play, though Harris will be less than 100 percent, especially in a short week. The injury happened three weeks ago, and he's still undergoing treatment. He played every defensive snap in the opener. -- Rich Cimini

## AFC NORTH

### Baltimore Ravens

Wide receiver Breshad Perriman is on the injury list again. He's dealing with a minor calf issue, but it was enough to keep him sidelined Wednesday, and it could keep him out of Sunday's game against the Browns. Without Perriman, the Ravens would rely even more on Mike Wallace in the deep passing

game. Linebacker Elvis Dumervil remains out with a foot injury, and it's unlikely he'll play. With backup Za'Darius Smith also sidelined by an ankle injury, Baltimore might look to rookie Matt Judon to be an outside edge rusher. -- Jamison Hensley

#### Cincinnati Bengals

Tight end Tyler Eifert said Wednesday that he would miss Sunday's game against the Steelers. His ankle injury is still keeping him off the practice field. Cornerback Darqueze Dennard practiced fully for the first time, which indicates that he could return to the lineup Sunday. C.J. Uzomah, Eifert's replacement who had only one catch as a rookie, had a breakout game against the Jets, with a 54-yard pass reception. Dennard will likely man the slot upon his return. -- Katherine Terrell

#### Cleveland Browns

Josh McCown takes over for Robert Griffin III at quarterback with Griffin sidelined by a fracture in his shoulder. "I'm full speed ahead with Josh," coach Hue Jackson said. The only other injury of note was to backup safety Derrick Kindred, who was limited by an ankle on Wednesday. Kindred played well in relief of Ibraheim Campbell in the opener. -- Pat McManamon

#### Pittsburgh Steelers

Linebacker Ryan Shazier missed Wednesday's practice because of a knee injury, and though it isn't considered serious, his status for the Bengals game is in doubt. Shazier, fresh off an interception in Week 1, is pushing hard behind the scenes. He doesn't want to miss any time. -- Jeremy Fowler

#### AFC SOUTH

##### Houston Texans

Besides inside linebacker Brian Cushing and left tackle Duane Brown, who will definitely not play Sunday against the Chiefs, the Texans are relatively healthy. Coach Bill O'Brien said Brown and Cushing are weeks away from returning. While Brown has been out, tackle Chris Clark has played in his place. He played every offensive snap Sunday and was solid against the Bears. After Cushing left Sunday's game early in the first quarter, Max Bullough filled in at inside linebacker and improved as the game went along, registering five combined tackles, including one for a loss. The Texans have depth at linebacker, including Akeem Dent and Brian Peters. -- Sarah Barshop

##### Indianapolis Colts

Outside linebacker Robert Mathis did not practice Wednesday because of a foot injury. He said on his weekly radio show on WNDE 1260 AM in Indianapolis that he has a hyperextended toe and is wearing a protective boot. The Colts can't afford to lose Mathis, who was held out of the preseason, because they had only one sack in their Week 1 loss to Detroit. Trent Cole, who had three sacks last season, will likely start if Mathis doesn't play. -- Mike Wells

##### Jacksonville Jaguars

Running back Chris Ivory was released from the hospital Tuesday, but the Jaguars aren't sure whether he'll be available for Sunday's game in San Diego. Ivory was hospitalized Sunday morning with what the team said was a "general medical issue." Ivory did not practice Wednesday, though he is expected to hold a news conference to address his injury at some point this week. If Ivory does not play against the Chargers -- and that's the way it's looking -- the Jaguars might give kick returner Corey Grant some reps on offense, in addition to Denard Robinson. Ivory is expected to return to the field at some point, but it looks like that will be next week at the earliest. -- Mike DiRocco

#### Tennessee Titans

Outside linebacker Derrick Morgan (left hamstring) was out Wednesday, but coach Mike Mularkey left open the possibility that Morgan could practice Thursday, and that would give him a chance to play. If the Titans are without him, David Bass and two rookies -- Kevin Dodd and Aaron Wallace -- will combine to fill in, and Mularkey expects production. The Titans were thin behind Morgan and Brian Orakpo last season, which was a big reason they spent the first pick of the second round on Dodd. -- Paul Kuharsky

#### AFC WEST

##### Denver Broncos

All eyes are on wide receiver Demaryius Thomas, who is getting treatment on the left hip injury he suffered in the first quarter of the regular-season opener against the Panthers. Thomas was held out of Monday's practice, but he practiced on a limited basis Wednesday. Coach Gary Kubiak said Thomas took "about a third of the reps" in Wednesday's practice. Kubiak added that Thomas "is on course to make it to Sunday." The Broncos could be helped by the fact that they played Thursday because that meant they could give Thomas treatment through the weekend. At Wednesday's practice, Thomas could be seen hitting his left hip after he ran at times. The Broncos have some depth issues overall, given that Bennie Fowler, the team's No. 3 receiver in training camp, is still trying to come back from the fracture near his right elbow that he suffered in the preseason opener. -- Jeff Legwold

##### Kansas City Chiefs

Right guard Laurent Duvernay-Tardif has a high ankle sprain and is unlikely to be available when the Chiefs play the Texans on Sunday. The Chiefs would fill in with their veteran backup, Zach Fulton, who is a former starter, but the injury still comes at a bad time. Duvernay-Tardif had one of the best games of his career last week against the Chargers, and the Chiefs were hoping for offensive line stability, something they didn't have last season. Duvernay-Tardif was injured on the game's final play, quarterback Alex Smith's overtime touchdown run. -- Adam Teicher

##### Oakland Raiders

The Raiders' makeshift offensive line, which helped them to that epic comeback win in New Orleans, has questions all over the place, especially on the right side. While backup right tackle Austin Howard practiced fully Wednesday for the first time since he sprained his right ankle on Sept. 1, center Rodney Hudson (knee), left guard Gabe Jackson (left knee) and right tackles Menelik Watson (groin) and Matt McCants (left knee) all sat out practice. Hudson and Jackson are expected to play in Sunday's home opener against the Falcons, but keep an eye on rookie guard/tackle Vadal Alexander, who was a healthy scratch Sunday in New Orleans. -- Paul Gutierrez

## San Diego Chargers

Joey Bosa is still nursing a hamstring injury and did not practice Wednesday, which means the rookie defensive end will likely miss his second game when the Chargers play host to the Jaguars in the team's home opener on Sunday. Bosa has not participated in a padded practice since he signed his rookie deal on Aug. 29. "Like I've been saying, he's day-to-day," Chargers coach Mike McCoy said. "I really can't give you a great update until he's out here in pads and he's out here practicing with the team. Then his odds will go way up, whether or not he's going to play in a game. But I'm never going to rule him out until he's officially out." -- Eric D. Williams

## NFC EAST

### Dallas Cowboys

Left tackle Tyron Smith (stinger) and cornerback Orlando Scandrick (hamstring) were knocked from the opener because of injuries, but the Cowboys believe that because they were able to return to the game, there shouldn't be issues moving forward. Smith's injury was a reoccurrence of a training camp hit, and he is being fitted for a larger neck roll. Scandrick has battled through a hamstring injury before. Both players were able to go through full practices on Wednesday. -- Todd Archer

### New York Giants

The Giants are shockingly healthy, even though they lost reserve linebacker J.T. Thomas for the season in the opener. All 22 starters are practicing this week and are expected to play. Linebacker Jonathan Casillas' hand might be the only concern, but that isn't serious. -- Jordan Raanan

### Philadelphia Eagles

Tight end Zach Ertz is expected to be sidelined this week after he suffered a rib displacement against the Browns. "It's a dangerous situation with a displaced bone," coach Doug Pederson said. "You are talking up around the neck and head area, so any type of blow again could do further damage to that. That's why it's a week-to-week deal to see how it heals and recovers." Trey Burton could have a fairly significant role in Ertz's absence. Starting cornerback Leodis McKelvin is also week-to-week because of a hamstring injury. Ron Brooks and rookie Jalen Mills will be called on to pull extra weight if he can't go. -- Tim McManus

### Washington Redskins

The Redskins are a healthy team, and there isn't much concern, though defensive end Chris Baker was limited in practice because of rib and knee issues. Losing him would be a big blow, considering he is the team's best defensive lineman, but at this point, it appears he'll play. -- John Keim

## NFC NORTH

### Chicago Bears

The biggest injury concern for the Bears is still Kyle Long's left shoulder. Long is determined to play the entire year on a torn labrum, but he is often in visible pain during and immediately after games. Long deserves a ton of credit for attempting to play through such a difficult shoulder injury, but there is concern that eventually the shoulder will simply give out. Long is such an important member of the offensive line. It's hard to envision the Bears running the football successfully without him at right guard, where he has been voted to multiple Pro Bowls. -- Jeff Dickerson

#### Detroit Lions

DeAndre Levy missed practice Wednesday and was the only player not at least partially available for Detroit. If Levy were unable to play Sunday, it would leave a massive hole at linebacker. The team's depth there would be thin, and Kyle Van Noy or rookie Antwone Williams would likely have to fill in. The play of both would be a drop-off from one of the best coverage linebackers in the NFL. -- Michael Rothstein

#### Green Bay Packers

Cornerback Sam Shields sustained his second concussion in less than nine months late in Sunday's win over the Jaguars. It was his fourth since 2011. He missed a month last time he was concussed, but the time before that, he played the following week. The Packers were so thin at cornerback on Wednesday - - rookie Josh Hawkins (hamstring) was also out -- that practice-squad receiver Herb Walker had to line up on defense. -- Rob Demovsky

#### Minnesota Vikings

Left tackle Matt Kalil was seen leaving the team's training facility in a T-shirt and shorts just before practice started Wednesday, and Kalil was listed as a non-participant because of the hip injury that has bothered him for a couple weeks. Kalil said at the end of training camp that he was simply "resting up some little things," but given the tackle's injury history -- and the task the Vikings face Sunday night against a blitz-heavy Packers defense -- it bears watching what the Vikings do with Kalil the rest of the week. -- Ben Goessling

#### NFC SOUTH

##### Atlanta Falcons

The Falcons' top two wide receivers, Julio Jones and Mohamed Sanu, are dealing with ankle injuries. Both were limited during Wednesday's practice, as the Falcons continued preparation for Sunday's matchup with the Raiders. Jones told ESPN he's going to be fine, while Sanu said "I'm good" when asked about his ankle. Another key offensive player, running back Devonta Freeman, was limited Wednesday by a quad injury. -- Vaughn McClure

##### Carolina Panthers

Running back Jonathan Stewart showed up on the injury report with a sprained ankle that coach Ron Rivera expressed no concern about. Stewart isn't sure how he suffered it. Safety Dean Marlowe (hamstring) was limited in practice, but he appears close to being ready to give the Panthers much-needed depth at the position. -- David Newton

## New Orleans Saints

The Saints know they won't have top cornerback Delvin Breaux for about six weeks, which is a huge loss, considering they're about to face Odell Beckham Jr. and the Giants. The biggest issue this week is whether left tackle Terron Armstead can get closer to 100 percent with his quad injury. Armstead will play, but he admitted to shaking off some rust last week. He is one of the Saints' two or three best players and will face a tough challenge against Giants pass-rusher Olivier Vernon. -- Mike Triplett

## Tampa Bay Buccaneers

This isn't really a question -- it's definitive that defensive end Jacques Smith is done for the season because of a torn ACL. He led the team with four sacks this preseason and was the top pass-rushing defensive end the past two seasons. Although the Bucs have more of a rotation going along the defensive line, this still hurts. How much? That depends on who steps in. They'll have William Gholston for their base defense, but in terms of a pass-rusher? Noah Spence didn't line up on the left at all during camp. He's an option, as is Howard Jones. Also keep an eye out for DaVonte Lambert. -- Jenna Laine

## NFC WEST

### Arizona Cardinals

The biggest injury concern for the Cardinals this week is right guard Evan Mathis, who sustained a mid-foot sprain in the second quarter Sunday night. He didn't practice Wednesday, and coach Bruce Arians listed Mathis as day-to-day and added that the team will see how Mathis practices Thursday, if he's able to take the field. With defensive end Frostee Rucker out two to three weeks because of an MCL injury, Ed Stinson has been taking his snaps, and Rodney Gunter has been working at right end. -- Josh Weinfuss

### Los Angeles Rams

The Rams need as much help as they can get at wide receiver, but it doesn't look like they'll get it immediately. Nelson Spruce (knee) and Pharoh Cooper (shoulder) were both inactive for Week 1 and probably won't be available in Week 2. Rams coach Jeff Fisher said Spruce is "probably a week or two away." He has yet to comment on Cooper, who injured himself while making an acrobatic catch in the third preseason game, but shoulder injuries take time. Both can be major assets in the intermediate passing game that suits Case Keenum's skill set. -- Alden Gonzalez

### San Francisco 49ers

The 49ers came out of the season opener relatively healthy, with only two additions to the injury report Wednesday. One guy to keep an eye on is defensive lineman Arik Armstead. He has been battling a shoulder issue, and that limited him in the preseason and in Wednesday's practice. The Niners used him mostly on passing downs in the opener, but they're hoping to work him in more as he continues to manage the injury. He was effective in a fairly small sample size against the Rams, and the 49ers are hoping more reps mean a breakout season for the 2015 first-round pick. -- Nick Wagoner

### Seattle Seahawks

Russell Wilson's right ankle will be in the spotlight Sunday against the Rams. Wilson suffered a sprain last week against the Dolphins, but he practiced Wednesday, and offensive coordinator Darrell Bevell said he expects the quarterback to be "full go" this weekend. If Wilson is limited from a mobility standpoint on Sunday, Bevell will have to adjust the game plan accordingly. But barring a setback, the team is counting on Wilson to start. He has never missed a game in his NFL career. -- Sheil Kapadia

# Luck knows all about Denver's hard-hitting defense

By Arnie Stapleton  
Associated Press  
September 15, 2016

Andrew Luck didn't need to see the film of Cam Newton getting clobbered to realize Denver's defense can put a serious hurt on the quarterback.

Luck led the Colts to a big win over the Broncos last year but ended up in the hospital afterward with a lacerated kidney and torn abdominal muscle that sidelined him for the final two months of the season.

Lesson learned.

After playing in just seven games in 2015 and then signing a megadeal this summer that includes a record \$87 million in guarantees, Luck is more cognizant of protecting both his body and team owner Jim Irsay's investment in him.

"As a quarterback you have an obligation to be on the field," Luck said Wednesday in a conference call with reporters in Denver, where the Colts (0-1) play this weekend. "That involves taking care of your body. Situationally, there are times when I need to slide or throw the ball away and I've been working on that."

There's a balance he's trying to find so he doesn't lose any of what's made him the quarterback he is.

"You're going to go out there and take a hit if the game's on the line or in (certain) other situations," Luck said. "But I think in every year I'm trying to approach the game in a better, more efficient way. So, I guess this is somewhat of a natural progression, as well."

Luck was only sacked once but hit 11 times by the Broncos last year. His worst hit came when he was sandwiched by defensive end Vance Walker and linebacker Danny Trevathan, but he finished up and led the Colts to a 27-24 win in Indianapolis.

The Broncos lost Trevathan to free agency and Walker was penciled in as Malik Jackson's replacement until he blew out a knee in training camp.

That doesn't mean the Broncos are any less of a hazard to Luck's health.

"A lot of other guys got big hits on him, too," cornerback Chris Harris said. "That wasn't the only hit. Everybody got big hits on him. Like I said, Luck put his body on the line against us. Just like Cam Newton did last week. Quarterbacks know if they want to beat us, they've got to go all-out."

Like Newton, Luck doesn't avoid hits like say, the elusive Russell Wilson.

"No, Andrew Luck doesn't slide too much," Harris said. "Those guys try to run you over. So, you've got to hit them like running backs."

That's what Denver's defense did to Newton last week, hammering him 17 times, including four helmet-to-helmet hits, two of which resulted in fines for linebacker Brandon Marshall and safety Darian Stewart.

Their hits on Newton, along with those of Super Bowl MVP Von Miller and cornerback Bradley Roby, sparked a debate about player safety, the viability of read-option QBs in this league and whether Denver's defense had crossed the line.

Luck is up next and, like the league's disciplinarians, he's been studying the Panthers-Broncos game film all week.

"Yeah, tough, physical, good, really good players all around the field," Luck said. "Obviously, they're a winning group. They know how to win. Well-coached. Coach (Wade) Phillips does a heck of a job, everywhere he's been. Certainly great pass rushers, really good cover guys. Really, there's no weakness on the defense."

One adjective that many are using to describe Denver's defense is dirty.

Not Luck.

"I wouldn't necessarily agree with that," he said. "They play hard, they're well-coached and obviously everybody's entitled to their own opinion. They do a good job. They really do."

Colts coach Chuck Pagano thinks so, too.

"They're an athletic, physical, tough, attacking, swarming defense," Pagano said. "They've got talent front to back. The edge pressure that you get, the way that they run to the football, the linebackers are sideline to sideline and the secondary is as good a unit as there is in the National Football League. They're a physical, physical unit."

Notes: WR Demaryius Thomas (left hip) returned to practice and coach Gary Kubiak reiterated his belief that he'll play Sunday. WR Bennie Fowler (right elbow) was held out again.

# Marshall, Stewart fined for hits on Newton

By Arnie Stapleton  
Associated Press  
September 15, 2016

Big dents to their bank accounts for helmet-to-helmet hits on Cam Newton aren't deterring Denver Broncos defenders Brandon Marshall and Darian Stewart.

"I'll do it again," Marshall declared shortly after saying he'll fight his \$24,309 fine for launching himself at Newton in Denver's 21-20 win over the Carolina Panthers in the NFL opener last week.

"I'm not going to change the way I play the game," asserted Stewart, who was fined \$18,231 for his high hit against the league's reigning MVP.

Marshall wasn't flagged for his hit, which the NFL deemed an "impermissible use of the helmet (including illegal launching)," according to its 2016 schedule of fines.

Stewart was fined for roughing the QB in the final minute, a penalty that was nullified on the field when Newton was whistled for intentional grounding. Although Stewart's hit left Newton motionless on the ground, he wasn't checked for a concussion until after the game.

Super Bowl MVP Von Miller and cornerback Bradley Roby didn't find FedEx envelopes in their lockers like Marshall and Stewart did Wednesday as they avoided any fines for their own helmet-to-helmet hits on Newton.

"For what? We didn't do anything," Miller told The Associated Press. "I could see if we did something wrong."

The four hits on Newton, three of which weren't flagged, sparked a debate about league safety, the viability of option quarterbacks in the NFL and the notion that Denver plays dirty.

Newton dismissed news of the fines.

"My job is to win football games, not lobby for my health," Newton said Wednesday, adding he feels "great" and he didn't want to "dwell on" the previous game and the hits.

The Broncos said their job was to keep playing stout defense.

"I'll just say this: we play hard and we're going to continue to play hard," coach Gary Kubiak said. "It's really difficult defensively when you have a quarterback who goes from a passer to a runner and you're committed (as a defender) and that's what both of these guys were.

"We understand that you have to stay away from the head, but we're going to continue to play hard. That one's in the past. We're moving on."

Not entirely.

Although they avoided suspensions, Marshall and Stewart said they'd appeal their fines.

"I felt like he was running with the ball and I was trying to make a play," Stewart said. "He was doing that the whole game. I was just being aggressive, but not really aiming for the head."

Panthers left tackle Michael Oher was glad to hear about the fines, but would have preferred flags.

"Well, I wish some calls could have gotten made in the game," he said. "There were some calls that could have been made. But maybe in the future he will be treated more like a quarterback."

Marshall insists Newton has to be treated like a 250-pound running back when he leaves the pocket. He also found himself wishing he'd been flagged for his hit on Newton because that might have resulted in a fine such as Stewart's.

Because there was no whistle, the league determined the violation and fined him \$6,078 more than Stewart.

"That's a huge fine," Marshall said. "And I know what it looked like. It looked bad. But that's a lot of money. So, yes, I'm upset about it. I wasn't expecting that amount. Honestly, the truth be told, I was expecting Stew to get more than me."

On another front, Marshall said he was finalizing an endorsement deal from music mogul Russell Simmons's Rushcard after losing two endorsements over his kneeling during the national anthem before the opener in support of Colin Kaepernick's protest of social injustices and police treatment of minorities.

Marshall, who has pledged to donate to military charities and expand his work in the community, also met with Denver police chief Robert White on Tuesday.

Marshall said he will accept White's invitation to participate in a shoot-or-don't-shoot training simulator and to go on a ride-along with police officers.

# 2017 Pro Football Hall of Fame nominees list released. See which Broncos made the cut.

By Associated Press staff  
Associated Press  
September 15, 2016

LaDainian Tomlinson, Hines Ward and former Broncos safety Brian Dawkins are among the 94 players and coaches nominated for the Pro Football Hall of Fame's class of 2017.

Joining those first-time eligible nominees are Jason Taylor, Donovan McNabb, Chad Johnson, Olin Kreutz, former Colorado State star Joey Porter, Derrick Mason and Bob Sanders.

Already chosen to be discussed by the voting panel the day before the Super Bowl next February are senior finalist Kenny Easley and contributor finalists Jerry Jones and Paul Tagliabue.

Among the 2016 finalists back on the ballot are Kurt Warner, Terrell Davis, Edgerrin James, Terrell Owens, Joe Jacoby, Alan Faneca, Morten Andersen, Steve Atwater, John Lynch and coach Don Coryell.

The Pro Football Hall of Fame released its full list of modern-era nominees for the class of 2017 on Wednesday. List to be reduced to 25 in November (x-2016 nominee, former Broncos listed in bold):

**QUARTERBACKS (7)** — Drew Bledsoe, Randall Cunningham, Doug Flutie, Donovan McNabb, Steve McNair, Phil Simms, x-Kurt Warner

**RUNNING BACKS (13)** — Shaun Alexander, Ottis Anderson, Tiki Barber, Larry Centers, Roger Craig, x-Terrell Davis, Eddie George, x-Edgerrin James, Daryl Johnston, Eric Metcalf (also WR/PR/KR), LaDainian Tomlinson, Herschel Walker (also KR), Ricky Watters

**WIDE RECEIVERS (10)** — Isaac Bruce, Henry Ellard (also PR), Torry Holt, Chad Johnson, Derrick Mason (also KR/PR), x-Terrell Owens, Sterling Sharpe, Jimmy Smith, Rod Smith, Hines Ward

**TIGHT END (1)** — Mark Bavaro

**OFFENSIVE LINEMEN (14)** — Tony Boselli (T), Ray Donaldson (C), x-Alan Faneca (G), Jay Hilgenberg (C), Chris Hinton (G/T), Kent Hull (C), x-Joe Jacoby (T), Mike Kenn (T), Olin Kreutz (C), Jim Lachey (T), Kevin Mawae (C/G), Tom Nalen (C), Nate Newton (G), Steve Wisniewski (G)

**DEFENSIVE LINEMEN (5)** — Leslie O'Neal (DE), Simeon Rice (DE), Fred Smerlas (NT), Jason Taylor (DE), Bryant Young (DT)

**LINEBACKERS (11)** — Carl Banks, Cornelius Bennett, Tedy Bruschi, Seth Joyner, Levon Kirkland, Clay Matthews, Willie McGinest (also DE), Karl Mecklenburg, Sam Mills, Joey Porter, Zach Thomas

**DEFENSIVE BACKS (16)** — Eric Allen (CB), x-Steve Atwater (S), Joey Browner (S), LeRoy Butler (S), Brian Dawkins (SS), Rodney Harrison (S), Ty Law (CB), Albert Lewis (CB), x-John Lynch (S), Frank Minnifield (CB),

Bob Sanders (SS), Darren Sharper (FS), Dennis Smith (SS), Troy Vincent (S), Everson Walls (CB), Darren Woodson (S)

KICKERS/PUNTER (4) — x-Morten Andersen (K), Gary Anderson (K), Sean Landeta (P), Nick Lowery (K)

SPECIAL TEAMS (2) — Brian Mitchell (KR/PR also RB), Steve Tasker (ST also WR)

COACHES (11) — x-Don Coryell, Bill Cowher, Tom Flores, Mike Holmgren, Jimmy Johnson, Chuck Knox, Buddy Parker, Richie Petitbon, Dan Reeves, Clark Shaughnessy, Dick Vermeil

# Broncos Demaryius Thomas limited in practice, but on track to play against Colts

By Troy Renck  
KMGH  
September 15, 2016

Demaryius Thomas was limited at practice Wednesday with a left hip injury. He participated in roughly one-third of the plays, but didn't appear to go full speed during the media viewing period. The wide receiver remains sore after hurting his leg when tackled awkwardly on the Broncos' third drive last Thursday.

Coach Gary Kubiak remains optimistic Thomas will play on Sunday when the Broncos host the Indianapolis Colts.

"He looked OK with what we asked him to do. We are going to take it a step at a time this week. We had him set for certain plays in practice. He's on course to make it to Sunday," Kubiak said. "Today was a step in the right direction."

Bennie Fowler, who broke a bone in his right elbow a month ago, hopes to play. He practiced in individual drills Wednesday, but was not permitted for team work. He called watching the opener an "awful" experience.

"You want to be out there with your guys," Fowler said. "It was hard."

Regardless of Thomas' health, Fowler knows he must view his situation in a vacuum. He has taken every step allowed by the medical staff after X-Rays cleared him to begin physical activity.

"I was out there (last) Friday catching passes," he said. "But I know I can't rush it. I have to see what coach Kubiak says. If it was up to me I would already be out there."

## QB Spotlight not too bright

Trevor Siemian played efficiently in the Broncos' season-opening win, completing 18 of 26 passes for 178 yards for one touchdown and two interceptions. The film reinforced he must eliminate turnovers, especially those near the red zone. But teammates were impressed that the moment wasn't too big for Siemian. After his first pick, Siemian delivered a touchdown drive on the next possession. Fowler, who received plenty of reps with Siemian last year, figured Siemian couldn't handle the spotlight because of, um, Miley Cyrus.

"I saw last it last year against Seattle (in the preseason). They were playing some Miley Cyrus right before he went in, and he was like, 'Hey guys check out this song.' Then he threw me a pass 60 yards down field," Fowler said.

Colt coach Chuck Pagano left impressed with Siemian after viewing the film.

"He's mature beyond his years," he said.

## Footnotes

The Broncos were not alone in getting fined. Carolina offensive guard Trai Turner was docked \$9,115 for taunting, according to ESPN.

Broncos defensive lineman Derek Wolfe remains hopeful the Panthers offensive linemen will be fined for targeting. "If not, then what's the deterrent?" said Wolfe, who injured his neck in the victory.

Colts quarterback Andrew Luck said he doesn't view the Broncos defense as dirty. They knocked him out of the season in the eighth game after lacerating his kidney on a combo high-low tackle. "I wouldn't necessarily agree with that. They play hard, are well coached and everybody is entitled to their own opinion. They do a good job. They really do."

Former CSU star Ty Sambrailo said his hyper extended elbow has improved. He's not sure how much longer he will wear a brace. He's been playing multiple positions in practice, including right guard and right tackle.

Defensive tackle Vance Walker tweeted that he underwent successful knee surgery. He will miss the season after tearing his ACL during training camp. "Surgery went very well today!!! Again I thank everyone for their prayers, thoughts, and well wishes. I truly do appreciate it. If there is any praying I can do for you all, please let me know, as you guys have done the same for me."

# Troy Renck: Are Broncos dirty? No. Team straddles line between aggression, crossing the line

By Troy Renck

KMGH

September 15, 2016

The question was simple: Is the Broncos defense dirty?

The answer was blunt.

"Did they watch the film of last year? Did they watch the Super Bowl?" cornerback Chris Harris told Denver7.

His point? The Broncos boast an aggressive, physical, in-your-face style. They aren't reinventing themselves, not after years of being dogged as a team with more finesse than salon-quality shampoo. The issue facing the Broncos on Wednesday is not unlike the controversy that arose last year. How do they walk a fine line without crossing the line on big hits?

Two Broncos were docked pay Wednesday. Linebacker Brandon Marshall, first reported by Denver7, was fined \$24,309 for launching himself into Carolina quarterback Cam Newton. Safety Darian Stewart was levied \$18,231 for a helmet-to-helmet strike on Newton on the Panthers' final drive.

Both players admitted that they have to be smarter. But it came with a caveat.

"We can't stop being aggressive," Stewart said. "That's what made us No. 1."

The league can't legislate out violence. Rules are in place to protect the players, in particular, the quarterbacks. But in a game staged at lightning speed with athletes bigger, stronger and faster than ever, there will be issues. Broncos defensive coordinator Wade Phillips is not coaching his players to break rules. However, his defense unleashes players to go upfield, to make the quarterback miserable. To think there won't be rules broken is naive. The Broncos finished third in on-field fines last year at \$131,530. They ranked behind the Cincinnati Bengals (\$242,193) and Pittsburgh Steelers (\$150,477).

Not all penalties are created equal. Some send a message.

Therein lies the issue: How does a defense remain physical without incurring the league's wrath? The Broncos successfully struck a balance, for the most part, last year. Foolish penalties helped secure a loss at Indianapolis last season when cornerback Aqib Talib poked tight end Dwayne Allen in the eye. He was suspended for his behavior, then acknowledged his mistake. Evidence he wants to move on? I asked if he was concerned about any retaliation from Allen this Sunday.

"Who's that? Who's that?" Talib said.

Anyone who followed the Broncos last season knows they won a Super Bowl because of their defense. They led the league in sacks, stuffed the run, and suffocated great quarterbacks (Their last four wins, counting this year's opener, have come against Ben Roethlisberger, Tom Brady and Newton -- twice).

Being aggressive brings advantages. Opponents know they are going to get hit. Over and over again. It's who the Broncos are. Are they dirty? The Panthers believe so, though they had as many problems with the officials as the Broncos. Colts coach Chuck Pagano doesn't think so.

"Our guys are aware of (the Broncos' defense). It's up to us to protect our (quarterback)," Pagano said Wednesday. "It's a physical game."

The Broncos won't change their identity. They own rings because of their brass-knuckle style on defense. But the challenge is real. They must remain physical without being selfish and hurting the team.

And if complaints follow, well, they are they fine with that.

# EXCLUSIVE: Broncos' Brandon Marshall fined 24K for hit on Cam Newton

By Troy Renck

KMGH

September 15, 2016

The Broncos redefined their image last season. Dogged by criticism as a soft team, the Broncos boasted the NFL's top defense. It came with a price. Denver ranked third in on-field fines a year ago, behind the Cincinnati Bengals and Pittsburgh Steelers.

The Broncos felt the league's wrath on Wednesday for their physical play as linebacker Brandon Marshall (\$24,309) and safety Darian Stewart (\$18,231) were fined for hits on reigning MVP Cam Newton.

Marshall's fine, first reported by Denver7, resulted from his launching into Newton on Thursday night, striking him in the helmet. Marshall anticipated the fine because he left his feet on the hit. Stewart was docked for lowering his head into Newton on Carolina's final drive. While Marshall was not penalized, officials flagged Stewart for roughing the passer.

Hits by Von Miller and Bradley Roby also remained under review. The Broncos have received a wave of criticism nationally and from Carolina fans specifically that they are dirty.

"It's not going to stop me from being aggressive. I just have to be smarter next time," Stewart said. "We hear what everyone says about us. But we are not going to stop being physical. It's what we do. That's what has us number one. They are fans. They have a right to their opinion. But we have a job."

This marks the the Broncos' third fine in three weeks. Cornerback Bradley Roby was fined \$24K for a hit on a defenseless Los Angeles Rams receiver. He told Denver7 he is appealing. Broncos coach Gary Kubiak has defended his defense repeatedly over the last few days.

"We play hard," Kubiak said.

# Broncos great Floyd Little questions Brandon Marshall's decision to kneel for anthem

By David Ramsey  
Colorado Springs Gazette  
September 15, 2016

Floyd Little believes Brandon Marshall has a right to kneel during the national anthem.

But Little, the retired Broncos running back who ran his way to the Pro Football Hall of Fame, never would kneel beside Marshall.

“This is a free country,” Little said from his home in Las Vegas. “People fought in wars and died for his right to protest. This is one that I would not join, because of my military background and knowing what the flag and the national anthem stands for.

“He’s expressing himself, but being a military guy, it would be hard for me to recognize and understand it. Sacrifices have been made for our country. The anthem stands for freedom, justice for everybody in this country. It’s like the constitution. It’s very special, and you honor it.

“Many people haven’t been educated well enough. I always put my hand over my heart during the anthem. It’s very special to me.”

After playing high school football in Connecticut, Little attended Bordentown Military Institute in New Jersey. He played football at BMI in 1962 and 1963, wearing No. 77 while averaging three touchdowns per game.

General Douglass MacArthur joined the crusade to recruit Little to play for Army, MacArthur’s alma mater. For a time, it looked as if Little would play for the Black Knights.

But Syracuse University countered with 1961 Heisman Trophy winner Ernie Davis, who persuaded Little to wear No. 44 and play for the Orange. Little was a three-time All American at Syracuse.

The Broncos selected him with the sixth pick of the 1967 draft. Little, wearing No. 44, led the AFC in rushing in 1970 and 1971. He was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2010.

Little’s brother, Charles, served two tours in the Vietnam War. Charles died in 2011 of complications from being exposed to Agent Orange, a defoliant used by U.S. forces to eliminate forest cover for North Vietnamese troops.

“He served his country well and gave up his life for doing that,” Little said. “I salute him at every opportunity.”

Marshall, a linebacker, knelt during the national anthem before the Broncos opening game against the Panthers. Marshall said he plans to again kneel before Sunday’s game at Mile High against the Colts.

# David Ramsey: C.J. Anderson, powered by mom's tough love, soars as lead actor in Broncos offense

By David Ramsey  
Colorado Springs Gazette  
September 15, 2016

C.J. Anderson, the most important force on the Broncos' offense, has no trouble remaining humble and hungry.

He was feeling good after leading the Broncos' fourth-quarter comeback Thursday night against the Carolina Panthers. He scored twice. He gained nearly half the Broncos' total yards.

Then he talked to Neva, his football-loving, highly critical mom.

"You should have went here and there," Neva said as she dissected her son's decisions. This, by the way, is the PG-13 version of the conversation. Neva's language becomes quite colorful as she analyzes her son's performance.

"You should hear my mom," Anderson said, laughing. "Matter of fact, one day I'm going to record the conversation and me and you, one on one, we're going to listen to my mom."

Demanding moms often produce high-flying sons. Just look at Anderson, who has traveled from free agent to the epicenter of the Broncos' attack. No running back since Clinton Portis, who departed after the 2003 season, has been as crucial to the Broncos' offense.

Quarterback Trevor Siemian often blundered against the Panthers, throwing two interceptions and coming achingly close to dooming the Broncos with a final interception in the fourth quarter. He's not ready to carry an offense.

This leaves the burden on Anderson's shoulders. I believe he's prepared for the load. He's eternally dissatisfied, partially because he listens closely to his mother's perceptive, aggressive observations. He runs with a distinctive fire, attacking tacklers more than they attack him.

Defensive end Derek Wolfe laughed as he considered the fate of opponents who must tangle with Anderson.

"The first guy C.J. gets to, that guy is going to pay for it," Wolfe said. "He just runs hard. He doesn't let an arm tackle him down. He doesn't get tackled by one guy."

He's also quicker and swifter. At times, Anderson's playing weight has hovered near 240 pounds. This bulk helped him break tackles, but the added weight robbed him of speed.

He's playing in 2016 at 217 pounds. Anderson lacks the combustive speed of the departed Ronnie Hillman, but he's grown into a legit home run threat.

Coach Gary Kubiak embraces a zone-blocking scheme that will give Anderson open spaces. Last season's Broncos offense was lost in a confused transition from Peyton Manning's go-go era to the slowdown schemes of Kubiak.

After the first 10 games in 2015, the Broncos ranked 29th in NFL rushing yards with 86 per game. In the next seven games, the Broncos rose into the NFL's top seven with 135.1 per game.

The pass-happy days of Manning and his shotgun formation are gone. A rugged running game, combined with the NFL's most violent defense, will define the Broncos this season.

Anderson should top 1,500 yards rushing this season, along with another 400 or 500 in receiving yards. He's enjoyed an immense transformation from the 2013 draft. He hoped to hear his name called. He never did.

He's a complicated soul. He often barks at the media, dissecting questions like an enraged surgeon. He remembers every slight, every doubting word.

There's a different side, too. On Wednesday after practice, Anderson slowly ate a salad garnished with mushrooms and hard-boiled eggs while discussing philosophy books and the O.J. Simpson murder trial.

The star of the conversation was, of course, his mom.

He's amazed after games when he talks with Neva. She has not broken down video. She does not have a trained football mind, and she's never carried a football into a mass of dangerous men.

But she's almost always right.

She says he should have cut right instead of left, and when Anderson later examines video, he sees she was correct. She watches with a level of intensity and wisdom found only in the eyes of a fully devoted mother.

"She loves the game and she puts me at the potential level she knows I can be at," Anderson said between bites.

He supports the sometimes harsh words. He believes in underplaying his accomplishments and overplaying his failures.

He's learned well from Neva.

When he makes a less-than-perfect cut while trying to escape some mangy linebacker, he knows he will hear from his mother.

He yearns for those critiques from Neva. The day she finds no mistake is the day C.J. Anderson might retire.

# Broncos' Brandon Marshall reflects on what he learned after national anthem protest

By Brett Smiley  
FOXSports.com  
September 15, 2016

In August, San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick sparked a wave of criticism and praise when he kneeled during the national anthem before a preseason game, protesting racial inequality and police brutality in the United States.

Some players and former players took umbrage with the gesture while others followed Kaepernick's lead. Denver Broncos linebacker Brandon Marshall was among the players to join when he took a knee during the anthem before the Broncos played the Panthers in the NFL's kickoff on September 8.

Marshall told The MMQB after the game:

"I'm not against the police. I'm not against the military. I'm not against America. I'm against social injustice. This movement is something special. People are going to bash me on social media but at the end of the day I'm going to go home and sleep peacefully knowing what I did was right. I will not lose any sleep."

According to a posting by Marshall on Wednesday, he spent the week that followed the game meeting with figures in the community about social injustice, including the Denver Police Department's Chief Robert C. White. Read Marshall's full statement in which he also discusses his involvement with local social organizations. (In case the Instagram print is too small, scroll down further for transcript.)

On Thursday, Sept. 8, I took a knee for the National Anthem to take a stand against social injustice. My intent was not to offend anyone but rather to simply raise awareness and create some dialogue toward affecting positive change in our communities. In the last week, I've had a lot of productive conversations with people I respect, including Chief White of the Denver Police Department. I really appreciate all of them taking the time to listen to me and offer some insight and feedback on ways we can all make a difference. I've also had a lot of time to personally reflect on important issues such as race and gender equality, the treatment of our military veterans, our relationship with law enforcement, educational opportunities for our youth, and many more. I recognize and applaud the significant progress that has been made in these areas made possible only through the hard work of so many dedicated leaders. But, it's clear there is so more work to be done by all of us. Together, we all need to Stand Up for change. This starts with me. My work with the Rose Aodom Center to stop domestic violence is fulfilling and close to my heart. But I need to do more. I plan to be involved with several other organizations that benefit the Denver community and others through the services, awareness and funds they provide for these critical social issues. And I will donate 300 dollars for every tackle I make this season to those programs. You can track these contributions on social media through #TackleChange. I'm truly grateful for the support I've received from so many people, especially my teammates. I look forward to preparing with them and focusing on an important game Sunday against the Colts.

# Broncos LB Brandon Marshall on causes: 'I need to do more'

By Frank Schwab  
Yahoo! Sports  
September 15, 2016

From the moments Denver Broncos linebacker Brandon Marshall started explaining why he took a knee for the national anthem before last week's opener, he made it clear that was just one step in his process.

Kneeling brought attention — in a peaceful, non-disruptive way — to the issues of social injustice, police brutality and even how veterans are treated. Marshall mentioned the latter because he has family members who served in the military, although that message got lost in the ignorant claims by angry fans that he's being anti-military by protesting during the anthem.

Getting attention to those issues is great, but Marshall said he didn't want to stop there.

Like Colin Kaepernick, Marshall's college teammate who started this movement, Marshall has thought a lot about these issues and is taking them seriously. He wants to speak out not just against police brutality against minorities, but seemingly everything involving equality for all people. He also wants to take action. Marshall met with Denver Chief of Police Robert White on Tuesday and posted the following heartfelt letter on Instagram, which outlined some of his initiatives, including donating \$300 for every tackle this season to various organizations. He met with White after talking to a fourth-grade class, according to Mike Klis of 9News in Denver.

Here is Marshall's letter from Instagram, along with his photo of White:

On Thursday, Sept. 8, I took a knee for the National Anthem to take a stand against social injustice. My intent was not to offend anyone but rather to simply raise awareness and create some dialogue toward affecting positive change in our communities.

In the last week, I've had a lot of productive conversations with people I respect, including Chief White of the Denver Police Department. I really appreciate all of them taking the time to listen to me and offer some insight and feedback on ways we can all make a difference.

I've also had a lot of time to personally reflect on important issues such as race and gender equality, the treatment of our military veterans, our relationship with law enforcement, educational opportunities for our youth, and many more. I recognize and applaud the significant progress that has been made in these areas made possible only through the hard work of so many dedicated leaders.

But, it's clear there is so more work to be done by all of us. Together, we all need to Stand Up for change.

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My work with the Rose Amond Center to stop domestic violence is fulfilling and close to my heart. But I need to do more.

I plan to be involved with several other organizations that benefit the Denver community and others through the services, awareness and funds they provide for these critical social issues. And I will donate 300 dollars for every tackle I make this season to those programs.

You can track these contributions on social media through #TackleChange.

I'm truly grateful for the support I've received from so many people, especially my teammates. I look forward to preparing with them and focusing on an important game Sunday against the Colts.

For those who wrongly say the players should use a different approach, that's ignoring how much positive dialogue has been created by the protests. Perhaps Marshall could have met with White without kneeling for the anthem, as a prominent member of the defending Super Bowl champions in a city that loves its Broncos, but it probably didn't hurt in speeding up the process. Since Kaepernick's protest became a big story weeks ago, media outlets around the country have spent invaluable time talking about the protest and the cause behind it.

There have been other positive steps, such as the 49ers matching Kaepernick's \$1 million donation to various groups that support equality. Or Marshall's very thoughtful answer of "only love can drive out hate" to those criticizing him. Those who are inventing reasons to complain about the NFL players' movement seem to be an irrational and angry, albeit vocal, minority.

If Marshall kneeling for the national anthem is going to bring about constructive dialogue about issues like racial equality, police brutality, the treatment of military veterans and domestic violence, how can it be viewed as a bad thing?

# NFL franchise values are growing at an astonishing rate

By Frank Schwab

Yahoo! Sports

September 15, 2016

It's hard to find any business in the United States that is much more successful than the National Football League.

There likely aren't too many companies that have been around since 1920, yet still grew at the rate of 19 percent over the past year. Forbes magazine said NFL franchises are now worth \$2.34 billion on average, and that's a 19 percent bump from last year.

Say what you will about the product on the field, or the issues off the field. Complain about NFL commissioner Roger Goodell, or send another email about how you won't watch the league anymore over national-anthem protests. That's all just noise. The NFL is growing at a rate any 96-year-old business — which hasn't drastically changed the basic foundation of its product in all those years — shouldn't still be growing in 2016. Ask around and see how many corporations would love to get a 19 percent hike in the value of their business in the next year.

What's causing this increase? Forbes mentioned four factors: the new "Thursday Night Football" television rights package, the Rams moving from St. Louis to the much bigger market of Los Angeles, the Minnesota Vikings' new stadium and the soon-to-be completed Atlanta Falcons new stadium.

The Dallas Cowboys still check in at No. 1 among NFL teams, at \$4.2 billion. Forbes said earlier this summer that the Cowboys for the first time took over the title of the most valuable franchise in all of sports. The New England Patriots (\$3.4 billion), New York Giants (\$3.1 billion), San Francisco 49ers (\$3 billion) and Washington Redskins (\$2.95 billion) round out the top five. The Redskins' inclusion in the top five is a bit surprising, because they have a stadium they desperately want to replace and they haven't had much success on the field this century. It shows Washington could challenge Dallas for the "most valuable" title at some point soon.

There's even more growth possible for the NFL teams. The Oakland Raiders and San Diego Chargers are trying hard to get new stadiums. The league feels that holding games in other continents will help its bottom line. TV deals are probably going to increase in the future, because there's no sign of the NFL becoming less valuable to networks.

Just remember that when you tune in to games this Sunday. You'll be watching one of the truly great American business success stories unfold in front of you.

# NFL hands down fines to Broncos for illegal hits on Cam Newton

By Frank Schwab

Yahoo! Sports

September 15, 2016

The Carolina Panthers would probably rather have had the penalty yards for the uncalled illegal hits on their quarterback Cam Newton, but some fines for the Denver Broncos at least confirmed the Panthers' complaints.

Safety Darian Stewart was fined \$18,231 for his helmet-to-helmet hit on Newton late in the fourth quarter that was penalized, according to ESPN's Adam Caplan. Linebacker Brandon Marshall, who launched himself into Newton's head at the end of a throw, was fined more than \$24,000 according to Troy Renck of Denver7. Marshall was not given a penalty on that play, and other questionable hits weren't called either.

The multiple illegal hits on Newton in last Thursday's regular-season opener drew many complaints from the Panthers and even from Newton's father.

On NFL Network, NFL vice president of officiating Dean Blandino said if Newton has tucked the ball and appears to be a runner he doesn't get the normal quarterback protection, but if he is looking to pass he should still be treated as a quarterback.

"It's the posture that dictates the protection," Blandino said.

The Panthers have argued that Newton should be protected like all quarterbacks are, and officials might not be calling penalties the same for Newton because of his size and running ability.

The fines indicate the NFL agrees and Newton wasn't protected like he should have been. The fines won't change the outcome of the Panthers' Week 1 loss, but you can imagine that officials will be keeping a closer eye on the way Newton is hit going forward, starting on Sunday when the Panthers host the San Francisco 49ers.

# All Twisted Up

By Andy Benoit

MMQB

September 15, 2016

Last season was a nightmare for the Colts. Fittingly, their best victory—a Week 9 win over the eventual Super Bowl champions, the Broncos—was a Pyrrhic one. Andrew Luck threw for 252 yards and two touchdowns, but took endless body blows in the 27-24 win. Somewhere in there, his kidney was lacerated and his season soon came to an end.

Denver's formula for reaching Luck was easy to identify. When their dynamic pass rushers weren't straight up blowing past Indy's sluggish blockers, the Broncos were creating opportunities through twists and stunts. These tactics are often talked about but rarely explained. On a stunt or a twist (or a "game," because there seems to be a thousand names for the same thing across pro football), defensive lineman A attacks his blocker at an angle to create a pass rushing lane for defensive lineman B to loop into.

The Colts really had trouble in 2015 when opponents employed a third defensive lineman in this equation and stunted around two gaps, which the Broncos did with Von Miller early in Week 9.

Jonotthan Harrison, the center, failed on this play. It's no coincidence that Colts GM Ryan Grigson used a first-round pick on Harrison's replacement, Ryan Kelly, this offseason. The Alabama product, a stabilizing presence in Week 1 against Detroit, will be challenged to play with vision and awareness against the Broncos on Sunday. Stunts do two things to an offensive lineman. They force him to play laterally and demand that he be on the same page with the linemen next to him (emphasis: to his left and right). The blockers must pick up each other's assignments smoothly. The better they do this, the squarer their bodies will be to the line of scrimmage (and the less laterally they'll have to play).

Tactics like these are why we hear about the importance of having continuity along an offensive line. You can teach blockers to identify and communicate against stunts, but the nuances in execution will vary from man to man. With Ryan Kelly about to play just his second NFL game, the Broncos will test his chemistry with guards Jack Mewhort and Denzelle Good. A seventh-round rookie tackle last season, Good struggled against stunts and similar concepts in Week 1 against the Lions.

Offensive line woes aside, using stunts against the Colts works well because of Andrew Luck's deep dropbacks. Most stunts, especially multi-gap ones, take time to unfold. The design, in theory, means the looping pass rusher reaches the quarterback at the top of his dropback. Even if the pass rush is a little late getting to Luck, it's often effective because his courage is boundless when it comes to holding the ball. Having pass rushers loop around and in his line of vision is a smart strategy.

If last year's game is any indication, Luck will really have to hold on to the ball in obvious passing situations. The Colts' wideouts don't match up well against the physicality of Denver cornerbacks Aqib Talib, Chris Harris and Bradley Roby; those three stifled the Indy in man coverage last year. (Talib took Donte Moncrief, Harris took T.Y. Hilton and Roby took whoever was rotated in at No. 3.) Rob Chudzinksi took over as Indianapolis's offensive coordinator last year just before the Denver game. He wisely put his receivers in bunches and used switch-release concepts to make routes intersect and defenders give some cushion. Unfortunately, the execution was too erratic. It's imperative that Indy's receivers be sharper working together off the line on Sunday.

Chudzinski also called for runs on first and second down. The Colts didn't post huge numbers (120 yards on 40 carries) but the commitment to a run-pass balance kept them on schedule and in fewer third-and-long situations, when stunt tactics come into play. Chudzinski also cleverly exploited Denver's man coverage with his run designs, often sending a receiver in motion away from where the run was going and forcing the receiver's defender away from the action.

Given how successful Denver was in using man-to-man against Carolina in the season opener, it'd be a shock if they used another scheme in Week 2. If Luck and the offensive line can survive the pass rushing stunts, they'll have a chance to upset the Broncos again.

# Stewart, Marshall fined for hits on Cam Newton

By Edward Lewis

NFL.com

September 15, 2016

The Carolina Panthers thought the Denver Broncos deserved more penalties for their hits on Cam Newton in last Thursday's 21-20 season-opening loss. While it's too late now for the Panthers to get those flags, they might find solace knowing some fines were handed down for the Broncos' hits.

NFL Network Insider Ian Rapoport reported Wednesday that safety Darian Stewart and linebacker Brandon Marshall both received fines for helmet-to-helmet hits on Newton. Stewart was docked \$18,231, while Marshall was fined \$24,309.

ESPN first reported the fine to Stewart; The Denver Post first reported the fine to Marshall.

Newton was tagged several times by Broncos players throughout the game. Stewart's hit late in the fourth quarter, when he launched his helmet into the side of the quarterback's shortly after he released the ball, drew a flag. Marshall, however, who left his feet to put his helmet into Newton's facemask after the quarterback threw a pass earlier in the game, did not, though NFL vice president of officiating Dean Blandino admitted it should have.

The Panthers argued the Broncos should have had even more penalties, perhaps pointing to Von Miller's facemask-to-facemask hit on Newton early in the game as well.

# Roger Goodell says eliminating kickoffs remains possible if the NFL can't make them safer

By Mark Maske  
Washington Post  
September 15, 2016

The NFL has enacted rule changes to try to make the kickoff safer for players. That effort will continue with further safety-related tinkering with the play, according to NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell.

But if such maneuvers fail, the elimination of the kickoff from the sport remains a future consideration, Goodell said.

“We’ve made some very effective changes on the kickoff that have had a very significant impact reducing injuries,” Goodell said in an interview. “It is still a play where we see a higher propensity for head injury. So we want to try to address that. We think there’s still further changes that we can make. We won’t take anything off the table, including the elimination. But we still think there are some changes that we can make that we’ll continue to see progress in that area.”

The sport’s leaders have regarded the kickoff as an unusually hazardous play because would-be tacklers get a running start to race down the field toward potentially violent collisions with blockers and the returner. The Buffalo Bills’ Kevin Everett suffered what doctors called a life-threatening spinal cord injury during the opening game of the 2007 season. Everett survived the injury and later regained the ability to walk.

The most recent rule changes have been aimed at simply reducing the portion of kickoffs that are actually returned by increasing touchbacks. Owners of the 32 NFL teams last offseason ratified a proposal by the rule-making competition committee to place the football at the 25-yard line, rather than at the 20, for touchbacks on kickoffs.

[The NFL’s new rule to reduce kickoff returns didn’t work during the preseason]

The new rule is designed to encourage returners to remain in the end zone and settle for a touchback on kickoffs that land there. Previously, the NFL moved the spot of the kickoff five yards closer to the opposite end zone to help kickers reach the end zone.

It appears possible that the latest rule change might backfire, however. Some coaches said during the offseason, training camp and the preseason that teams might use the strategy of having kickers drop their kickoffs short of the end zone, then try to tackle the returner shy of the 25-yard line for better defensive field position.

Results during the four-game NFL preseason made those concerns appear justified. According to the league’s data, 42.2 percent of kickoffs resulted in touchbacks during this year’s preseason. That was down from 43.4 percent during the 2015 preseason before the new rule went into effect. The figure was 37.5 percent in 2014 and 45 percent in 2013. Fewer touchbacks mean more returns, exactly the opposite of what the league intended.

Dean Blandino, the NFL's vice president of officiating, said near the end of the preseason the league's leaders would not begin to evaluate the new rule until four weeks into the regular season.

Owners approved the touchback modification on only a one-year trial basis, so the competition committee and the owners will reevaluate the issue following this season.

The NFL also made other previous changes on kickoffs, including a rule to restrict "wedge" blocking by multiple members of the return team.

That has been part of a series of safety-related rule changes enacted by the league this decade for all plays, not only kickoffs.

"We've had 42 safety-related rule changes since 2002," Goodell said. "A lot of people questioned — our critics questioned — whether we could make the game safer and better at the same time. I think we've proven that we can, and that making the game safer can and usually does lead to making the game better. ... There are other areas that we still think we can make changes on, and the committee has been considering that over the last several years and will continue to do that."

In 2012, Time reported that Goodell had discussed a proposal to eliminate the kickoff with Greg Schiano, then the coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. One of Schiano's former players at Rutgers, Eric LeGrand, suffered a severe spinal injury on a kickoff.

Under Schiano's proposal, the team that scores a touchdown would retain possession of the football for a fourth-and-15 play at its 30-yard line. The team could opt to punt the ball to its opponent, or try for a first down in a bid to retain possession.

That would address what others within the sport have called one of the main obstacles to eliminating the kickoff. Any such rule change, they have said, might have to contain a mechanism allowing for the slim-chance possibility that a team trailing late in a game could get back possession of the football, as is now the case with the onside kick.

# Brandon Marshall, Darian Stewart “absolutely” will appeal their fines

By Mike Florio  
Pro Football Talk  
September 15, 2016

Broncos linebacker Brandon Marshall and safety Darian Stewart won't be surrendering their cash for hits on Cam Newton quickly or happily. Both said on Wednesday that they will appeal fines imposed for illegal hits on the Panthers quarterback.

“Absolutely, you have to appeal,” Marshall told reporters regarding his \$24,309 fine. “No matter what happens, I have to appeal it. That's a lot of money, think about it.”

Marshall seemed to be far more bothered by the amount of the fine than the fact that a fine was imposed.

“That's a huge fine,” Marshall said. “I know what it looks like. I know what it looked like. It looked bad, but that's a lot of money. That's what I'm upset about.”

Stewart will appeal his fine, too.

“I absolutely will,” Stewart told reporters. “I will definitely appeal the fine. . . . I was just trying to make a play. I was just being aggressive, but not really trying to aim for the head.”

That argument overlooks the reality that Stewart still is prohibited from striking Newton with Stewart's helmet anywhere, in the head or otherwise. Which makes it seem as if the common public misconception regarding what is and isn't permitted when striking a passer (no blows to the head and neck of the passer, no contact anywhere with the defender's helmet) also are common within the Denver locker room.

“I'll just say this, we play hard and we're going to continue to play hard,” coach Gary Kubiak said regarding the issue of fines for hitting Newton. “It's really difficult defensively when you have a quarterback who goes from a passer to a runner and you're committed and you're committed as a football player and that's what both of these guys were. We understand that you have to stay away from the head, we understand those types of things, but we're going to continue to play hard, that one's in the past, we're moving on.”

Kubiak's reference to a quarterback who runs and who passes echoes an explanation provided this week by NFL V.P. of officiating Dean Blandino on NFL Network, where he explained that the running or passing posture of the quarterback dictates where and how he can be hit. It's an issue that arose a year ago, after Ravens linebacker Terrell Suggs hit former Eagles quarterback Sam Bradford low after Bradford had completed a handoff following a read-option handoff. As to Newton, however, all of the illegal hits came when he was clearly in a passing posture.

Regardless of whether the Broncos agree or disagree, the fines put the players on clear notice of the expectations of the league. It's now up to the officials to do a better job of spotting all fouls against all

quarterbacks in real time — and for the league to consider applying a more aggressive disciplinary schedule, since plenty of players seem to be willing to risk a fine. Few would be willing to risk an ejection or a suspension.

# Hall of Fame announces 94 modern-era nominees for 2017

By Zac Jackson  
Pro Football Talk  
September 15, 2016

The Pro Football Hall of Fame has announced 94 former players and coaches as modern-era nominees for the Hall's 2017 class.

Prominent first-year nominees include pass rusher Jason Taylor, running back LaDainian Tomlinson and wide receiver Hines Ward. 2016 finalists back on the ballot include quarterback Kurt Warner, running backs Edgerrin James and Terrell Davis, wide receiver Terrell Owens, offensive linemen Alan Faneca and Joe Jacoby, safeties Steve Atwater and John Lynch, kicker Morten Andersen and ex-coach Don Coryell.

The list will be trimmed to 25 semifinalists in November and to 15 finalists in January. Eighteen finalists — those 15 from this group, senior finalist Kenny Easley and contributor category finalists Jerry Jones and Paul Tagliabue — will be presented to the selection committee before the Super Bowl next February. Between four and eight new Hall of Famers will be selected.

The full list of 2017 nominees, by position, is below...

## Quarterbacks (7)

Drew Bledsoe, Randall Cunningham, Doug Flutie, Donovan McNabb, Steve McNair, Phil Simms, Kurt Warner

## Running backs (13)

Shaun Alexander, Ottis Anderson, Tiki Barber, Larry Centers, Roger Craig, Terrell Davis, Eddie George, Edgerrin James, Daryl Johnston, Eric Metcalf, LaDainian Tomlinson, Herschel Walker, Ricky Watters

## Wide receivers (10)

Isaac Bruce, Henry Ellard, Torry Holt, Chad Johnson, Derrick Mason, Terrell Owens, Sterling Sharpe, Jimmy Smith, Rod Smith, Hines Ward

## Tight end (1)

Mark Bavaro

## Offensive linemen (14)

Tony Boselli, Ray Donaldson, Alan Faneca, Jay Hilgenberg, Chris Hinton, Kent Hull, Joe Jacoby, Mike Kenn, Olin Kreutz, Jim Lachey, Kevin Mawae, Tom Nalen, Nate Newton, Steve Wisniewski

## Defensive linemen (5)

Leslie O'Neal, Simeon Rice, Fred Smerlas, Jason Taylor, Bryant Young

Linebackers (11)

Carl Banks, Cornelius Bennett, Tedy Bruschi, Seth Joyner, Levon Kirkland, Clay Matthews, Willie McGinest, Karl Mecklenburg, Sam Mills, Joey Porter, Zach Thomas

Defensive backs (16)

Eric Allen, Steve Atwater, Joey Browner, LeRoy Butler, Brian Dawkins, Rodney Harrison, Ty Law, Albert Lewis, John Lynch, Frank Minnifield, Bob Sanders, Darren Sharper, Dennis Smith, Troy Vincent, Everson Walls, Darren Woodson

Kicker/punter (4)

Morten Andersen, Gary Anderson, Sean Landeta, Nick Lowery

Special teams (2)

Brian Mitchell, Steve Tasker

Coaches (11)

Don Coryell, Bill Cowher, Tom Flores, Mike Holmgren, Jimmy Johnson, Chuck Knox, Buddy Parker, Richie Petitbon, Dan Reeves, Clark Shaughnessy, Dick Vermeil

# Brandon Marshall to donate \$300 per tackle to Denver charities

By Josh Alper  
Pro Football Talk  
September 15, 2016

Broncos linebacker Brandon Marshall is handing over more than \$24,000 to the NFL as a result of a helmet-to-helmet hit on Panthers quarterback Cam Newton and he hopes to be doling out a lot more money for legal tackles as the season unfolds.

Marshall met with Denver police chief Robert White on Tuesday for a discussion about law enforcement in light of Marshall's decision to take a knee during the playing of the national anthem last Thursday night. White said "it became pretty clear to me that his kneeling was to speak to" injustices that Marshall feels exist in the country and that he was left with the feeling that Marshall "wants to do something" to address them beyond taking the knee.

Marshall shared his thoughts about the meeting in an Instagram post on Wednesday while announcing his plans to donate \$300 per tackle to local charities. The full text of Marshall's post appears below.

"On Thursday, Sept. 8, I took a knee for the National Anthem to take a stand against social injustice. My intent was not to offend anyone but rather to simply raise awareness and create some dialogue toward affecting positive change in our communities.

In the last week, I've had a lot of productive conversations with people I respect, including Chief White of the Denver Police Department. I really appreciate all of them taking the time to listen to me and offer some insight and feedback on ways we can all make a difference."

"I've also had a lot of time to personally reflect on important issues such as race and gender equality, the treatment of our military veterans, our relationship with law enforcement, educational opportunities for our youth, and many more. I recognize and applaud the significant progress that has been made in these areas made possible only through the hard work of so many dedicated leaders."

"But, it's clear there is so much more work to be done by all of us. Together, we all need to Stand Up for change. This starts with me."

"My work with the Rose Aandom Center to stop domestic violence is fulfilling and close to my heart. But I need to do more.

I plan to be involved with several other organizations that benefit the Denver community and others through the services, awareness and funds they provide for these critical social issues. And I will donate 300 dollars for every tackle I make this season to those programs. You can track these contributions on social media through #TackleChange."

"I'm truly grateful for the support I've received from so many people, especially my teammates. I look forward to preparing with them and focusing on an important game Sunday against the Colts."

# Demaryius Thomas “sore,” but gets in limited practice

By Josh Alper

Pro Football Talk

September 15, 2016

Broncos coach Gary Kubiak said Monday that he expected wide receiver Demaryius Thomas to be on the practice field Wednesday despite a hip injury that he suffered in last Thursday’s victory over the Panthers.

Thomas didn’t take part in the team’s practice on Monday after reportedly having an MRI over the weekend, but fulfilled Kubiak’s hope that he’d get back on the field. Thomas wasn’t a full participant in practice and reports from media members at the session were that he showed signs of discomfort with the hip, something Kubiak attributed to being “sore” while saying the team will see how he feels on Wednesday.

“He looked OK with what we asked him to do,” Kubiak said, via the Denver Post. “We’re going to take it a step at a time this week. We knew we had him set for certain plays at practice and tomorrow we’ll pick it up.”

Kubiak added that Thomas has “been through some of this before” and that the team is planning as if Thomas will be on the field for their matchup with the Colts.

# Brandon Marshall gets his fine for helmet-to-helmet hit on Cam Newton

By Josh Alper  
Pro Football Talk  
September 15, 2016

The NFL isn't willing to extend replay reviews to cover penalties, so there's no recourse on the field when officials miss a helmet-to-helmet hit on a quarterback that's obvious to anyone watching at home.

While teams go unpunished for players violating the rules during games, the league is fine with punishing the players after the fact. Once the NFL admitted that Gene Steratore's officiating crew dropped the ball when Broncos linebacker Brandon Marshall launched himself headfirst into Panthers quarterback Cam Newton's head in last Thursday's game, it was obvious that a fine would follow.

According to multiple reports, that fine has been issued. Marshall will owe \$24,309 for his shot on Newton.

Safety Darian Stewart was fined \$18,231 for drilling Panthers quarterback Cam Newton with a helmet-to-helmet hit that was flagged on the field, although there was no real penalty to the Broncos as Newton's intentional grounding penalty on the same play meant the penalties offset.

# Andrew Luck knows Broncos are physical, but doesn't think they're dirty

By Darin Gantt  
Pro Football Talk  
September 15, 2016

The hit from a pair of Broncos players that ended Andrew Luck's 2015 season was a clean one.

And even though all the punishment the Broncos doled out last week was not, Luck said he didn't view them as a dirty team.

"I wouldn't use that word," Luck said, via Mike Wells of ESPN.com. "I'd say they play hard and like any good defense, any good offense, like any good football team, you want to toe that line of aggression. They are certainly a tough, physical defense.

"Sometimes you get hit in the head, a flag comes out or it doesn't come out. I don't worry too much about it. It's the ref's job in a sense. By and large I think they do a great job of that."

Even if Cam Newton won't say so, plenty of other people might dispute that last notion, after the Panthers quarterback took four shots to the head in the second half of last week's opener.

When Luck ended up with a lacerated kidney last year, the tackle from Broncos linebacker Danny Trevathan (now in Chicago) and Vance Walker (now on IR) was hard, but not in a malicious way. But coach Chuck Pagano said his team knows it has to protect Luck, after seeing what happened last year and last week.

"If we pick things up, we communicate, get a hat on a hat, we do our job and obviously we can limit those things," Pagano said. "It's physical, physical football. We know that. We have to do our job and everybody else has to do their job."

That everybody else would include the officials, whose failure to make the calls on the field last week made it a dangerous situation for Newton.

# Darian Stewart fined \$18k for helmet-to-helmet hit on Cam Newton

By Darin Gantt  
Pro Football Talk  
September 15, 2016

On a day when the league is promising \$100 million to combat their concussion problem, they're also establishing a menu for what the cost of player safety actually is.

According to Adam Caplan of ESPN, Broncos safety Darian Stewart has been fined \$18,231 for his helmet-to-helmet hit on Panthers quarterback Cam Newton.

Stewart's was the only one of the four second-half head-shots to the MVP which was penalized on the field, but it was negated by an intentional grounding penalty.

Linebacker Brandon Marshall is also expected to be fined for launching himself into a helmet-to-helmet hit. Hits by Von Miller and Bradley Roby are also going to be reviewed.

# Brandon Marshall picks up new endorsement after losing two following anthem kneel

By Curtis Crabtree  
Pro Football Talk  
September 15, 2016

Denver linebacker Brandon Marshall lost a pair of endorsements after electing to take a knee during the national anthem prior to last Thursday's regular season opener between the Broncos and Carolina Panthers.

Now he's getting another endorsement opportunity and isn't sweating the change.

After losing CenturyLink and Air Academy Credit Union as paid endorsements, entertainment mogul Russell Simmons has reached out to Marshall to get him to endorse "RushCard," which is a prepaid Visa card.

"I spoke with Russell Simmons," Marshall said in quotes distributed by the Broncos. "They're endorsing me, The Rush Card and he said he was going to speak with me today. I spoke with him the last two days. He's going to talk to me today about the parameters of the deal, what it comes with. I lost two, but I gain one."

Marshall said he knew he could face repercussions from sponsors for taking a knee and was ready for those consequences. While he was still a bit surprised when sponsors did leave, he's now glad to have a sponsor that believes in the cause he is trying to bring attention toward.

"I didn't breach my contract. I didn't get arrested, I didn't do anything to defame the team or CenturyLink or Air Academy. I just exercised my first amendment rights and they drop me for that," Marshall said. "So for Russell Simmons to come up and step in, I think that's great. I'm proud of what I did because I didn't do anything that's wrong or hurtful by any stretch."

Marshall also said he doesn't plan to kneel forever. He will stand for the anthem again when he feels it makes sense to him to do so.

"Whenever I stand up, I'll stand up and I think it'll be a good thing and I think I'll make an impact," he said. "I'm trying to make an impact in the community as well. When I do stand up it'll be because kneeling really was just to bring attentions to the issues, an awareness factor, a symbol, so to speak, just like the flag is a symbol. That's really what everything's about. It's not about kneeling; it's about other things, so now I'm doing the donation thing and I'm going to do other things to back up my kneeling."

# Five things you should know from the Broncos' Wednesday

By Andrew Mason  
DenverBroncos.com  
September 15, 2016

Did the extra time off following the Thursday night opener help the Broncos?

The answer probably depends on who you ask.

"I think it's good for the players," Head Coach Gary Kubiak said. "For us as coaches, things don't change, other than having a little bit more time to prepare for this team [the Colts]."

"But it's been good for our players. Camp was a grind. Pushing toward the opening Thursday was a grind, and I was able to give them a break over the weekend. So I think we're fresh, and it looks that way running around. It should be good and fresh coming Sunday."

But it does alter the rhythm a bit.

"It was good. It felt like too long; I'll have to tell you the truth," QB Trevor Siemian said. "But it's good. You've got to take your days off when you get them and get ready for the long haul here."

What else stood out from the Wednesday of work at the UCHealth Training Center?

## 1. ON TO THE COLTS -- THE NEMESIS

No AFC rival has given the Broncos more fits, more consistently, in recent years than the Colts. Indianapolis is the only team to defeat the Broncos in each of the last three seasons -- during regular-season games in 2013 and 2015 at Lucas Oil Stadium, and in the 2014 divisional playoffs in Denver.

The Colts' .786 winning percentage against the Broncos in the last 15 years including the postseason is the highest of any team in the NFL at Denver's expense. Only the Chargers have beaten the Broncos more often in that span, but their 13 wins were more than balanced by 18 losses. Indianapolis, meanwhile, is 11-3 against the Broncos since 2001 and has won eight of the last nine games in the series dating back to the 2004 postseason.

Much of the Colts' success at the Broncos' expense came with Peyton Manning at quarterback. But the Broncos went 1-3 against Indianapolis once Manning was in orange and blue. The rapid emergence of Andrew Luck had plenty to do with that.

"At the end of the day, we've always said if you've got a quarterback in this league, you've got a chance, and they have one of the top ones," RB C.J. Anderson said.

But other teams have top quarterbacks and don't have the kind of dominance over the Broncos the Colts have had. So just why are the Colts such a thorn in the Broncos' side?

"I don't know. That's a tough one," Anderson said. "I don't know if when they see the Broncos, they just want to go out there and want to kick our butts, if that's just how they feel when they play [us]."

"They're very well coached. We know that, from Coach [Chuck] Pagano and what he does, especially his background being in Baltimore. Having that physical background that he has, he just imposed that on his players, and it's worked out no matter who's on the team every year."

## 2. MARSHALL, STEWART PLAN TO APPEAL FINES

Both ILB Brandon Marshall and SS Darian Stewart said they will appeal the five-figure fines levied against them by the NFL for helmet-to-helmet hits on Carolina QB Cam Newton in last week's season-opening win.

Neither plans to alter how they attack quarterbacks.

"I am upset about it, but it's still football, man. It's not going to change the way I play the game," Stewart said.

Just as Marshall and Stewart don't plan to change their style of play, their defensive teammates don't plan to hold up when they're on the attack.

"I'll just say this: We play hard. We're going to continue to play hard," Kubiak said. "It's really, really difficult to me defensively when you have a quarterback who goes from a passer to a runner, and you're committed as a football player."

"We understand that you've got to stay away from the head. We understand all of those types of things. But we're going to continue to play hard."

"They call it 'dirty,' but we just call it, 'Bronco football,'" CB Aqib Talib added. "We're playing full speed, to the whistle. We just call it, 'Bronco football.'"

## 3. PLAYING "BRONCO FOOTBALL" AGAINST LUCK

Although Luck and Cam Newton share some attributes, Luck is much less likely to run; he carries the football on 9.2 percent of his dropbacks since 2013, compared with 18.6 for Newton in that same time frame.

But the key for the secondary, believes Talib, is to focus more on their own play than what Luck might do and how he can beat defensive backs in coverage.

"We're going to play Bronco football. We're going to do what we do," Talib said. "We're going to play what Coach [Wade Phillips] calls. Coach is going to come up with the game plan. We're going to have our little tendencies that we know, but we're going to play Bronco football."

Still, Talib and the defense know the challenge they face -- and what Luck has done to them in the past. Luck has nine touchdown passes and two touchdown runs in four career games against the Broncos, and has a career 88.2 rating at their expense -- 7.0 points higher than the Broncos have allowed to all other quarterbacks since 2013.

"We know when we're playing one of the best," Talib said. "It takes more preparation than the time we have at work. We're aware that we're playing one of the best this week, and we've got to prepare like it."

#### 4. TACKLING CHANGE

A day after he knelt during the national anthem, Marshall mentioned that one of his coaches asked him, "What's your end game?"

He might have found part of it this week. A day after meeting with Denver Police Chief Michael C. White, Marshall announced that he plans to donate \$300 for every tackle he makes to multiple charities.

"That's part of the end game," Marshall said. "That's only one part of it. I'm going to continue to think of different things and continue to come up with different solutions so that's one thing and I'm looking forward to other things as well."

Marshall said he had not set a timeline for when he would stand for the national anthem instead of kneeling.

"Whenever I stand up, I'll stand up and I think it'll be a good thing and I think I'll make an impact," he said. "I'm trying to make an impact in the community as well. When I do stand up it'll be because kneeling really was just to bring attentions to the issues, an awareness factor, a symbol, so to speak, just like the flag is a symbol. That's really what everything's about."

"It's not about kneeling; it's about other things, so now I'm doing the donation thing and I'm going to do other things to back up my kneeling."

#### 5. VANCE WALKER UNDERGOES SURGERY

Just under one month after he tore his anterior cruciate ligament in practice, the eighth-year defensive end underwent surgery to repair the torn ligament.

Vance Walker ✓ @SwaggerVance99

Surgery went very well today!!! Again I thank everyone for their prayers, thoughts, and well...

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BKUfCk-DysA/>

8:46 PM - 13 Sep 2016

The rehabilitation process is expected to take several months, and Walker is expected to return for offseason work in 2017. His current two-year contract ends after this season.

# Broncos Injury Report: Demaryius Thomas practices

By Andrew Mason  
DenverBroncos.com  
September 15, 2016

Two days after getting a rest day following weekend injury treatment, WR Demaryius Thomas took approximately "one-third" of the practice repetitions as the Broncos commenced their regular weekly work in advance of Sunday's game against Indianapolis.

"He looked okay with what we asked him to do," Head Coach Gary Kubiak said. "We're going to take it a step at a time this week. Today, we had him set for certain plays in practice, and tomorrow we'll pick it up, but he's on course to make it to Sunday and get ready to go, so we've just got to do the right thing."

Thomas suffered a hip injury early in last week's 21-20 win over Carolina, but played through it, finishing with 48 yards on four receptions over 44 snaps.

"I know he's sore. He's been sore. But Greek [Head Athletic Trainer Steve Antonopoulos] has done a good job with him," Kubiak said. "We've had a few days extra from that standpoint, so now it's just a matter of working through it and getting ready for Sunday, so today is a step in the right direction."

Thomas' presence on the field and the return of WR Bennie Fowler from a fractured elbow ensured 100 percent attendance at practice for the first time this season. Fowler was officially listed as not practicing, but was on the field with a helmet when practice began.

"He just did some stuff early in practice, but once we got going with our team team portion, he didn't do it," Kubiak said.

Fowler and OL Ty Sambrailo both had braces on their right elbows. Sambrailo practiced once again after being limited last week; Head Coach Gary Kubiak said that Sambrailo's full work during Monday's practice was his first since he injured his elbow on July 31.

Newly acquired practice-squad ILB Reshard Cliett was also on the field Wednesday; he wore jersey No. 45.

# BMW Ultimate Performance: Andy Janovich, Todd Davis and Cody Latimer

By Andrew Mason  
DenverBroncos.com  
September 15, 2016

## HOW THE FULLBACK CHANGES THE OFFENSE

Start with these numbers:

5.8 yards: C.J. Anderson's average yards-per-carry against Carolina with Andy Janovich on the field.

3.4 yards: Anderson's average without Janovich.

Four and a half years ago, I wrote a story with the headline "Death of the Fullback" after the release of Spencer Larsen following the 2011 season. The Broncos would use Chris Gronkowski sparingly at fullback in 2012, but aside from his work and a brief Jacob Hester cameo late in that season, the fullback vanished from the offense for nearly all of the next four seasons. The 2013 and 2014 seasons passed without a fullback anywhere on the roster; whenever the Broncos needed someone for a fullback-type role, they would call on a tight end like James Casey or Virgil Green, or a lineman such as James Ferentz or -- memorably -- Mitch Unrein.

Now, the fullback lives.

It's too soon to guess where this might go. Is this just a product of the Broncos running the pure iteration of the Kubiak offense, leaving it a relative novelty league-wide as teams abandon use of the fullback? Or is it possible that the pendulum swings of football strategy could bring the fullback back on a widespread basis?

Janovich's play may have a lot to do with what happens.

In Week 1, he was a difference-maker as a blocker. But his 28-yard touchdown run will linger and will be at the forefront of how teams try to defend the Broncos.

Now the opponent has to take seriously the notion that the rookie fullback can make plays with the football. (Which is something they should have accounted for to begin with, given his two 50-plus gains last year at Nebraska.)

Defensive backs like Benwikere will no longer be able to ignore the threat of Janovich with the football. When they account for Janovich, that leaves their focus divided, likely creating openings in coverage, and lanes for the running backs.

That's one reason why you throw a play like that on the table in Week 1. For the next 15 games -- and beyond, the Broncos hope -- every opponent will have to strategize knowing that Janovich can rip off an explosive play when given space to do it.

## TODD DAVIS AND TEAM RUN D

Working mostly against the run, Davis was crucial in ensuring that Carolina's runs did not cause more damage than they did.

One example of this came early in the third quarter, when he stopped Jonathan Stewart for a 5-yard gain on second-and-6. Davis isn't in a good spot, but he quickly shakes off Carolina's Andrew Norwell, and is the first man there with help from Darian Stewart to make the play before the line to gain.

The next play saw perhaps the most important stop of the game, and was the very epitome of a team effort. Davis is aligned directly over the center, with Darius Kilgo and Jared Crick immediately flanking him at the A-gaps. Davis' responsibility is to fill a hole on the inside; he does that.

Cam Newton quickly rolls left. This leaves the fate of the play in the hands of Shane Ray, who was engaged with Devin Funchess, and Aqib Talib, who followed the motion man over to that side. The instant Ray sees Newton break toward the edge, he engages in heavy pursuit, and with Talib playing his side of the field, Newton is stopped, giving the Broncos the stop they desperately needed.

Too many runs reached the second level against the Panthers, and with another tough, large, mobile quarterback lurking Sunday in Indianapolis' Andrew Luck, the Broncos will need to improve -- fast. But Davis was a big part of ensuring that the paper cuts didn't become open wounds.

## SPECIAL TEAMS: CONTAINING TED GINN, JR.

WR Cody Latimer was the team's special-teams player of the game, and with good reason; he provided two of the Broncos' three tackles on returns, playing a big role in neutralizing Carolina's Ted Ginn Jr.

But it was a team effort. On his first tackle -- on the kickoff after Andy Janovich's 28-yard touchdown run -- safety Justin Simmons is the first one downfield racing forward to dive at Ginn at the 13-yard line. Simmons guides Ginn outside, and into the grasp of Latimer and Janovich, who followed his touchdown run with a 52-yard sprint to help stop Ginn.

Late in the second quarter, just after the two-minute warning, Latimer plays his role as gunner perfectly on Riley Dixon's 44-yard punt, reading the trajectory of the football and Ginn perfectly to cut back inside and meet Ginn right after he fields the football. With an assist from Kayvon Webster, who got up the opposite sideline, Ginn had no place to go and settled for a 4-yard return.

# That's What They Said: Chuck Pagano and Andrew Luck

By Aric DiLalla

DenverBroncos.com

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'They know how to win'

When the Colts meet the Broncos on Sunday, the game will revolve largely on the ability of the Colts' offense to find success against a Broncos defense that kept Cam Newton and the potent Panthers offense in check.

Colts quarterback Andrew Luck sees largely the same Broncos group and scheme that he saw last year when they met in Indianapolis.

"[They're] tough, physical, good," Luck said. "Really good players all around the field. Obviously they're a winning group. They know how to win. Well coached. I think [Defensive Coordinator] Coach [Wade] Phillips does a heck of a job everywhere he's been. Certainly great pass rushers, really good cover guys. Really there's no weakness on the defense."

Head coach Chuck Pagano, who is 3-1 against the Broncos as a head coach, views the Broncos' defense in the same light. From Derek Wolfe all the way back to T.J. Ward, Denver's defense poses matchup problems for an opposing offense.

"It's obviously an athletic, physical, tough, attacking, swarming defense," Pagano said. "They've got talent front to back. The edge pressure that you get, the way that they run to the football, the linebackers are sideline to sideline, and the secondary is as good a unit as there is in the National Football League. It's very, very difficult to generate movement inside and try to get something going in the run game. They do a great job there. They've got great edge setters in [DeMarcus] Ware and Von [Miller]. And then Shaq [Barrett] comes in and [Shane] Ray comes in. They're deep. They've got a ton of talent and they're extremely well coached. They're disciplined and they fly around. They're a physical, physical unit."

If the Colts are to find success this week, they'll need to get strong contributions from tight ends Dwayne Allen and Jack Doyle and wide receivers T.Y. Hilton, Donte Moncrief and Phillip Dorsett. The return in focus on involving the tight ends in the passing game is "incredibly important," so that the offense can "attack defenses in multiple ways." But the impetus for a solid offensive attack begins and ends with the speedy receiving corps.

"They're certainly taking the next step," Luck said. "They're great guys to play with. They're athletic. Obviously Donte is very big, on the bigger side, and Phil is maybe on the smaller side. Phil can run like the wind. Donte did a great job, made some big plays. Obviously, everybody just about knows what T.Y. can do in this league. And those guys are making it hard to just focus on T.Y. as a defense"

A challenge on defense

As the Colts head into Denver, they'll try to shut down Emmanuel Sanders, Demaryius Thomas and the rest of the Broncos' receiving corps with a banged-up secondary. Star cornerback Vontae Davis

continues to miss time with a medial right ankle sprain and both Darius Butler and Clayton Geathers are sidelined, as well. Against the Detroit Lions on Sunday, the situation only got worse for the Colts. Rookie safety T.J. Green left the game with a knee sprain and cornerback Patrick Robinson left with a concussion. For the rest of the game, former Broncos safety Mike Adams lined up alongside Winston Guy, Darryl Morris and Rashaan Melvin.

Stopping the Broncos' offense with that cast won't be an easy task for the Colts, which Pagano admitted on Wednesday.

"Yeah, it's going to be a challenge," Pagano said. "It was a challenge and it'll be no different this week. Got a talented, talented group on that side. Quarterback [Trevor Siemian]'s going to do a great job and those guys are matchup issues for your starters when you're healthy. And when you have some guys in there that haven't played, it's even more of a challenge. We've got to do a great job up front. We've got to be able to have some early down success and try to get them in third-and-long situations and be able to put some pressure on the quarterback with our four guys up front and try to force the ball out and try to take some of that pressure off those guys and try to mix some things up and do some different stuff. It's going to be one heck of a challenge."

The Broncos showed plenty of faith in Siemian against the Panthers, and he'll try again Sunday to get the ball to Sanders, Thomas and Co. in space. Pagano had nothing but good things to say about the young quarterback after he went 18 for 26 with 178 yards, a touchdown and two interceptions in the opener against Carolina.

"I saw a young man that looked like he's been playing for a long time," Pagano said. "He's mature beyond his years. I think he managed the game well. I think he made good decisions. There's a couple plays that he probably would love to have back, but he went through his reads, he went through his progressions. He's got arm talent. Obviously he's bright and he gets them in the right play. Again, he was very efficient. He was accurate. He's athletic enough to extend plays. He's a perfect fit, is what I saw, for Coach Kube's [Gary Kubiak] system and it reminds me of all the times I've had to face Coach Kubes and that offense. They do a great job and it's a great system. It's extremely difficult to defend, and Trev, he did a nice job and looks like they got a guy there that's more than capable."

Perhaps more important to the Broncos' hopes of winning Sunday's game is how running back C.J. Anderson performs. He shot out of the gate against Carolina with 139 all-purpose yards and two touchdowns. With the Broncos down 17-7, Anderson helped bring them back. He'll look for a big day against the Colts, who gave up 116 yards on the ground against the Lions.

"They do such a great job with their system and the way that they run the football and the way that they block up front," Pagano said. "They've got a great offensive line and they've got great runners. [RB C.J.] Anderson is one heck of a back. He's strong, he's compact, he's powerful, he's got great vision and he's got a great jump-cut. He hits his track. He takes his steps, puts his foot in the ground and he's north-and-south."

Replicating past success

If the Colts are going to win their third straight game against the Broncos, they'll need to replicate their performance from last November's win. Indianapolis jumped out to a 17-0 lead in the first half as they played sharp football.

"We've been able to come out and be efficient early," Pagano said. "Last year we played well early and then we got up and kind of hung on, if you will. We were able to eke out that win. But you've got to play early and we're gonna have to do this same thing."

That fast start was somewhat of an anomaly for the Colts, who said this week they're tired of the slow beginnings. Though the team has shown a propensity for roaring back, as they almost did against Detroit after being down 21-3, Pagano knows they must improve early in games.

"It's something that we need to get fixed and get fixed in a hurry," Pagano said. "We're going to stop talking about it. It seems to be a self-fulfilling prophecy, if you will. We've got to change that culture right now. It's kind of a last-minute culture and it's tough mentally. It's tough physically to have to do that over and over and over again. We know that we can finish, it's just a matter of coming out and executing and playing really good football. Go back to the game last year in Indy against these guys and we played well in all three phases and played great complementary football as soon as the first gun went off."

Yet while the Colts have enjoyed prior success against the Broncos, Luck knows that's no guarantee of anything during Sunday's game. This year's game has "nothing to do" with the Colts' 27-24 win in 2015, he said.

"We moved the ball decently," Luck said, "and converted some third downs and managed to score in the red zone and we obviously on the same token know it's a totally different year and what's happened in the past has absolutely zero bearing on this game."

# Davis, Lynch, Atwater, Reeves among Hall of Fame nominees

By Aric DiLalla  
DenverBroncos.com  
September 15, 2016

The Pro Football Hall of Fame announced its Modern Era nominees for the Class of 2017 on Wednesday, and a host of former Broncos made the first cut.

Terrell Davis, Rod Smith, Tom Nalen, Karl Mecklenburg, Steve Atwater, John Lynch, Dennis Smith and Brian Dawkins represent the Broncos as players. Former head coach Dan Reeves and three short-time Broncos, Seth Joyner (1998), Simeon Rice (2007) and Ty Law (2009), also got the nod among the list of 94 nominees.

The 2017 class marks the first time Dawkins, who played 13 years for the Philadelphia Eagles before joining the Broncos, is eligible for the Hall of Fame.

Several members of the Broncos delegation have previously been finalists, including Terrell Davis, Steve Atwater and John Lynch. Both Davis and Atwater are already in the Broncos' Ring of Fame, and Lynch is scheduled to be inducted this fall alongside Jason Elam and Simon Fletcher.

Four Hall of Famers were inducted for their Broncos contributions -- John Elway (2004), tackle Gary Zimmerman (2008), running back Floyd Little (2010) and tight end Shannon Sharpe (2011).

The list of nominees will be cut to 25 semifinalists in November and 15 finalists in January. The 15 finalists, along with Seniors Subcommittee nominee Kenny Easley and Contributors Subcommittee nominees Jerry Jones and Paul Tagliabue, will be presented to the full 48-member committee on Feb. 4, one day before Super Bowl LI.

Up to five Modern Era nominees can be inducted in this year's class, which can grow as high as eight if Easley, Jones and Tagliabue are selected for induction.

# Sacco Sez: The best shade of orange

By Jim Saccomano  
DenverBroncos.com  
September 15, 2016

The Denver Broncos have fashioned a magnificent history of winning under Owner Pat Bowlen, and most fans know many of the stats.

Under Mr. B we have become one of just four teams to go to eight Super Bowls and one of just nine to win the world championship three or more times. But it was not always such, prior to his ownership and in his first couple of seasons. Early on in his regime Mr. B once said to me, "To much of the country, we are just that team that plays up in the mountains and wears orange."

We are much more than that today, and while the height of the Rocky Mountains has not changed, but the Broncos and their fans have elevated the wearing of orange to an art form.

On Tuesday the Broncos and the National Football League announced a continuation of the NFL "Color Rush" uniform program, which will have the team in orange from shoulder to toe for the Broncos' game at San Diego on Thursday, Oct. 13. The uniform includes an orange jersey, orange pants, orange socks, and accent elements that evoke some of the uniform elements from as far back as the 1960's. That will be a lot of orange.

The Color Rush program began last year, and teams have had alternate uniforms for many years, but only the Cleveland Browns and Cincinnati Bengals have as much pure orange as do the Broncos. The most common uniform colors include versions of red and/or blue, but I have always liked the idea that our color scheme is more unique.

Every Bronco fan and the entire organization owes a debt of thanks to Jack Faulkner, who, upon taking over as General Manager and Head Coach in 1962, made the immediate decision to get rid of the team's legendary and notorious mustard and brown uniforms. In fact, that uniform disappeared in a public bonfire in conjunction with the annual end of camp scrimmage in 1962, which only added to the aura of that first uniform as well as to the rarity and purchase price of the few pair of striped socks that escaped the flames.

The team chose orange after internal discussions that included a brief modeling of jerseys, as described to me by the late Ronnie Bill, an assistant equipment manager who was one of the observers that day.

"One of the possibilities was green," Ronnie told me, "but there were rumors that the Jets wanted to go to green, and Jack wanted his own color."

In fact, the Jets did go to a green-and-white uniform one year later when Sonny Werblin succeeded in finalizing his purchase of the team. Werblin was a New York promoter who loved the color of money, and Faulkner had spent ten years playing and coaching in Ohio, where he had come to greatly admire both the success of the Cleveland Browns and the unique color which that team wore.

So from 1962 to the present, the Broncos have had a few different uniforms, but every one has incorporated orange as a primary color, and most variations included orange as the single most-

dominant color. The press and fans adopted the nickname "Orange Crush" in 1977 due to the crushing dominance of the defense, which included seven players who made the Pro Bowl one year or another and which was dominant for a four- or five-year period. There are a lot of similarities between that defense and the one that takes the field for the Broncos today, as longtime observers can attest.

Of course, a little orange can go a long way. The Broncos actually wore orange pants for a six-year span which ended with a playoff loss to Earl Campbell and the Houston Oilers in the Astrodome on Dec. 23, 1979, my second season with the team. However, the orange pants were never coupled with the orange jerseys during that time.

For one night this season there will be more orange on the Broncos sideline than at any other time in our history.

It is all part of the game and its promotion, and it once again gives our legions of fans the opportunity to revel in the color orange.