

# Mark Kiszla: Denver Broncos aren't getting carried away by 4-3 start

Mark Kiszla  
The Denver Post  
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Trending everywhere: #USALovesBroncos.

Call it a football miracle, but Peyton Manning might be a warmer and fuzzier NFL feel-good story in 2012 than Tim Tebow was in 2011.

Denver linebacker Wesley Woodyard is having a breakout season, turning a bitter D.J. Williams into Mr. Irrelevant.

If you get swept away by the praise, the Broncos are the first team in league history to clinch a playoff berth with a 4-3 record.

"No time to get cocky," Denver cornerback Tony Carter says.

Glad somebody around here cut through the hype to speak the truth.

If you believe the football tenet that you are what your record says, the Broncos are closer to mediocre than true Super Bowl contenders.

The Cincinnati Bengals don't scare anybody. And maybe that's the trap.

Lest we forget, in three road games this season, the Broncos have been outscored in the opening half 61-14.

America has discovered a new team to love.

But with the same voice a teacher warns his young students to get cracking on their homework, Manning says: "It's been two good wins in a row. We're looking for consistency. We're not looking for two good games and then a lull."

The Broncos have grown. Credit coach John Fox. All praise to Manning. From Demaryius Thomas to Chris Harris, youth is being served heaping helpings of success.

Trending topics, however, are just dust in the Twitterverse wind.

The next task for the Broncos is far tougher.

Push forward.

Don't fall back.

# Kickin' it with Kiz: Broncos' Peyton Manning's place is extra effort

Mark Kiszla  
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**Super perspective.** I have always enjoyed watching Peyton Manning play. I would watch him play for anyone, any time, for anything, no matter the stakes. John Elway, Joe Montana, Earl Campbell and O.J. Simpson met the same criteria. I have to say, however, that Manning should have played in more Super Bowls than he has. He can take the blame in many cases for why Indianapolis didn't go further in the playoffs. Did he always have a good supporting cast? No, but when one offensive play was pivotal to winning the game, Manning has come up short too often. So let's not obsess over what the Broncos will do, as if we know.

## ***Stan, Fort Collins***

**Kiz:** The Broncos are not in the same class as AFC rivals Houston or New England. Nobody understands this better than Manning. He knows how hard it is to win the Super Bowl. Nobody will work harder to make the Broncos improve than Manning. His obsession with maximum effort rivals anything I've seen from Michael Jordan, Patrick Roy or Cal Ripken Jr.

**Bufs vs. Valor.** I read your column on Alabama versus the NFL thinking I would get a good laugh. Oh, my gosh. You were serious! You even interviewed Broncos cornerback Champ Bailey based on the tongue-in-cheek comments of South Carolina coach Steve Spurrier? Has college football gotten so bad in Colorado you have to fantasize about Alabama losing to an NFL team? OK, maybe you're on the right track, but in the wrong neighborhood. How about we fantasize about CU taking on a couple of the local high school teams? Now that could be a good game!

## ***John, fantasy football lover***

**Kiz:** Mr. Bailey indulges my twisted sense of humor even better than he covers wide receivers. He was informed my questions were not serious. But I'm only half-kidding about this: Alabama would lose to the Kansas City Chiefs 10 out of 10 times. Give Valor Christian 10 shots at CU, however, and you might see an upset. Or two.

**No talent show at CU.** Here's a great quote from CU football coach Jon Embree: "We have some talent, but we're not very talented. So when you're not very talented, you can't help beat yourself, and that's what we've done." Is Embree referring to himself and his coaching staff? Certainly he's not throwing his players under the bus (a hybrid, of course). Embree gets whopped by 50 points week in

and week out, and The Denver Post provides an outlet to let everyone know how untalented his players are.

**Ernie, *hot-seat craftsman***

**Kiz:** The CU players are indeed in over their heads, swimming with the sharks of the Pac-12 Conference. But it's Embree, offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy and defensive coordinator Greg Brown who are in the deep end without their water wings. Hate to say it, but Bieniemy should be reassigned and Brown should be shown the door.

**A-Rod in LoDo.** With the horrible postseason performance of New York third baseman Alex Rodriguez, I am sure there's talk around Yankeeville to trade him. If the Rockies could get him at a reduced rate, do you think they would pursue A-Rod? He would love hitting at Coors Field. He would stack the seats, as well. Thoughts?

**Chad, *Denver***

**Kiz:** I have a better chance of being elected president this week than A-Rod does of being in the starting lineup next spring for the Rockies.

**Regis vs. Rockies.** And today's parting shot is a baseball mother's prayer of hope and thanks:

I read your column why Walt Weiss needs to say no to the Rockies. You are on point. As a baseball mom with an 11-year-old son, let me say Weiss is respected for his dedication, expertise and true love of the game. My son looks forward to being coached by Weiss when he attends Regis Jesuit High School in 2015. So, yes, Walt. Just say no!

**Janice, *knows the score***

# Klis: Sophomore slump hits Bengals' Andy Dalton

Mike Klis  
The Denver Post  
November 4, 2012

Andy Dalton is a sophomore.

There you have it. No other explanation is needed for his disappointing play this year as the Cincinnati Bengals' starting quarterback.

"I don't know exactly what it is," Dalton told the Denver media last week. "It's hard to put a finger on one thing that makes a change."

I can. It's called the sophomore jinx. Or sophomore slump.

It's a term most often associated with baseball players. Never was it more pronounced than with the Cleveland Indians' "Super Joe" Charboneau, who as a rookie in 1980 hit .289 with 23 homers and 87 RBIs. In his second year, he batted .210 with four homers and 18 RBIs. He would not play in the majors again after 1982.

In Charboneau's case, the sophomore jinx was the result of too much, too soon.

In the case of Mark "The Bird" Fidrych, the problem was injury. The Detroit Tigers' eccentric phenom was 19-9 with a league-leading 2.34 ERA and 24 complete games in 1976. Twenty-four complete games? In his next four years, he was 10-10. He was done by 1981.

Imagine Mike Trout slumping his way out of baseball by 2016. It's as difficult to imagine now as it was back then.

In recent years, the sophomore jinx has hit NFL quarterbacks who performed splendidly as rookies. The group includes Dalton, Cam Newton, Matt Ryan, Joe Flacco and Sam Bradford. The Broncos play against all but Bradford this year, including Dalton and Newton in their next two games.

That's requirement No. 1 to incurring the sophomore jinx: A player must first have a fine rookie season.

John Elway and Peyton Manning did not suffer the sophomore jinx because, statistically, their worst years were year No. 1.

In 2009, the rookie quarterback class of Matt Stafford, Mark Sanchez and Josh Freeman combined for 35 touchdown passes against 58 interceptions. They did not

slump in year No. 2 in part because it wasn't possible. But in 2008, Ryan and Flacco not only started all 16 regular-season games, they surprisingly led their respective teams to 11-5 records and the playoffs.

In their second seasons, Ryan's Atlanta Falcons and Flacco's Baltimore Ravens went 9-7.

Bradford, the No. 1 overall pick in the 2010 draft, threw for 3,512 yards as a rookie with 18 touchdown passes while leading the St. Louis Rams to an encouraging 7-9 record. In his second year, Bradford threw for 2,164 yards and six touchdowns as the Rams finished 2-14.

Which brings us to Newton and Dalton, the pride of the 2011 quarterback draft class. Newton, the No. 1 overall draft pick, went where no other rookie quarterback has gone before last season, passing for 21 touchdowns and rushing for 14. He lifted the Carolina Panthers to a 6-10 record, a four-game improvement from the final season of coach John Fox. This year, Newton has been humbled (or so his critics hope). He's on pace for 11 touchdowns passing, six rushing. His Panthers are on pace to finish 2-14 again.

The Broncos and Fox meet Newton and the Panthers next Sunday at Carolina.

First, the Broncos meet Dalton in Cincinnati. Last year, Dalton threw just 13 interceptions while leading the Bengals to a 9-7 record and a playoff berth. This year, his Bengals are 3-4 and he's on pace to throw 23 picks.

My theory: These quarterbacks are better as sophomores but coaches have given them greater freedom to operate a more sophisticated passing system in year No. 2 — which in turn makes them more vulnerable to mistakes.

"Those picks haven't come down the field, though," Bengals coach Marvin Lewis said.

In that case, there can only be one reason Dalton and Newton are faltering this year. Jinx!

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## **Spotlight on ...**

### **Jason Witten, TE, Dallas Cowboys**

**When:** 6:20 p.m. MST on Sunday night, when the disappointing 3-4 Cowboys play in Atlanta against the 7-0 Falcons.

**What's up:** Witten, 30, set a tight end single-game record with 18 catches last weekend in a 29-24 home loss to the division rival New York Giants. Through the

first three games this year, Witten had just eight catches for 76 yards as he was trying to play despite a ruptured spleen. Apparently, the spleen has since healed because in his last four games, Witten has 43 catches for 411 yards.

**Background:** He grew up in Elizabethton, Tenn., a war- historic town of about 14,000 in the northeast part of the state. He was recruited to the University of Tennessee as a defensive end but switched to tight end as a freshman. A third-round pick of the Cowboys in the 2003 draft, Witten is third all time among tight ends with 747 catches; 68 behind second-place Shannon Sharpe.

**Klis' take:** Either I spent too much time covering baseball or I underestimate modern medicine, because I can't believe the serious injuries so many of these NFL stars have overcome. I saw Broncos defensive tackle Gerard Warren tear the labrum in Drew Brees' right shoulder in the 2005 regular-season finale and I never thought the quarterback would be the same. I did not think Peyton Manning would return to form this season after he returned, at the age of 36, from missing last season due to four neck surgeries. And after a ruptured spleen essentially ruined the career of former quarterback Chris Simms, I figured Witten would miss most of the 2012 season and not be worth a hoot when he did play. Wrong. Witten is a class act who unfortunately has become the Don Mattingly (baseball name!) of the Cowboys in that he was a great player for a great franchise at a lean time in franchise history.

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## THREE UP

**1. Dolphins:** Defense has allowed 13, 14 and nine points in winning three straight. Rushing for 116 yards per game and allowing only 82.

**2. Raiders:** Sebastian Janikowski is second in the league with 18 field goals. His only miss was from 64 yards.

**3. Steelers:** Rank first against the pass. Peyton Manning threw for only 253 yards against them in the opener.

## THREE DOWN

**1. Ravens:** These are the Ravens? Opponents are averaging 142.9 yards rushing.

**2. Seahawks:** Russell Wilson has six TD passes, zero picks, 116.9 passer rating, 3-0 record at home; four TD passes, eight picks, 65.8 rating, 1-4 record on the road.

**3. Redskins:** Raheem Morris' secondary has allowed league-worst 19 TD passes, 314 yards per game.

# Broncos' Demaryius Thomas, Bengals' A.J. Green a growing trend

Jeff Legwold  
The Denver Post  
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Herm Edwards was an NFL cornerback for 10 years. He stood 6-foot tall and weighed 194 pounds. His career ended in 1986. Broncos star Champ Bailey has spent the past 14 years in the league and been to 11 Pro Bowls, an NFL record for cornerbacks. He stands 6-foot tall and weighs 192 pounds.

"Right there's your problem," said Edwards, an NFL analyst for ESPN. "You want to know why the passing numbers are going up and up and up? A big part of it is right there. Cornerbacks in the league, the best cornerbacks in the league, are the same size right now as they were in the 1970s. When I played, the average cornerback was about 5-11 and now the average cornerback is about 5-11. And receivers? They ain't 5-11. No, receivers ain't anywhere close.

"Receivers are bigger, taller and stronger. You've got guys who look like power forwards on the outside now and quarterbacks these days are throwing passes they never would have thought about throwing 20, 30 years ago because these guys just go up over the smaller guy and get them."

The trend will be on full display Sunday at Cincinnati's Paul Brown Stadium. The Bengals will line up 6-4, 207-pound wide receiver A.J. Green against a Denver secondary featuring Bailey as its tallest cornerback. The Broncos will line up 6-3, 229-pound wide receiver Demaryius Thomas and 6-3, 218-pound wideout Eric Decker against a Cincinnati secondary whose tallest cornerback is 6-2 rookie Dre Kirkpatrick, who will give away 34 pounds to Thomas.

That's just one game of many in a league where the scales, figuratively and literally, are tipped convincingly toward wide receivers.

"It's every week, and to me that's the difference," Bailey said. "When I first came in the league (in 1999), you would see a 6-4, 6-5 guy, 220 pounds, maybe once every five, six games. Now you see at least one every week and it seems like everybody's got another one or two waiting to get in the game. It's the story of my life now."

The numbers, at the top of the production scale, bear that out. In 1972 the wide receivers named to the Pro Bowl were tall and skinny, averaging 6-3<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> and 196.4 pounds while the cornerbacks named to the Pro Bowl averaged 6-0<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> and 188 pounds. The receivers named to last season's Pro Bowl were more than an inch, on average, taller and 18.8 pounds heavier than the league's elite cornerbacks.

Toss in a rule book tilted toward throwing the football, as well as a generation of the most accurate quarterbacks the league has known, and the challenge of playing "on the island" looks all the more lonely.

"The rules are set up to protect the quarterback and throw the football," Edwards said. "Offenses have evolved, quarterbacks are more accurate and they're daring.

"Offensive coordinators are more daring because they know the rules, being the way they are now. Just throw the ball down the field. And you're playing against shorter DBs. His back is turned away from the quarterback, and two good things are going to happen to you. He's either going to catch it or it's a 50-yard pass interference. You see it game after game, week after week."

Broncos quarterback Peyton Manning, one of the most accurate passers in NFL history, takes advantage of mismatches with his receivers. Manning has talked almost every week of putting the ball where his receivers "can go up there and make a play."

Manning hit Thomas for a 41-yard gain in the first quarter last Sunday night when Manning put the ball up high and Thomas leaped and reached over the Saints' trailing defensive backs to reel in the pass.

Bengals quarterback Andy Dalton, meanwhile, admits to taking chances because he knows what Green can do when the ball is in the air.

Blessed with elite body control, an enormous catch radius because of his reach and a 34-inch vertical leap, Green usually comes down with the ball in a crowd.

"He's so rangy. He's got great ball skills. He's got an extra gear when the ball is in the air," Dalton said. "You really have to know when you can take your chances, because a lot of times he's making plays even when he is covered."

Bailey said it has made the initial contact cornerbacks have with receivers, in the 5-yard chuck zone, even more important in man-to-man coverage. But that's where that extra 18.8 pounds can come into play as well.

"Because not only do these guys have speed to run by you, they're strong," Bailey said. "You can't get tangled up. When the big guys can run, that's a whole different thing."

"When you're up in bump-and-run (coverage), I've always said this: You win the play in the first 2 yards," Edwards said. "If you open the gate, in other words if you open your hips and you allow a receiver to get in front of you — the good receivers now, they cut you off, they always keep you in trail technique. And if you're in trail technique against a wide receiver now, a good one, you have no shot. That's a touchdown, and a lot of 'em."

# Sunday's NFL games: Tony Gonzalez, Jason Witten continue reconstruction of all-time lists

Jeff Legwold  
The Denver Post  
November 4, 2012

When Shannon Sharpe retired after the 2003 season, his 815 catches, 10,060 receiving yards and 55 touchdowns were NFL records for tight ends.

Sunday night's game will show how much the NFL's passing numbers have exploded since Sharpe's career ended. Meeting at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta will be the No. 1- and No. 3-ranked tight ends in league history in receptions and receiving yards. For now, Sharpe is sandwiched between them.

The Falcons' Tony Gonzalez, the only player with 14 consecutive 50-catch seasons, leads the way for tight ends with 1,195 catches and 13,797 receiving yards. With one more touchdown catch, Gonzalez will become the first tight end in league history with 100.

The Cowboys' Jason Witten, who had 18 catches last weekend against the Giants, ranks No. 3 all time among tight ends with 747 catches for 8,396 yards. Witten has nine consecutive 50-catch seasons, ranking second behind Gonzalez.

## Must-see game of the week

### **Cowboys at Falcons 6:20 p.m., KUSA-9**

**The skinny:** The Cowboys haven't played in the Georgia Dome since 2006, when they beat the Falcons 38-28. The Cowboys have won five of the last seven meetings. It's clear that veteran quarterback Tony Romo is pressing as the Cowboys fail to meet expectations. Romo has thrown 10 interceptions in his last four games, including four last Sunday against the Giants. Nine of those interceptions have come in only two games, when Romo was asked to throw the ball a lot. He threw five picks among 43 passes against Chicago. His four picks against the Giants came during a game in which he threw 62 passes.

**The difference will be:** If quarterback Matt Ryan and the Falcons' offense keep on keeping on. When Ryan has a passer rating of at least 100, the Falcons are 28-0. When he throws at least three touchdown passes in a game, the Falcons are 15-0 — including 4-0 this year. And when tailback Michael Turner gets at least 23 carries, the Falcons are 22-1.

**The call:** Falcons 28-20.

## Catch 'em if you can

**Cardinals at Packers 11 a.m.**

The Packers seem to walk the razor's edge. Aaron Rodgers is the first quarterback in NFL history with at least 21 touchdown passes halfway through the season in back-to-back years. But he also is the most-sacked QB in the league (28). Rodgers has been sacked at least five times in a game three times this season. Arizona's defense is tied for the league lead with 26 sacks.

**The call:** Packers 27-16.

**Bills at Texans 11 a.m.**

The Bills are last in the 32-team league in scoring defense, allowing an average of 32.4 points per game. And they rank 31st in total defense (424.1). In his past 11 starts Texans QB Matt Schaub is 10-1 with 15 touchdown passes and five interceptions.

**The call:** Texans 31-20.

**Vikings at Seahawks 2 p.m.**

Minnesota's Christian Ponder has cooled in recent weeks. After not throwing an interception in his first four starts, he has nine in the past four games. Also, he has completed only 47 and 54 percent of his passes in the past two games.

**The call:** Vikings 21-20.

**Steelers at Giants 2:25 p.m., KCNC-4**

The defending Super Bowl champion Giants have had a difficult week off the field, dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. The Steelers haven't played a road game against the Giants since 2004, when Jerome Bettis was their running back and quarterback Ben Roethlisberger was a rookie.

**The call:** Giants 24-21.

**Quick hitters****Ravens at Browns 11 a.m.**

The Ravens have won their past nine games against the Browns and are 11-5 in games after the bye. Also, the Ravens have won their past 10 games against AFC North teams.

**The call:** Ravens 27-16.

**Dolphins at Colts 11 a.m.**

Two of the Dolphins' four victories have come on the road. They have won five of their past six games in Indianapolis. The Colts have to keep their minus-10 turnover margin from beating them.

**The call:** Colts 27-24.

**Lions at Jaguars 11 a.m.**

The Lions are averaging 407.6 total yards per game. That ranks No. 1 in the NFC. The Jaguars continue to rank near the bottom of the league's major offensive categories.

**The call:** Lions 30-10.

**Bears at Titans 11 a.m.**

Bears QB Jay Cutler, who starred at Vanderbilt, has played against the Titans in Nashville, Tenn., once in his NFL career — Nov. 19, 2007, when he was with the Broncos. In the past four games, the Bears' Brandon Marshall has averaged 115.3 reception yards.

**The call:** Bears 24-13.

**Panthers at Redskins 11 a.m.**

Defenses have adjusted to Carolina QB Cam Newton. He has thrown more interceptions than touchdown passes this season. In his past three starts, he has completed only 47, 57 and 51 percent of his passes.

**The call:** Redskins 31-28.

**Buccaneers at Raiders 2 p.m., KDVR-31**

Tampa Bay QB Josh Freeman has three consecutive games with at least three TD passes. Bucs rookie Doug Martin is only NFC player with at least 500 yards rushing (543) and at least 200 reception yards (224).

**The call:** Raiders 27-23.

# Broncos at Bengals: Five things to watch

Jeff Legwold  
The Denver Post  
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## **1. Don't let the Bengals go Green on you.**

Second-year Bengals quarterback Andy Dalton plays favorites in the passing game, and why not? Wide receiver A.J. Green is a big target at 6-foot-4 and has terrific athleticism. Dalton has targeted him at least 11 times in each of five games this season and 30 percent of his passes have gone Green's way. But when Dalton can't get the ball to Green, the Bengals seem to unravel. Green sounds like a job for Denver cornerback Champ Bailey.

## **2. Keep steep learning curve for Dalton.**

Dalton, a second-round pick in the 2011 draft, had four comeback victories as a rookie, helped guide the Bengals into the playoffs and wound up in the Pro Bowl as an injury replacement. Former Colts general manager Bill Polian said in a recent radio interview that one of his big regrets was not selecting Dalton in the first round of the 2011 draft. All of that said, the former Texas Christian star continues to learn on the job. He's thrown an interception in every game this season, including six in the past three games.

## **3. Denver needs to do away with slow starts.**

The Broncos are a different team when they play with the lead, the proof being what they have done against Pittsburgh, Oakland and New Orleans this season. Playing with the lead allows them to be more aggressive on defense, especially when using some of their most effective pass-rush packages. The Bengals have outscored opponents 44-23 in the first quarter this season and 58-49 in the second quarter. The Broncos have shown their comeback ability, but they're better off getting the lead and setting the game's tempo.

## **4. Watch for steady diet of Bengals' Atkins.**

The Broncos have already seen one defensive lineman — the Texans' J.J. Watt — smash their offensive game plan. Geno Atkins, a Cincinnati defensive tackle, presents a similar problem. Atkins, a fourth-round pick in the 2010 draft, leads his team in sacks with seven. Bengals coach Marvin Lewis can put more defensive players in pass coverage because Atkins can cave in the pocket.

## **5. Pack maturity in the Broncos' luggage.**

The Broncos spent the work week hearing how their remaining schedule — only one opponent (Baltimore) has a winning record — puts them on the fast track to the playoffs. And they are coming off their most complete game of the year. But they also play five of their next seven games on the road, including four trips a little east (Kansas City) and much farther east (Cincinnati, Carolina and Baltimore) to play at 11 a.m. Mountain time. History has shown that to be tough duty for the Broncos.

# Broncos Q&A: Jim Leonhard thinks big

Tom Kensler  
The Denver Post  
November 4, 2012

Just 5-foot-8 and 188 pounds, Broncos safety Jim Leonhard has made 61 NFL starts — including one this season, his first year in Denver. In college, he earned all-Big Ten honors three times at Wisconsin after joining the Badgers as a walk-on. He had no scholarship offers from major-college programs.

Leonhard's home town of Tony, Wis., lists a population of 105 residents. It's no wonder that Leonhard's official website — [jimleonhardfootball.com](http://jimleonhardfootball.com) — offers an assortment of apparel emblazoned with "Dream BIG."

"That's always been my motto," Leonhard said. "Dream BIG is a mind-set to set your goals high and chase after them. And if you fall short, there's no shame in that."

Q: After not receiving major-college scholarship offers, did you carry around a chip on your shoulder, as coaches like to say?

A: In college, that was definitely the mind-set. I felt that I was a better athlete and a better player than I was given credit for. I went out there every day and tried to prove people wrong. To be successful, you have to have some sort of edge. That was mine — being overlooked by a lot of people.

Q: You signed with Buffalo in 2005 as an undrafted free agent, playing primarily on special teams during three years with the Bills. But your career turned the corner in 2008 with Baltimore when you started 13 games. What do you recall about that season with the Ravens?

A: It was an unbelievable season in Baltimore. It was one of those situations where the style of the defense and the coaching staff, everything just fit. We had a great locker room. I was able to rejuvenate my career. I was given the opportunity to make some plays and prove that I deserved to get some snaps. And we did well as a team, making it to the AFC championship game.

Q: Rex Ryan was the defensive coordinator on that Ravens team, and then he convinced you to join him in 2009 in New York when he became head coach of the Jets. What was it like playing for him?

A: He's a great coach. That's the thing that kind of gets overlooked. He's known for the comments he makes and the personality he has. But the biggest thing is, he's a great football coach. I learned a lot from him. Having him as head coach, it was a great time. I have a lot of respect for him.

Q: You finished consecutive seasons — 2010 with a leg fracture and 2011 with major knee surgery — on injured reserve. Did you ever think that your career might be over?

A: It was a grind, there's no doubt about it. Maybe I'm not smart enough, but I never thought those injuries would be the end of me. I knew I had football left in me and was lucky enough to get an opportunity out here. The body feels great. I'll be ready when an opportunity comes.

Q: What made you decide the Broncos would be a good fit?

A: I knew a little bit about Jack Del Rio and his defense. Obviously, bringing Peyton (Manning) in — this organization wants to win, and they want to win now. Those are never bad places to be.

Q: Broncos fans watched you wrestle the ball away from Chargers all-pro tight end Antonio Gates at the end of what appeared to be a long completion three weeks ago. What was going through your mind?

A: During a play you don't have a whole lot of time to think. I knew the ball was up, just based on (the pattern) he ran. I knew I would have a chance at it, and I made the play. We needed it.

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## Jim Leonhard file

**Positions:** Safety, returner.

**Height:** 5-foot-8.

**Weight:** 188 pounds.

**Hometown:** Tony, Wis.

**College:** Wisconsin.

**Draft:** Signed with Buffalo in 2005 as undrafted free agent.

**Career stats:** 61 starts for four teams, 373 tackles, seven interceptions, 3.5 sacks, 94 punt returns for 902 yards, 13 kick returns for 274 yards.

**2012 stats:** One start, one interception, 12 punt returns for 82 yards, one kick return for 18 yards in first season with Broncos.

# Worst NFL teams in history

The Denver Post  
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Worst teams in NFL history

*The Kansas City Chiefs are 1-7, but what makes them repulsively awful is they haven't had a lead in regulation time through eight games. (Their victory came on a field goal in overtime.) Not since the 1929 Buffalo Bisons had an NFL team played eight games without a lead in regulation. Buffalo folded after that season. Chiefs fans hope general manager Scott Pioli will simply leave Kansas City. The worst teams in NFL history:*

## **1. 1976 Tampa Bay Buccaneers, 0-14**

The QB of the expansion team that was outscored by an average score of 29-9? Steve Spurrier. Bucs started 0-12 in 1977.

## **2. 1942 Detroit Lions, 0-11**

Averaged 3.5 points per game. QBs Harry Hopp, Chet Wetterlund and Tom Colella combined for zero touchdown passes and 27 interceptions. You can look it up.

## **3. 1943 Chicago Cardinals, 0-10**

Loss of players to World War II brought a merger with Pittsburgh Steelers in 1944, when Card-Pitt again went 0-10.

## **4. 2008 Detroit Lions, 0-16**

Remember, this was the decade of parity. How does a team with Calvin Johnson, who had 78 catches for 1,331 yards, go winless?

## **5. 1980 New Orleans Saints, 1-15**

This was the year Saints fans went with the Unknown Comic look. Archie Manning's team started 0-14, then beat the Jets 21-20.

## **6. 2000 San Diego Chargers, 1-15**

Ryan Leaf! Three years after he was the No. 2 pick in the draft, behind Peyton Manning, Leaf was benched for 37-year-old Jim Harbaugh.

## **7. 1971 Buffalo Bills, 1-13**

They were shut out four times. Dennis Shaw threw 11 TD passes and 26 interceptions. O.J. rushed for only 742 yards. Team was last in total defense and last in total offense.

## **8. 2007 Miami Dolphins, 1-15**

Started 0-13, then beat Baltimore in overtime.

# Broncos at Bengals: Game plan

The Denver Post  
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## When the Broncos run

Opponents have been effective running at Bengals defensive tackles Geno Atkins and Domata Peko. The Bengals are allowing 4.7 yards per carry over the center and left guard and 5 yards per carry over the right guard. That's prime real estate for Denver tailback Willis McGahee. The Broncos could find running room by spreading out the Bengals' defense and pounding at the middle. **Edge: Broncos**

## When the Bengals run

When the Bengals signed BenJarvus Green-Ellis to a \$9 million deal, they had high hopes that the former undrafted Patriot could add some pop to their running game. But Green-Ellis hasn't found his rhythm in the Cincinnati offense. Green-Ellis averaged 5.2 yards per carry in the season opener against Baltimore, but he hasn't topped an average of 4 yards per carry in the six games since. And he hasn't had a rushing touchdown in the past four games. **Edge: Broncos**

## When the Broncos pass

What's not to like here for Denver? Peyton Manning is 7-0 against the Bengals, with 17 touchdown passes and only three interceptions. Manning has also strung together four consecutive games of at least 300 yards passing with at least three touchdown strikes. Offenses have had success when they force the Bengals' super-sized linebackers — Vontaze Burfict weighs 245 pounds and Ray Malaluga weighs 265 — into pass coverage. **Edge: Broncos**

## When the Bengals pass

A.J. Green is a dominant, big-play receiver who can overwhelm a defense. But there are times when second-year Bengals QB Andy Dalton tries too hard to get the ball to Green. Tight end Jermaine Gresham can be trouble for a defense. Wide receiver Andrew Hawkins is only 5-foot-7 and 180 pounds, but the former Canadian Football League player runs well in traffic and has big-play potential, especially on bubble screens. **Edge: Broncos**

## Special teams

Brandon Tate and Pacman Jones give the Bengals potential pop in the return game. Jones has an 81-yard punt return for a touchdown this season. But the Broncos have covered well and may have the best power kicking-game duo in the league in Matt Prater and Britton Colquitt. If the Broncos can be more successful in the return game, they could have one of the best special teams in the NFL. **Edge: Broncos**

# **Joe Mays to have left leg surgery Tuesday**

Mike Klis  
The Denver Post  
November 3, 2012

Broncos middle linebacker Joe Mays hobbled out of the Dove Valley headquarters on crutches Friday. He will have surgery Tuesday to repair his broken left fibula. The break is near his left ankle.

The good news for Mays is he did not suffer any ligament damage around the ankle. He should be fully recovered by the start of offseason workouts in May.

# Raining and chili in Cincinnati

Mike Klis  
The Denver Post  
November 3, 2012

Covington, Ky – Lindsay Jones and I shared a cab (still together, just separate checks now) from airport to hotel and as we got out, there was light hail and fairly heavy rain.

Still raining hard enough to where I can't make the 4 block walk to Gold Star Chili. Derek Wolfe's Cincinnati Bearcats just finished off Syracuse, 35-24, in a steady rain. And the temperature can't be 50.

I mention all this to say stay tuned, weather might be a factor here Sunday when the Broncos play the Cincinnati Bengals.

# Manning still sets standard at quarterback

Joe Kay  
Associated Press  
November 3, 2012

CINCINNATI — Bengals coach Marvin Lewis spent the last day of his bye weekend watching NFL games on television and getting a read on how the rest of the league is doing.

His conclusion?

“You have to play good at quarterback in order to win,” Lewis said. “That stands out if you look at each and every game. You have to take care of the ball on offense and play efficient at quarterback. Turnovers beat you, and if you don’t make plays from that position, you have a hard time.”

It wasn’t so much an epiphany as a foretelling. On Sunday, the Bengals (3-4) bring a struggling quarterback — Andy Dalton and his interception streak — into a pivotal game against one of the NFL’s best of all time.

Peyton Manning is back to playing at a best-ever level, leading the Denver Broncos (4-3) to the top of the AFC West. Manning has passed for at least 300 yards and three touchdowns in each of his past four games, the first to do so since Steve Young in 1998. He’s thrown for at least 300 yards in his past five games, matching his best from 2009 with Indianapolis.

The Colts cut their ties with Manning after a neck injury raised doubts about whether he could play at the same level again. There’s no questioning his level of play now.

“It’s hard to say that he’s not” at his best, said Bengals cornerback Leon Hall, who watched the Broncos beat the Saints 34-14 on Sunday night. “He’s been doing well, putting up a lot of good numbers, spreading the ball around to receivers and tight ends. I don’t know how the numbers compare, but as far as how he looks on film, I think he’s pretty damn close.”

The Broncos have scored 37, 21, 35 and 34 points in their past four games, getting a little more comfortable with Manning’s way of directing things at the line of scrimmage. And Manning has been rounding into form, too, after recovering from his neck problems.

“Well, certainly, it was a lot of unknowns before this season,” Manning said. “I think there still is. This is a new team, and nobody knew how this team would form chemistry-wise. I didn’t know what my situation would be. I mentioned early on

that I'm feeling my way out. We're finding out our identity. I think we are still doing that."

Everyone in Cincinnati knows his identity against the Bengals: perfect.

Manning is 7-0 against the Bengals with 17 touchdowns, three interceptions and a 107 passer rating. Cincinnati is one of seven teams that have never beaten him.

The Bengals have concerns about their quarterback as well. Dalton has thrown an interception in every game this season. After watching other NFL quarterbacks on television, Lewis challenged him to become more of a leader, along with middle linebacker Rey Mauluga. As a rookie last season, Dalton let the veterans and coaches handle issues with the offense.

"We want Andy to take control of the football team," Lewis said. "That's the thing. A year ago, everything was new, and now he has an understanding of everything he needs to do. Now, let's go do it, and let's be great at it, and let's get the other guys to do their jobs even better."

It was an out-of-character comment for Lewis, who prefers to handle things quietly and internally. It underscored the sense that the Bengals' season is in jeopardy at the midpoint. They've lost three in a row.

"He's expecting a lot out of me and Rey and a lot of the leaders on this team," Dalton said. "It wouldn't have been said if we weren't where we were."

"Maybe this is the fire that we need."

# ESPN experts predict Broncos-Bengals

Jamison Hensley  
ESPN.com  
November 3, 2012

In the video, Mark Schlereth and Eric Mangini make their predictions for the Broncos at the Bengals.

Here's what the other ESPN experts are predicting:

**Eric Allen:** Broncos  
**Mike Golic:** Broncos  
**Merril Hoge:** Broncos  
**Ron Jaworski:** Broncos  
**Chris Mortensen:** Broncos  
**Adam Schefter:** Bengals  
**Mark Schlereth:** Broncos  
**Seth Wickersham:** Broncos  
**Tom Jackson:** Broncos  
**Keyshawn Johnson:** Broncos  
**Mike Ditka:** Broncos  
**Cris Carter:** Broncos

# Mailbag: DHB's season

Bill Williamson  
ESPN.com  
November 3, 2012

Weekend mail call:

**Ron from Petersburg, Va., wants to know** why Oakland quarterback Carson Palmer and receiver Darrius Heyward-Bey aren't having a great connection this year.

**Bill Williamson:** Heyward-Bey has just 14 catches. But he has missed two games. Still, he is not on pace to match the 64 grabs he had last year. But he is making his catches count, averaging 15.4 yards per catch. I don't think his lack of catches is a sign that he isn't in sync with Palmer. The two were in sync last year when Palmer came to the team mid-season. I think it has to do with the scheme change, the fact that there are other targets and Heyward-Bey's injury. These two will be fine even if Heyward-Bey's numbers don't match last year's big season.

**Deb from Fort Smith, Ark., wants to know** if the Chiefs will hire a defensive coordinator next year if Romeo Crennel stays on as head coach.

**BW:** Yes, if Crennel is back, I do certainly think there will be a defensive coordinator. I don't think the Chiefs' brass will think it is a good idea that Crennel remains the defensive coordinator in addition to head coach. I think Crennel needs to concentrate on his duties and have a like-minded coordinator on the staff as well. I think his decision to be his own coordinator was a mistake.

**Faris from Anaheim, Calif., wants to know** if Denver Ryan Clady is considered an elite left tackle again.

**BW:** Yes, Clady is playing at a high level. Scouts I speak to believe he is playing at a high level again. He started his career at a level, but he was slowed by a knee injury he suffered while playing basketball. He also seems much more comfortable blocking for the more traditional Peyton Manning than in wild option days of Tim Tebow. Clady is a free agent and I think Denver will franchise him if a long-term deal is not finished prior to free agency.

# 'D' holds the key to return to Super Bowl success

Paul Klee  
Colorado Springs Gazette  
November 3, 2012

CINCINNATI • What is it you remember about the Broncos' juggernauts that brought twin Super Bowl championships to our state?

John Elway's arm? Terrell Davis' legs? Shannon Sharpe's mouth?

Hey, me too.

Don't worry, the defenses of the 1997 and '98 Broncos were just fine operating in the shadow of the powerful offenses that grip our memories. They were fine with it, because they celebrated in a parade down 17th Street just the same.

"We knew what we were. We were all about, 'Let's make them punt and get John Elway back on the field,'" said Alfred Williams, a veteran defensive end with those Super Bowl champions.

"Our defense, we had a sense of urgency immediately. We knew we weren't going to have many more years of John Elway. So we wanted to win now."

The new window for a championship gives the false impression it is expanding with each brilliant Sunday from Peyton Manning. But it's a window that can close as quickly as it opened. The AFC offensive player of the month for October, Manning is 36, after all. And there's the whole four-neck surgeries thing. Despite the Manning magic so far, there is still the feeling this is a football dream with an expiration date.

But if the expectation now is a Super Bowl — and Manning's \$96-million deal suggests it is — the blueprint for getting there is roughly the same as it was when Elway was quarterback.

An offense as explosive as it is diverse.

And a defense that gets the Hall of Fame quarterback back on the field.

So these Broncos are halfway there.

Entering the season's midpoint today at Cincinnati (11 a.m., CBS), we know enough about the Broncos' offense to go all in. Manning has an MVP look about him. Demaryius Thomas-Eric Decker is as dangerous a receiving tandem as there is in the NFL. Willis McGahee is in a career year. Ronnie Hillman? Can't wait to see more.

This is an offense to fall in love with.

The defense? We have lingering trust issues. And it's not you; it's me.

For that we blame Tom Brady or Darren McFadden or, definitely, Philip Rivers, and certainly, Manning (when with the Colts). Our anxiety with the Broncos' defense is the fault of previous seasons more than this one. And after Jack Del Rio coordinated a masterpiece in last week's 34-14 rout of the Saints, the D deserves more faith.

So while we know Manning's offense is a 21-point quarter waiting to happen, the ticket to a Super Bowl season lies with a defense that seems to be progressing weekly.

"I don't want to blow smoke about it and say, 'Yeah, we're there. But we're turning the corner. We're definitely turning the corner,'" defensive tackle Kevin Vickerson said.

Perhaps this is the telling development: Tracy Porter won't play today and no one seems overly concerned with the absence of the cornerback, aside from his personal health. Hillman's breakout game on offense against the Saints earned the most notice. But it's the emergence of cornerbacks Chris Harris and Tony Carter on defense that figures to have the biggest impact over the long haul.

"Our identity is not all the way there, to the extent of what we can be. We're close, but we're not there," Vickerson said. "We know what kind of defense we can be. We want to be ranked in the top five in defense in every category statistically."

With Manning, like it was with Elway, the defense doesn't have to be that good. It just has to be good enough. The '97 Broncos ranked seventh in total defense; the '98 Broncos were ninth. This defense has been far better than it's given credit for, ranking sixth, an impressive number considering the gantlet of opposing quarterbacks it has faced.

"It takes time," Champ Bailey said. "You've got to build chemistry, get used to a different voice. There's a lot of little things that have to come together to be a great defense."

Greatness on defense would be grand. But with Manning on the other side, it isn't necessary — much like the last time the Broncos played in a Super Bowl.

"Peyton Manning changes everything in this equation. You just don't see guys like him," Williams said. "Remember, they have an offense that's going to score 31 points. They just have to limit the other team to 30."

"(During the Super Bowl years) I always knew that if I could get a sack and we could get a punt, our offense would go down and score and we would win the

game. If (opponents) score field goals on every drive, we're going to win every game. With John Elway and that offense, it was that simple."

All these years later, it might be that simple again.

—

During Sunday's game, Klee (@Klee\_Gazette) will be tweeting

# Denver Broncos riding Peyton Manning return

Bob McManaman  
Arizona Republic  
November 3, 2012

It wasn't that long ago when the football world was still wondering whether Peyton Manning would be healthy enough to play this season, let alone put a new team on his shoulders and carry it to the playoffs.

Coming off a series of four neck surgeries that forced him to skip all of last season with the Colts that ultimately led to his becoming a free agent, there were legitimate questions whether he could ever be the same quarterback He is, after all, 36 years old.

Of more concern, would he risk the possibility of paralysis if he took one too many hits to the head and neck area?

Everyone can relax.

Manning isn't only back, he's back and as good as ever, even if for some, seeing No. 18 in blue and orange is about as strange as seeing James Bond in a pair of cutoff jean shorts and a hoodie.

Entering Sunday's game at Cincinnati, the Broncos quarterback is on pace to set a career high in passing yards (4,830) and could top his career-best passer rating of 121.1 in 2004, the year in which he threw 49 touchdowns.

The neck, Manning said, isn't healed yet. But it hasn't affected his play or been any kind of a distraction.

The only thing ailing him is a bad thumbnail, which he smashed last week against the helmet of a New Orleans Saints defensive player.

"Quarterbacks, probably the biggest fear is always the thumb on the helmet off the defensive lineman," Manning told reporters. "It'll be sore, but I'm probably a little bit lucky."

He's also been pretty darn good.

He is the NFL's top-rated quarterback with a 109.0 rating, is second in yards per game at 301.9, tied for third in touchdown passes with 17 and is fifth in total yards with 2,113.

Manning matched his career high -- and set a Broncos franchise record -- by surpassing 300 yards in five consecutive games, beginning with a two-touchdown performance in Week 3 and continuing with four games in a row with at least three touchdown passes.

He can join Steve Young as the only quarterbacks in history to pass for at least 300 yards and three touchdowns in five straight games this week against the Bengals and their 31st-ranked defense, which is a real possibility.

Yeah, he's back all right.

"It's hard to say that he's not," Bengals coach Marvin Lewis told reporters. "He's been doing well, putting up a lot of good numbers and spreading the ball around to receivers and tight ends. I don't know how the numbers compare, but as far as how he looks on film, I think he's pretty damn close."

Imagine how he would look in a Cardinals uniform.

While it's true they courted Manning as a free agent and brought him to the Valley for a visit, it's worth wondering if the Cardinals would have done what Denver did and sign him to a five-year, \$96 million contract that guarantees him \$18 million this season.

But the Cardinals had to make a decision faster than Manning was prepared to make his. They had to pay Kevin Kolb a roster bonus or risking entering the season with no viable options or depth at quarterback.

Manning's decision to pick Denver certainly has worked out well for the Broncos. The AFC looks to be wide open as the season's second half approaches and the Manning-led Broncos have quickly become a trendy pick to do some damage in the postseason.

"I think what he's done has been remarkable," Denver coach Jon Fox said. "I don't know that he's all the way back, but he's well on his way, for sure."

Manning, by the way, has never lost to the Bengals. He is 7-0 in his career against Cincinnati with 17 touchdowns, only three picks, and a 107 passer rating.

"He is going to be on the short list of the greatest quarterbacks of all time," former Broncos quarterback John Elway, now the team's executive vice president of football operations, told NBC's Bob Costas.

"I think he would just like to solidify it and say, 'I'm the best of all time.' He can do that by winning some Super Bowls. Hopefully, we can get that done."

# Manning: passing & primed

Joe Reedy  
Cincinnati Enquirer  
November 3, 2012

It's tough enough facing Peyton Manning when everything is going well with your own team. After a winless October and Marvin Lewis' call to man up to two of his leaders, things are far from well in Bengaldom.

Losers of three straight, the Bengals face the prospect of not playing for much during the second half of the season unless they can defeat a quarterback who is unbeaten in seven starts against them.

"It's an important, important football game," head coach Marvin Lewis said.

A win today would put the Bengals at .500 at the midway point and keep them in a crowded AFC playoff picture. With a loss, they would drop to 2-5 in conference games and would need to be 6-2 or better down the stretch to have any hopes of breaking a 30-year drought of back-to-back playoff appearances.

A loss would also mark the fourth time in six years the Bengals had a losing streak of four games or more. The previous three times it happened they finished 7-9 ('07), 4-11-1 ('08) and 4-12 ('10).

To show the stakes involved, Lewis challenged quarterback Andy Dalton and linebacker Rey Mauluga to take control of the team both in practice and during the game. This came more than two weeks after a loss in Cleveland when Lewis said his team was being too nice and needed more of an angry instinct to finish off opponents.

Not only did Dalton and Mauluga heed the message, but the rest of the team took to it as well, with some players saying this was one of the better weeks of practice that they have had this season.

Lewis, though, on Friday tried to recast his comments by saying that he wasn't trying to be critical and that he has great confidence in his leaders moving forward. However, he wants the standards accelerated on what is still a young team,

"Now that we have guys in position who know what they're doing, it is bring everyone else up to your level as much as you can. Because at some point the coaches are out of the mix and you have to take the bull by the horns and get going," Lewis said. "Last year we relied on the offensive and defensive lines to be the energy. Now they're trying to pass the baton a little bit. They still need to carry it, but we have to move forward and do more and special things. The only way is to have more and special players. We're asking guys to mature in a hurry."

In order to turn that around, the Bengals will need to stop Manning, who looks like he has cast aside doubts about whether he had any arm strength left and whether he could come back after a year out of the game after neck surgery.

After going 2-3 with losses to Atlanta, Houston and New England, and falling behind 24-0 at halftime to San Diego, Manning and the Broncos offense have found their stride. Over the last six quarters the Broncos (4-3) have outscored opponents 69-14 and have scored on 9 of 17 drives, with only one turnover and two three-and-outs.

Also during that span, Manning has completed 35 of 44 for 472 yards with six touchdowns and no interceptions. He comes into the game with the league's best passer rating (109.0) and is second in passing yards per game (301.9).

Manning has also thrown for 300 yards in four straight games and is one away from tying Steve Young's 1998 run of five straight. He has also thrown for three touchdowns in each game and has only one interception.

Not only is Manning being discussed as an MVP candidate, but the Broncos are also being mentioned as a contender in the AFC.

Said Manning, who makes only his second Paul Brown Stadium appearance, about the season to date: "Certainly, it was a lot of unknown before this season. I think there still is. We're finding our identity. Any time you can make some strides, some progress, some wins, while you're figuring out who you are, that's a good thing. It's been two good wins in a row. We're looking for consistency. We're not looking for two good games and then a lull."

Lewis noted earlier this week that the Broncos have done a great job of re-creating the offensive schematics that Manning had in Indianapolis. Tight end Jacob Tamme and receiver Brandon Stokley played with Manning in Indy, but Demaryius Thomas and Eric Decker have been a dangerous duo on the outside.

Thomas and Decker, who have combined for nine of Manning's 17 touchdowns, rank second in the league in combined receiving yards (only New England's Wes Welker and Rob Gronkowski are as prolific). Thomas is averaging 17.4 yards per catch and has a league-leading 11 receptions over 25 yards.

"He's taking shots, he's getting up, he's moving in the pocket," Lewis said. "People may have doubted if he can still move in the pocket the way he always has, but you saw that against San Diego, where he steps over the guys, resets his feet and makes the throw. That's always what he's been so good at."

As if the passing game isn't a headache, running back Willis McGahee looks like he hasn't slowed down. The 10th-year back has seven 100-yard games over the past two seasons, including 101 against the Bengals in a Week 2 game last year. The way McGahee has been playing makes the Broncos' play-action even more lethal.

There is one sliver of hope for the Bengals. The last time they faced Manning, they held him without a touchdown. The bad news is that due to five turnovers the Bengals lost that game in Indianapolis 24-17.

"I'm not sure what's going on with their offense, but their defense is playing solid," said Manning of the Bengals. "I've always had a great respect for Mike Zimmer. They could rush four and create pressure on the quarterback or they probably have every blitz in the book. It kind of depends on whatever they want to do so, you've got to be prepared for all of it."

This will be the sixth time Zimmer has gone up against Manning as a defensive coordinator. The lone win for a Zimmer defense came in 2006 when Dallas ended Indianapolis' bid for an unbeaten season.

Manning hasn't thrown for 300 yards in any of those games and he has thrown 10 touchdowns against three interceptions. In seven games against the Bengals, Manning has thrown for 300 just once.

"Going into the game, you would think that disguising and trying to trick him would be the thing, but that's only a small part of the game," cornerback Leon Hall said. "Really at the end of the day, we talked about it this morning, it's big plays. Sometimes when he knows what coverage you're in, he knows how to attack it. You've got to out-execute that receiver on that given play or if it's a running back on a run play."

Zimmer has been pleased with the play of his cornerbacks, who don't have an interception yet. The Bengals are second in the league in sacks but have picked off only three passes.

The one thing that Zimmer stressed to the defense throughout the bye week and in preparing for today's game is to be more disciplined and be more consistent in technique. The Bengals come into the game 21st in total defense after being in the top 10 all of last season.

"There are times when we play great football and then tend to have lapses that stand out. We have to play more consistent throughout," safety Nate Clements said. "It is about staying upbeat and confident. Taking what you practiced throughout the week and translating that work you have done into the game."

# **Peyton Manning isn't as protected as people think**

Mike Florio  
ProFootballTalk.com  
November 3, 2012

After Broncos quarterback Peyton Manning slammed his thumb into the helmet of Saints defensive end Martez Wilson, Wilson's helmet seemed to strike Peyton in the chin.

No flag was thrown.

After the game, Broncos coach John Fox said the team would take a close look at the play.

Regardless of whether the league took a close look at the play, no fine was imposed on Wilson, according to an NFL spokesman.

So the next time anyone wants to complain that certain quarterbacks receive special protection from the league, here's a piece of evidence to the contrary.

# D.J. Williams: I was dealt an unfair deal and I'm bitter

Michael David Smith  
ProFootballTalk.com  
November 4, 2012

Broncos linebacker D.J. Williams is nine days away from finishing his nine-game NFL suspension, and although he's excited to get back on the field, he's unhappy with what he says is unfair treatment from the league.

"I thought I was dealt an unfair deal," Williams told *USA Today*. "There's a lot of bitterness about it."

Williams was suspended six games for violating the league's performance-enhancing drug policy by giving what the NFL said was something other than his own urine to the drug tester. He was then suspended an additional three games for his second drunk driving conviction. Williams, however, says that a lot of people hear about his suspension and assume it was for using steroids, which is untrue.

"For the rest of my career, I'll have an asterisk beside my name, saying that I used performance enhancers or steroids or whatever," Williams said. "People forget that when I was 16, I was 6-2, 225. I went to Miami at 233 [pounds]. My dad is huge, my mom competes in fitness and body competition – that's the genetics that I have gotten passed on. It sucks because I'll always be questioned on my ability and what I do as if I did steroids."

But Williams declined to comment on that issue with his urine sample. And according to the NFL's version of events, it sure sounds like Williams was trying to cheat the drug-testing system. The NFL says that when Williams was tested in both August and September of 2011, the sample he provided turned out to be something other than human urine. And in November of last year, the drug tester who showed up at the Broncos' locker room to test Williams said he saw Williams holding a bottle near his waist while submitting the test, possibly to pour clean urine from someone else into his sample, and Williams then refused to give the tester the bottle.

Drug testing can't work if the players are cheating the tests, and if Williams was suspended for cheating the tests, there's nothing unfair about that.

# Looking for Repeated Success on the Road

Von Miller  
DenverBroncos.com  
November 3, 2012

We travel to Cincy this week to face the Bengals, who are another good team. They started the season 3-1. They've been on a losing streak lately, but they're desperate to win – just like we are too.

They're coming off the bye, so you always come back refreshed from that. We just have to keep playing Broncos football and hopefully we can come home with a W.

I remember playing against the Bengals last year – it was a tough game in 2011. I was able to have some success, get my first career sack and most importantly, we got a win. Andy Dalton is one of my good buddies too, I played against him in college and we were both rookies last season.

It's always tough to win on the road, but we got a taste of that last time at San Diego and hopefully we can have some repeated success.

Gig `em!