

Mark Kiszla: Broncos aren't just winning, they do it with attitude

Mark Kiszla
The Denver Post
November 11, 2012

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Beating you no longer suffices for the Broncos. Now they want to break your spirit and dance on your soul.

"We've got a lot of crazy guys," Denver linebacker Von Miller said Sunday, after the Broncos not only ran Carolina out of its own house in a 36-14 victory, they piled on the style points and disrespect.

The Broncos busted it open with a 76-yard punt return for a touchdown by Trindon Holliday, an interception Tony Carter took 40 yards to the house and relentless mocking of beleaguered Panthers quarterback Cam Newton by Miller and his mates.

"Those," Denver cornerback Chris Harris said, "were back-breakers."

And that was being polite.

The big play is back in Denver. The Broncos already have produced seven touchdowns from at least 40 yards this season, matching their total of long-distance scores from 2011. "Touchdowns can come from anywhere," Miller said.

But let's up the ante on how dangerous this team has become on offense, defense or special teams. In 1997, at the height of their Super Bowl power, no NFL team was more feared than the Broncos. John Elway, Terrell Davis and company scored 10 touchdowns from at least 40 yards that season. That was an offensive juggernaut. But this Peyton Manning edition might have more quick-strike capability and scoring versatility.

"A lot of NFL games turn on big plays," Denver cornerback Champ Bailey said. "If you get big plays, you're probably going to win. And if you get big plays in all three phases, that's how you score 30-plus points on a regular basis."

With the Broncos leading 17-7 early in the third quarter, Carolina stripped the football from Manning to force a turnover. On the very next snap, however, Carter stepped in front of a pass intended for Panthers receiver Brandon LaFell and knocked momentum on its ear with an interception for a TD. "That will suck the life out of a team. I know, because I've been on the other side of it," Bailey said. For the dark decade of Broncos football that marked the decline of Mike Shanahan and the mistakes of Josh McDaniels, the problem was obvious: Denver lacked playmakers to match Tom Brady or James Harrison.

Football is a team game often outshined by the brightest stars. From Demaryius Thomas to Manning on offense to Wesley Woodyard and Miller on defense to Holliday and Britton Colquitt on special teams, the Broncos have more than a half dozen legitimate candidates for the Pro Bowl.

Championship runs are built on a series of tipping points. So it's no surprise Denver never has sent more clutch performers to the league's all-star game than in 1998 when 10 Broncos were rewarded with an all-expense-paid trip to Hawaii.

Miller was fired up to get a shot at Newton, who went a pick ahead of the Denver linebacker atop the 2011 draft. When his alma mater, Texas A&M, upset No. 1 Alabama fewer than 24 hours before kickoff against the Panthers, Miller's amp went nuclear. "Oh, everybody on the team knew what the Aggies did," Broncos linebacker Wesley Woodyard said. "Von was at the hotel on Saturday night, yelling, 'Gig 'em!' "

After sacking Newton for an 8-yard loss on Carolina's opening possession, Miller struck the Superman pose that Newton has adopted as his trademark celebration. "I really wanted to do it. I'm sure Cam didn't want to see it," Miller said. "But I definitely think it set the tempo for my buddies on defense."

Between the seven sacks and two interceptions suffered by Newton, he had to watch so many Denver players do the Superman diss that it was worse than being struck in an endless loop of "Gangnam Style" with PSY riding roughshod in the quarterback's worst nightmare. "We're playing football. It's not ballet," said Newton, shaking off the pain of being made to look extremely mortal.

On a four-game winning streak, the Broncos are beginning to believe they are all Superman. They can do anything. This team's swagger is on steroids.

Denver Broncos blow out Panthers in Carolina, as Manning ties Marino

Mike Klis
The Denver Post
November 12, 2012

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Peyton Manning may be everywhere, but he is never alone.

The Broncos' quarterback is a cross-over star who shares. He shares product and humor in his commercials. He shares pizza through his 21 Papa John's franchises in Colorado.

He shared a 36-14 Broncos victory here on a Veterans Day Sunday against Carolina with the likes of Von Miller, Tony Carter and a suffocating Denver defense that sacked talented quarterback Cam Newton a career-most seven times.

"Sometimes, the media will divide a team into three different teams: Broncos offense, Broncos defense and Broncos special teams, and you write about it as if it's three different teams when we all actually are on the same team," Manning said. "You did know that, right?"

There's that humor he shared.

He also shared a day of individual accomplishment with his good friend Brandon Stokley. He shared in a job well done with waterbug Trindon Holliday and the Broncos' special teams.

Manning even shares a couple of lofty slots with Dan Marino on some significant all-time lists. The Broncos' dominant victory will be marked as the 147th regular-season victory in Manning's career. That ties him with Marino, the former Miami Dolphin great, for third all time. Heads up, John Elway. You're next. One more Manning-led Broncos victory will tie him with the Broncos' former quarterback-turned-front-office boss for second all-time.

Wait. Manning is reaching that rarefied space where there is achievement within an achievement. On Sunday he threw his 420th career touchdown pass. Again, he is tied with Marino, this time for second place.

"Dan Marino, after my dad retired, was my favorite quarterback growing up," Manning said. "I am grateful for all the receivers and all the protection that I have received along the way."

The Broncos team that Manning shares has also put the special in special teams thanks to the electric Holliday, who had his second return for a touchdown in two weeks.

It has a defense that got an interception return for a touchdown by Carter, a safety from strong safety Mike Adams on a sack of Newton, and a career-most seven sacks against the Panthers' prized quarterback.

Manning said the divide between Broncos' offense, Broncos defense and Broncos special teams would be written. This one's for Peyton.

"It's the Broncos who scored those touchdowns," Manning said. "And anybody on the team that wants to score a touchdown I'm for it."

It didn't go well early for the Broncos. For one drive in the first quarter their defense forgot that tight ends are eligible receivers. After a touchdown flick from Newton to a wide-open Greg Olsen put Carolina up 7-0, Broncos' defensive coordinator Jack Del Rio adjusted.

From then on, Manning showed the more physically gifted Newton how playing quarterback is done. On the play when he tied Marino with his 420th touchdown pass, Manning rolled right on a flood pattern right. It was first-and-goal from the 10 and the Broncos lined up three receivers to the right, all of whom ran patterns to the right side as Manning sprinted out right.

From the slot, Stokley delayed and dragged to the middle where he was wide open. Manning threw across his body and right on target.

Touchdown pass No. 420 was from one 36-year-old to another.

"It's cool to be a part of doing special things out there," Stokley said. "But you don't really pay attention to it when you're in the moment. I did not know that was 420. But it is cool when you're done you can look back and know you were part of something special."

Manning and the offense might as well have taken the rest of the day off. The Broncos have become an AFC version of Devin Hester and the Chicago Bears. The Broncos have their own home run return threat in Holliday and a defense that scored its fourth touchdown in four games. Holliday returned a punt 76 yards for a touchdown that gave the Broncos a go-ahead, 14-7 lead in the second quarter. And in the third, cornerback Carter came up with his second touchdown return when he stepped in front of a harried Newton pass to the sideline and sprinted 40 yards for a score.

The Broncos (6-3) can bury San Diego (4-5), and all but clinch the AFC West by beating the Chargers next week in Denver. After helping the Broncos reach their comfortable perch, Manning signed autographs for several men and women who are serving our country. He shared his name. He then stopped to chat with 16 family members of coach John Fox, who won his homecoming game.

Manning shared his time. He then walked out to a team bus alongside a few Broncos security and administrative personnel.

This was a day, and victory, in which Manning was never alone.

Pass or Fail

Offense

Peyton Manning's sixth 300-yard passing game of the season was enough to get the Broncos through on a day when the offense finished with only two touchdowns.

Defense

A lot of Cam Newton's 241 yards passing came in mop-up time in the fourth quarter. He had 152 after three quarters. The Broncos sacked him seven times.

Special teams

The Broncos' special-teams units sprung return man Trindon Holliday free for the second consecutive week as he had a 76-yard punt return for a touchdown.

Coaching

This game was a maturity test for the young Broncos as the compliments keep coming from near and far. They passed the test and gave coach John Fox the kind of victory he had hoped for in his return to Carolina.

Game Balls

LB Von Miller — Four tackles for loss, a sack and forced the Panthers offensive front to have to deal with him all day.

KR/PR Trindon Holliday — Had a 76-yard punt return for a touchdown and made his first appearance on offense.

Coach John Fox — The Broncos knew it meant enough to Fox to give him a game ball when all was said and done.

Willis McGahee's fumbles may draw extra Broncos coaching attention

Mike Klis
The Denver Post
November 11, 2012

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Willis McGahee may have just qualified for a week with a green-covered football.

"They can if they want to," McGahee said.

The Broncos' top tailback, McGahee fumbled two more times Sunday, losing one. He has fumbled five times this year, losing four.

"They were two strips from behind," McGahee said about his fumbles in the Broncos' 36-14 victory over the Carolina Panthers. "Those are tough. I shouldn't be doing it. You can't blame anybody but yourself."

When Broncos receiver Demaryius Thomas had a bout with fumbles earlier this season, he was sentenced to a week with a football that was covered by two, green scouting beanies and etched with the initials, "MM." The initials represented Morgan and Madison, the two daughters of Broncos receivers coach Tyke Tolbert.

The ploy worked as Thomas hasn't fumbled since. McGahee has been around long enough to where he may not need such a tactic. He's had 1,950 carries and only 24 lost fumbles — one for every 81.3 carries — in his career.

But just in case, McGahee's running backs coach, Eric Studesville, has a daughter named Sydni. After McGahee's second fumble, which he recovered, rookie Ronnie Hillman finished off the drive with a 5-yard touchdown run. It was Hillman's first career touchdown.

"Hopefully not the last," Hillman said.

McGahee rushed for 56 yards on 14 carries, enough to cross the 8,000 rushing yard mark in his career. Not a bad milestone for a tailback who tore up his knee in his final college game and has been a full-time starter for only six seasons.

"Overcoming adversity," McGahee said about reaching the milestone at the advanced running back age of 31. "Chicken and broccoli and leaving beef alone. Love pork but I leave beef alone."

Champ Bailey urging Broncos to stay focused, calm during win streak

Jeff Legwold
The Denver Post
November 11, 2012

CHARLOTTE, N.C. —Because he has done so much, for so long, in his decorated career, Broncos cornerback Champ Bailey provides plenty of perspective about where the Broncos are as a team right now.

And, after watching what linebacker Von Miller did against Carolina Sunday, Bailey matter-of-factly tossed Miller's name into the league's defensive player-of-the-year race.

"I don't ever like to get ahead of myself," Bailey said. "It's important to keep things where they need to be, but I really can't say he's not playing better than anybody right now. Because he is playing better than anybody right now. It's amazing what he's doing. He just needs to stay the course, and it will all work itself out. But I'm glad I'm around to see him do what he's doing"

And if Miller keeps doing what he's doing, that's bad news for opposing offenses. Miller leads the league in tackles for loss with 21, having added four more Sunday.

He also had a sack, giving him 10. Miller has reached double digits in each of his first two seasons. He had 11.5 sacks last season on the way to NFL defensive rookie of the year honors. The Panthers often tried to use a tight end to slow down Miller, a mismatch Miller repeatedly took advantage of on the way to Cam Newton.

In addition to the tackles and the sack, Miller also grasped Newton's leg to force a poor throw on the interception Broncos cornerback Tony Carter returned for a touchdown. The Broncos selected Miller No. 2 in the 2011 draft, just after the Panthers Newton.

"He's a dynamic guy, I think this kind of meant something to him," Broncos coach John Fox said.

Asked if he liked the match-up with an opposing tight end trying to slow down Miller, Fox added: "To be real honest with you, I kind of like Von matched up on anybody. A lot of people try different things. He's pretty special."

Miller has played 24 regular-season games and has 21.5 career sacks. Sunday he made the Broncos' first sack of the game — on a third-and-4 play on the Panthers' opening possession.

After the play he mocked Newton's "Superman" pose.

"I had a plan. I talked about it all week (in the locker room), but if you talk about it (in public) and it doesn't happen, it's always worse," Miller said. "It's good to talk about it and get it done so quick in the game."

"I just want to keep going, keep doing what I'm supposed to do, keep working. I don't want to be satisfied with this and that. I want to win. I want to be a guy everybody counts to help us win."

Broncos defensive approach turns out to be Kryptonite for Cam Newton

Jeff Legwold
The Denver Post
November 12, 2012

CHARLOTTE, n.c. — For much of the week leading up to their game Sunday, the Broncos talked about Cam Newton's size and strength, his powerful arm and his running ability.

They talked about how difficult it is to get the Carolina Panthers' 6-foot-5, 245-pound quarterback to the ground. But in the spirit of one of coach John Fox's favorite missives — "well done is better than well said" — they went out and showed how to stop Newton.

"He's a big man," Broncos linebacker Von Miller said. "We knew what we had to do. You can't let him beat you. He's so versatile, you can't let him do all those things. And this is a defense that wants to be respected and feared. That's how we want to play."

With a mix-and-match approach on personnel — including a few groupings the Broncos had not used this season — and a ferocious pass rush, the Broncos chased, harassed and closed out Newton and the Panthers.

The Broncos finished with seven sacks for the first time in more than nine years and scored their fourth defensive touchdown of the season to go with their second safety.

What went right

Given Newton's size and his ability as a runner, the Broncos kept a little more size on the field in nickel (five defensive back) situations, with middle linebacker Keith Brooking staying on the field and pairing with Wesley Woodyard at linebacker.

When the down-and-distance situation leaned a little more toward the Carolina passing game, rookie Danny Trevathan replaced Brooking alongside Woodyard. The Broncos also used cornerback Chris Harris at safety more than they had been. The second-year defensive back started the game at right cornerback in place of Tracy Porter. Harris also was used in the slot in the nickel defense, then lined up at safety for several snaps.

"They're starting to realize how versatile I can be," Harris said. "I think I can play safety, I can play nickel, I can play outside corner. I just want to stay consistent, to keep myself in the game."

"As long as I stay consistent, keep doing what I'm supposed to do no matter where they put me, they'll hopefully keep using me."

The Broncos, knowing Newton had targeted Steve Smith 70 times coming into the game, slapped Champ Bailey on Smith, forcing Newton to look elsewhere. Newton still targeted Smith seven times, but the veteran had only one catch.

Put it all together and the Broncos forced Newton to hold the ball too long, leading to the Broncos' seven sacks.

What went wrong

By the time the Panthers scored their first touchdown with six minutes, 46 seconds left in the first quarter, tight end Greg Olsen had three catches for 46 yards, including his scoring play.

Olsen finished with nine receptions for 102 yards and two touchdowns. It marked the second straight game an opposing tight end worked over Broncos linebackers and safeties for a 100-yard game. The Bengals' Jermaine Gresham had 108 yards on six catches in Denver's victory in Cincinnati last week.

This season, five opposing tight ends have finished with at least 50 yards receiving.

Up next

The last time the Broncos faced the Chargers, they constructed a historic comeback that kick-started the current four-game winning streak.

The Broncos intercepted four passes thrown by Philip Rivers in that game and cornerback Tony Carter added a fumble return for a touchdown. And with the Chargers' loss Sunday, the Broncos hold a two-game lead in the AFC West.

In the bag

With their seven sacks, the Broncos have 32 and took over the NFL's sack lead heading into the Sunday night game. It was their first seven-sack game since Oct. 12, 2003. The franchise record for sacks in a game is 10 which was achieved on Oct. 19, 1969, against Cincinnati. The Broncos have had seven sacks in a game 11 times.

Trindon Holliday makes it two games in a row with Broncos TD returns

Tom Kensler
The Denver Post
November 11, 2012

CHARLOTTE — After an afternoon when Trindon Holliday returned a punt 76 yards for a touchdown, the Broncos' new weapon declined to brag about his sprinter's speed. But he won't lie, either.

"After I break past the first wave (of the opponent's coverage unit), it's over with," he said.

Holliday became the sixth Broncos player to score multiple touchdowns on special teams in the same season, adding to his 105-yard kickoff return a week earlier at Cincinnati. It's doubtful anybody will catch the 5-foot-5, 170-pounder from behind. At Louisiana State, Holliday was an eight-time All-American in track. He claimed the 2009 NCAA title for the 100-meter dash with a time 10.0, which is world class.

A second-year pro, Holliday joined the Broncos on Oct. 11 after he was placed on waivers by Houston. The Texans had put linebacker Brian Cushing on injured reserve and needed to adjust their roster and use Holliday's roster spot.

"I think this is a perfect fit for me," Holliday said of the Broncos.

And that's not just as a returner. In the third quarter, Broncos quarterback Peyton Manning looked left and completed a 15-yard pass to Holliday — the first NFL reception of Holliday's young career.

Then Manning went back to Holliday on the next play. That completion went for only 2 yards, but it sent a message that Holliday is destined to become more than a sideshow on offense.

"That made me feel good," Holliday said of Manning looking for him on back-to-back plays. "I want to do everything I can to help the team. I don't want to be just a one-dimensional guy.

"I have great hands. I just haven't been able to prove it (as a wide receiver) in the NFL. You can't have bad hands and be a returner."

Holliday said he has not been told whether he will become a more featured part of future game plans on offense. But he is getting more reps in practice as a receiver.

"It's bits and pieces right now," Holliday said. "I'm just trying to build more and more each week and trying to get better."

Teammates would love to see him out there.

"Trindon can add (to the offense) what he adds on the returns — incredible speed, agility and quickness," tight end Jacob Tamme said. "It's always good to get the ball in his hands."

Wide receiver Demaryius Thomas said at least one Panthers defender mentioned Holliday.

"They said, 'Man, that No. 11 is fast!' " Thomas said.

Returns for touchdowns tend to flip the momentum and almost always have a demoralizing, psychological effect on the opponent. The timing of Holliday's returns in the past two games couldn't have been much better.

The Broncos were up just 10-3 against the Bengals when he brought back a kickoff 105 yards. This time, the score was tied 7-7 when Holliday put Denver in front with the 76-yard punt return on the first play of the second quarter.

"We were trying to set that up the whole game," Holliday said of Sunday's punt return. "(Carolina punter Brad Nortman) gave us one that I could return. I caught it and made a little jab to the left. Then I saw my teammates making blocks for me on the right side, and I just hit a hole."

As Holliday darted to the right sideline, Nortman appeared to have an angle on him. But Holliday zipped past him.

"I was not going to be tackled by the punter," Holliday said. "I'd never hear the end of it."

Roster juggling can be unavoidable. But what in the world did the Texans not see in Holliday?

"I don't know, man," he said. "No comment on that one. I'm just happy to be on this team."

Broncos 2012 return TDs

Sept. 9 vs. Pittsburgh: Tracy Porter 43-yard interception return

Oct. 15 at San Diego: Tony Carter 65-yard fumble return

Oct. 15 at San Diego: Chris Harris 46-yard interception return

Nov. 4 at Cincinnati: Trindon Holliday 105-yard kickoff return

Nov. 11 at Carolina: Holliday 76-yard punt return

Bests and worsts from the Broncos' win over the Panthers

Tom Kensler
The Denver Post
November 12, 2012

Bests

On target. During a pick-'em-apart stretch of the first half, Broncos QB Peyton Manning completed 13 passes in a row.

Off to the races. This is NASCAR country, but Trindon Holliday sped like a Ferrari with his 76-yard punt return in the second quarter. Panthers punter Brad Nortman had a good angle to tackle Holliday — and no chance.

Fast start to career. Yep, that Von Miller fellow has a promising future, all right. His first-quarter sack gave him 10 for the season for back-to-back years of double figures.

Worsts

Third downs. We're being picky here, but the Broncos' offense was just 3-for-13 on third-down conversions.

Dumervil down. Broncos all-pro defensive end Elvis Dumervil strained his shoulder in the first quarter while scrambling for a Cam Newton fumble. Dumervil came back for one play, then was shut down for the rest of the game.

Ball security. Willis McGahee has been a horse for the Broncos' running game, but in the third quarter he lost his fourth fumble of the season.

Trindon Holliday is sixth Bronco with multiple kick returns for TD

Mike Klis, Jeff Legwold & Tom Kensler
The Denver Post
November 12, 2012

Holliday is sixth with TD returns

CHARLOTTE, n.c. — With his 76-yard punt return Sunday, Trindon Holliday became the sixth Broncos player with more than one special-teams touchdowns in the same season.

Also accomplishing that feat were Al Frazier in 1961 (one punt return, one kickoff return), Goldie Sellers in 1966 (two kickoff returns), Rick Upchurch in 1976 (four punt returns), Upchurch in 1982 (two punt returns), Darrien Gordon in 1997 (three punt returns) and Eddie Royal in 2009 (one kickoff return, one punt return).

"Doing it back-to-back weeks is fun," Holliday said. "We'll just go back to practice next week and see if we can build on it."

Mike Pereira, an NFL rules analyst for Fox television, said the return should have been called a fumble and subsequent touchback because Holliday flipped the ball in the air in celebration just before the ball crossed the plane of the goal line.

"It was confirmed," referee Al Riveron told a pool reporter. "The entire play on a scoring play is reviewed."

Riveron added he had not talked to the replay officials.

Fox gets game ball. After the Broncos' victory, owner Pat Bowlen delivered the game ball to coach John Fox.

"I know this one means a lot more to you," Bowlen said.

Fox was Carolina's coach for nine years from 2002-10. When his contract wasn't renewed, Bowlen quickly gave him another one. Fox is 15-12 in his two seasons with the Broncos, counting last year's postseason run.

"It was a little strange. I had never been in the visitors' locker room," Fox said of his return. "All the years I've been here as a head coach, I had never been here. But it was great getting back. My sons are still out here going to school, so it was neat seeing family."

Close calls. Elvis Dumervil's shoulder strain was the most serious of the Broncos' injuries Sunday, but they had several other near misses with some of their marquee players .

Wide receiver Demaryius Thomas, running back Willis McGahee and linebacker Von Miller also left the game briefly, but all returned. Quarterback Peyton Manning also briefly grabbed his knee after the brace he wears appeared to catch in the grass when he slid after a run in the first half.

Manning didn't leave the game.

Miller's had looked the most serious, as his left ankle was rolled up on in a pile during the Panthers' second possession of the game. He initially grabbed his left ankle and was helped off the field.

He returned a few plays later.

"A guy just rolled up on me. I had to come out," Miller said. "But they worked on me, and I was able to get back out there and go. It wasn't as bad as it looked right away."

Century-mark man. Thomas caught nine passes for 135 yards to reach triple figures for the fifth time this season.

"I'm just doing what they want me to do — beating my defender," Thomas said. "The offensive line is giving Peyton enough time to throw, and he's putting the ball on the money."

Prater's streak ends. Broncos kicker Matt Prater missed his first field goal of the season — a 43-yarder in the second quarter — to end his streak of 11-for-11, including a 53-yarder earlier in the quarter.

"I hit it pretty good," Prater said. "There was a little wind today, and I hit it straight, but I hit it a little right and it kept drifting on me. It was a good learning experience."

Prater made a 27-yarder in the fourth quarter.

Williams returns. D.J. Williams is finally a free man, at least in the court of the NFL. The Broncos' linebacker served the final day of his nine-game suspension Sunday. He can rejoin the team in all activities starting Monday, although the team won't start practicing until Wednesday.

Third-down dominance. The Broncos held the Panthers to an 0-for-12 showing on third down. It was just the fourth-time since 1991 the Broncos held an opposing offense without a conversion.

What they said: Broncos praise defense after stopping Carolina, Newton

The Denver Post
November 11, 2012

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The Denver Broncos routed the Carolina Panthers 36-14 on Sunday. Here's what players and coaches had to say after the game.

"We're not perfect, but we have the right mindset about where we need to go."
--**Champ Bailey**, Broncos cornerback, on Denver's defense

"I don't know what Wesley Woodyard is doing, but that guy is a monster. Carolina has Superman, but we've got a Superman, too."
--**Von Miller**, praising the Broncos LB

"We were able to get out there have some fun. It was a good day for the Broncos."
--**Wesley Woodyard**, Broncos linebacker

"It's all about entertainment."
--**Von Miller** on his post-sack Superman poses

"I've never been in this visitor's locker room before."
--**John Fox**, Broncos coach and former Carolina coach

"We wanted to get it done for Coach Fox."
--**Von Miller**

"There are brighter days ahead for the Carolina Panthers."
--Carolina QB **Cam Newton**

"As far as what they did, they did nothing that wasn't there on film. The execution wasn't there on all cylinders and I've got to do a better job of getting the ball out."
--**Cam Newton**

"We were trying to set that up the whole game and he punted one that I could return."
--**Trindon Holliday**, Broncos returner, on his 76-yard punt return for a TD

"To be honest, I didn't notice that. We try to prepare that way and we do expect to go out there and have success. Peyton is phenomenal. That's a good stretch, but we had stretches that weren't so good offensively."
--Broncos TE **Jacob Tamme** on Peyton Manning completing 13 in a row during a stretch in first half

"We settled down a little bit and played Broncos defense."

--**Von Miller**, Broncos linebacker, on Denver's defense after Carolina's first drive

"When we win and get turnovers, really it's all about what they are doing up front."

--**Champ Bailey** on the Broncos' defensive line

"I hit it pretty good. It was a little windy out here. I hit it straight and it kept drifting on me. Going back, I wish I would have played it a little to the left. It's a good learning experience."

--**Matt Prater**, Broncos kicker, on his missed 43-yard field goal

"I didn't think we'd get that many sacks on Cam Newton, because he's so elusive."

--**Justin Bannan**, Broncos defensive tackle, on their seven sacks.

"It was great. Doesn't matter who it's against."

--**Von Miller**, on Denver sacking Cam Newton

"They did a lot of trickery that first drive, things we didn't expect. After that (first) drive, we settled down and shut things down."

--**Justin Bannan**

"We were able to go out there and have some fun."

--**Justin Bannan**

"The offensive line was giving Peyton enough time to throw and he was putting it on the money."

--Broncos WR **Demaryius Thomas**

Sunny and 70 in Charlotte, N.C.

Mike Klis
The Denver Post
November 11, 2012

CHARLOTTE — Weather will be no factor for Broncos-Panthers' game today. Unless the warmth wears on one team or the other.

It's currently 61 degrees on its way to the mid-70s. Lots of sunshine. Little wind. Good passing weather.

Bill Polian, Tom Moore drop in on Peyton Manning for Broncos-Carolina game

Mike Klis
The Denver Post
November 11, 2012

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Standing outside the visitors locker room at Bank of America Stadium, waiting for Peyton Manning and the Broncos to come out for warmups, were Bill Polian and Tom Moore, the quarterback's former bosses with the Indianapolis Colts.

Moore was the Colts' offensive coordinator during Manning's first 13 seasons; Polian was the Colts' general manager who selected Manning (and not Ryan Leaf) with the No. 1 overall pick in the 1998 draft.

Andre Caldwell, C.J. Davis get uniforms

Mike Klis
The Denver Post
November 11, 2012

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The most significant changes in the Broncos' 46-man, game-day roster today are receiver Andre "Bubba" Caldwell and offensive guard/center C.J. Davis are dressing.

Caldwell essentially replaces rookie safety Duke Ihenacho, who dressed last week, on special teams. Broncos coach John Fox apparently feels he needs more depth at receiver than safety today — especially with four other safeties (Rahim Moore, Mike Adams, Jim Leonhard, David Bruton) are already up.

Davis was added to give interior blocking depth in light of the ankle injury to right guard Chris Kuper. Manny Ramirez had been the top interior reserve the previous three games but will start in place of Kuper.

Elvis Dumervil to have MRI on left shoulder Monday

Mike Klis
The Denver Post
November 11, 2012

CHARLOTTE, NC — As happens in so many victories in the sport of football, the news wasn't all good.

Broncos two-time Pro Bowl defensive end Elvis Dumervil left in the first half with a strained left shoulder. He did not return. He will have an MRI on the shoulder back in Denver on Monday morning.

"You have to stay confident, man," Dumervil said.

Dumervil felt something strain — "nothing popped," he said, — in the backside muscle area of the left shoulder, perhaps involving the lat or labrum.

"It's hard to pinpoint what happened at what particular time," Dumervil said. "We'll know t(Monday) morning and see what happens."

Dumervil registered his seventh sack of the season before the injury. With Dumervil out, the Broncos gave plenty of playing time to rookie Malik Jackson.

Broncos inactives for Sunday at Carolina

Tom Kensler
The Denver Post
November 11, 2012

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Here are the Denver inactives listed by the Broncos prior to Sunday's game at Carolina:

QB Caleb Hanie
CB Tracy Porter
RB Knowshon Moreno
SS Duke Ihenacho
OG Chris Kuper
TE Julius Thomas
NT Sealver Siliga

Offensive guard Manny Ramirez will start in place of Kuper (ankle sprain).

Cornerback Chris Harris will start in place of Porter (pre-seizure symptoms).

Inactives for Carolina:

QB Jimmy Clausen
WR Joe Adams
S D.J. Campbell
LB Jason Williams
OT Bruce Campbell
DE Antwan Applewhite
DE Thomas Keiser

Manning, defense lead Broncos over Panthers 36-14

Associated Press
November 12, 2012

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) - Peyton Manning and the Denver Broncos were too much for the Carolina Panthers.

Manning threw for 310 yards and a touchdown Sunday helping the first-place Broncos (6-3) rout the Panthers 36-14 to win for the fifth time in six games.

"I didn't know what kind of progress I would make physically," Manning said after he missed last season because of injuries.

"I have made some. I continue to have some that I need to make and continue to have to do my rehab. I think we have improved on certain things and part of developing some kind of chemistry.

"This is not a team that has been together for four or five years so we still have some things that we can do better. Anytime that you can learn a little bit about each other, make some progress, and win some games, that is a good thing. But, we still need to get better, especially down this home stretch."

The Broncos have scored at least 31 points in their past five wins.

After the game, players gave coach John Fox a game ball after winning against the team he coached for nine seasons from 2002-2010.

"There were a lot of motivating factors to help us win this game, and Coach Fox was the biggest one," Von Miller said.

Manning threw his 420th touchdown pass to move into a tie for second place on the NFL's list with his childhood hero Dan Marino. He trails only Brett Favre (508).

"I have never felt comfortable kind of being mentioned with him," Manning said.

Manning had plenty of help from his teammates.

Linebacker Miller harassed Cam Newton all day and Trindon Holliday returned a punt 76 yards for a touchdown as for the Broncos (6-3).

The Broncos sacked Newton seven times, including once for a safety, and Miller pressured him into an interception that Tony Carter returned 40 yards for a score.

Fox spent nine seasons in Carolina before his relationship with owner Jerry Richardson deteriorated when the organization failed to offer him a contract extension.

Fox took the high road after the game.

"You just feel good to win," Fox said. "You put a lot into these things. It is seven days of hard work and countless hours. It's all for naught if you don't win."

Miller was all over the field and finished with a sack, forced fumble and four tackles for a loss.

"We want to be feared and respected for a relentless pursuit for the ball," Miller said.

Denver's defense pressured Newton all day, forcing him to make quick decisions that often resulted in mistakes.

"We changed up our protections, did a couple of things differently and they were still able to break through," Panthers coach Ron Rivera said.

After a strong start, Newton finished 21 of 36 for 241 yards with two touchdown passes to tight end Greg Olsen. He threw two interceptions.

By the end of the game Newton looked tired, discouraged and a little beat up.

Despite spending much of the day on his back, Newton wouldn't blame his offensive line.

"This is the same offensive line that did an excellent job a lot of times today, so I'm not thrashing them." Newton said. "... I think personally I have to do a better job of getting the football out, getting it to my outlets."

Miller, selected No. 2 in the 2011 draft, one spot behind Newton, was a disruptive force right from the start. He sacked Newton on the second series and celebrated by imitating Newton's Superman routine, pretending to rip open his shirt.

The Panthers (2-7) appeared ready to give the Broncos a challenge early while playing in all-black uniforms, jumping to a 7-0 lead in the first quarter on a 4-yard pass from Newton to Olsen.

But it was all Broncos after that as they scored 29 straight points.

After a slow start, Manning started to pick apart Carolina's defense.

He had a 10-yard touchdown pass to Brandon Stokley. With the game tied at 7, Holliday put the Broncos ahead with a nifty punt return for a touchdown.

Matt Prater made it 17-7 on a 53-yard field goal.

Early in the third quarter, Charles Johnson sacked Manning and forced a fumble that Greg Hardy recovered.

But on the next play, Miller grabbed Newton's ankle in the backfield as he was trying to throw and Carter stepped in front of the pass near the sideline and returned it for a touchdown and a 24-7 lead. Prater added another field goal and Mike Adams sacked Newton for a safety to make it 29-7.

"I should have thrown it out of bounds," Newton said. "I have to be more mature than that. It's better to be second-and-10 than have a pick-six."

NOTES: Broncos DE Elvis Dumervil left the game with a shoulder injury in the second quarter and did not return. ... Panthers TE Greg Olsen posted his first career 100-yard receiving game in six seasons. ... The Panthers have not won back-to-back games this season under Rivera.

Manning ties Marino, Broncos sack Cam seven times in rout

Associated Press
November 11, 2012

CHARLOTTE, N.C. -- Moments after the Denver Broncos gave the Carolina Panthers a good old-fashioned shellacking Sunday, they gave coach John Fox a game ball.

"There were a lot of motivating factors to help us win this game, and Coach Fox was the biggest one," Von Miller said.

Peyton Manning made sure Fox's return to Carolina was successful, throwing for 301 yards and a touchdown, and the defense turned in a dominating performance to lead the Broncos to a 36-14 rout.

Manning threw his 420th touchdown pass to move into a tie for second place on the NFL's list with his childhood hero Dan Marino. He trails only Brett Favre (508).

"I have never felt comfortable kind of being mentioned with him," Manning said.

Manning had plenty of help from his teammates.

Linebacker Miller harassed Cam Newton all day and Trindon Holliday returned a punt 76 yards for a touchdown as the Broncos (6-3) won for the fifth time in six weeks. The Broncos sacked Newton seven times, including once for a safety, and Miller pressured him into an interception that Tony Carter returned 40 yards for a score.

Fox spent nine seasons in Carolina before his relationship with owner Jerry Richardson dramatically deteriorated when the organization failed to offer him a contract extension.

So Sunday's win was a taste of revenge, although Fox took the high road after the game.

"You just feel good to win," Fox said. "You put a lot into these things. It is seven days of hard work and countless hours. It's all for naught if you don't win."

Miller was all over the field and finished with a sack, forced fumble and four tackles for a loss.

"We want to be feared and respected for a relentless pursuit for the ball," Miller said.

Denver's defense put on a show, pressuring Newton all day and forcing him to make quick decisions that often resulted in mistakes.

"We changed up our protections, did a couple of things differently and they were still able to break through," Panthers coach Ron Rivera said.

After a strong start, Newton finished 21 of 36 for 241 yards with two touchdown passes to tight end Greg Olsen. He threw two interceptions.

By the end of the game Newton looked tired, discouraged and a little beat up.

Despite spending most of the day on his back, Newton wouldn't pass blame on his offensive line.

"This is the same offensive line that did an excellent job a lot of times today, so I'm not thrashing them." Newton said. "... I think personally I have to do a better job of getting the football out, getting it to my outlets."

Miller, selected No. 2 in last year's NFL Draft, one spot behind Newton, was a disruptive force right from the start. He sacked Newton on the second series and celebrated by imitating Newton's Superman routine, pretending to rip open his shirt.

The Panthers (2-7) appeared ready to give the Broncos a challenge early while playing in all-black uniforms, jumping to a 7-0 lead in the first quarter on a 4-yard pass from Newton to Olsen.

But it was all Broncos after that as they would score 29 straight points.

After a slow start, Manning started to pick apart Carolina's defense and was 16 of 20 for 135 yards, including a 10-yard touchdown pass to Brandon Stokley. With the game tied at 7, Holliday put the Broncos ahead with a nifty punt return for a controversial touchdown.

As Holliday sprinted the final 25 yards to the end zone alone and untouched, television replays appeared to show him flip the ball out of his hand in celebration about a yard before he reached the end zone.

In a pool report, NFL referee Al Riveron said, "The entire scoring play is reviewed" and that it was confirmed it was indeed a touchdown.

Said Holliday: "We had that problem last week, but I thought I got the ball across the goal line. I'll have to go back and look."

Prater later made it 17-7 on a 53-yard field goal.

Early in the third quarter, Charles Johnson sacked Manning and forced a fumble that Greg Hardy recovered.

But on the next play Miller grabbed Newton's ankle in the backfield as he was trying to throw and Carter stepped in front of the pass near the sideline and returned it for a touchdown and a 24-7 lead. Prater added another field goal and Mike Adams sacked Newton for a safety to make it 29-7.

"I should have thrown it out of bounds," Newton said. "I have to be more mature than that. It's better to be second-and-10 than have a pick-six."

Manning said after the game he was honored to be in the same company with Marino, who was his favorite playing growing up.

"Dan Marino, after my dad retired, was my favorite quarterback growing up," Manning said, "so it is pretty much documented through the years when I have been asked about Dan Marino how I feel about him."

Notes

- Broncos DE Elvis Dumervil left the game with a shoulder injury in the second quarter and did not return.
- Olsen, a six-year veteran, posted his first career 100-yard receiving game.
- The Panthers have not won back-to-back games this season under Rivera.

Peyton Manning ties Dan Marino for second-most TD passes in NFL history with 420

Associated Press
November 11, 2012

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Peyton Manning threw his 420th career touchdown pass in the first quarter against the Carolina Panthers to move into a tie with Dan Marino for the second-most touchdown passes in NFL history.

Manning tied the record on a 14-yard touchdown pass to Brandon Stokely.

Brett Favre has the most TD passes in NFL history with 508.

Will there be an AFC West race?

Bill Williamson
ESPN.com
November 11, 2012

The AFC West may get boring very quickly.

Week 10 of the NFL season brought some clarity in the division.

The Denver Broncos showed they are clearly the best team in the division, while the San Diego Chargers and the Oakland Raiders showed they are nowhere ready to make a playoff push.

Once again, the Broncos were impressive in a 36-14 win at Carolina. It was Denver's fourth straight victory with three of the wins coming on the road.

Denver is now 6-3 and it is rolling with the easiest remaining schedule in the NFL. San Diego fell to 4-5 after a 34-24 loss at Tampa Bay on Sunday. It has lost four of the past five games. Oakland was blitzed, 55-20, by Baltimore and is not a factor with its 3-6 record. Kansas City is 1-7 and it plays at Pittsburgh on Monday night. The only question about the Chiefs' remaining season is if they will get the No. 1 pick in the draft.

The Broncos could put a stranglehold hold on the division before Thanksgiving.

Denver hosts San Diego on Sunday. If the Broncos win it will essentially have a four-game lead in the division with six games to go. Denver already beat the Chargers.

It was that game, on Oct 14, in which the division started to turn. The Broncos turned a 24-0 halftime deficit into a stunning 35-24 win. The Broncos have been one of the NFL's best teams since and the Chargers have been in a daze since.

With quarterback Peyton Manning putting together an MVP season, Denver looks dangerous with nearly every phase of the game playing at a high level.

Of course, anything can happen in the final seven weeks of the season, but unless something dramatic happens, the events of Week 10 showed us the Broncos could put away the division title and work on becoming January-strong in a matter of weeks.

Wrap-up: Broncos 36, Panthers 14

Bill Williamson
ESPN.com
November 11, 2012

A look at another impressive outing by the Denver Broncos:

What it means: Denver is rolling. It is now 6-3 and has won four straight games. Denver has a two-game lead in the AFC West over the San Diego Chargers, who have a 4-5 record.

Road warriors: The Broncos won in Cincinnati last week and have back-to-back road wins. Neither team is a killer, but going East and winning is something good teams do. With seven games remaining, there is little doubt Denver is a good team. The Broncos have been a dominant team since scoring 35 points in the second half against San Diego to win 35-24 on Oct. 14.

Good win for Fox: Denver coach John Fox marked his Carolina return with a big win. He was the Panthers' coach for nine years and was fired after the 2010 season. Denver is pleased he was given the boot in Carolina. He has done a terrific job with the Broncos.

Miller shines: Denver linebacker Von Miller won the battle of the top picks in the 2011 draft. Miller had his 10th sack of the season and had four tackles for loss as he harassed Carolina quarterback Cam Newton all game. Newton was the first pick in the 2011 draft, and Miller was the second.

Oh yeah, him: Peyton Manning is playing so well it's almost not news anymore. He just rolls along. Manning continued to make his case for being the NFL MVP in his huge comeback season with 301 yards and a touchdown pass. It was his 420th NFL touchdown pass, tying him with Dan Marino for second on the all-time NFL list. Manning hooked up with Demaryius Thomas nine times for 135 yards as Thomas continues to make a huge push for the Pro Bowl.

Trindon Holliday is a weapon: Everything is working for Denver, including the return game. Holliday was claimed off waivers last month to give life to one of Denver's few weak spots. It is no longer a problem. He returned a punt 76 yards for a score Sunday. Last week, he had a kickoff return for a touchdown.

So is Tony Carter: The young cornerback returned an interception for a score. It was his second touchdown in four games. Carter and starter Chris Harris are both playing very well as Tracy Porter deals with the effects of a seizure.

Controlling line of scrimmage: Denver had seven sacks on defense and allowed just one sack Sunday against a team that had 10 sacks in the past two games. It dominated the line of scrimmage, another sign of a team that is clicking.

What's next: The Broncos host the Chargers. If Denver wins, it will have a three-game lead with six games to go. It also holds the tiebreaker over San Diego because of the two wins over the Chargers. If Denver wins next week, this division race could be very close to being done.

2012 NFL Grades, Week 10: Down go the Falcons, but that's OK

Will Brinson
CBSsports.com
November 11, 2012

That noise you heard in South Florida? It's the 1972 Miami Dolphins performing an annual ritual they claim they don't perform, cracking champagne in celebration of the last unbeaten team falling in the NFL.

No, we will not forget them. And neither should you.

The Saints helped out the '72 crew this season, as they squeaked out a 31-27 victory over the Falcons in the Superdome, a win that puts New Orleans squarely back in the playoff race and raises questions about Atlanta.

Don't get me wrong: The Falcons are fine and still one of the best teams in the NFL. But they did a poor job running the ball Sunday and an equally poor job stopping the run. Giving up points to Drew Brees and Jimmy Graham and the Saints passing game is one thing. But getting run on by Chris Ivory and Mark Ingram is another.

The bigger concern should be the way they're using Michael Turner. The Saints were giving up 176.5 yards per game and 5.3 yards per carry to opposing rushing attacks this season before Sunday. Turner managed to run 13 times for 15 yards.

Atlanta's going to make its money and win games on the back of the passing attack, but it still needs to be able to run the ball, particularly when it gets near the goal line. The Falcons couldn't do it on Sunday against the Saints, and that's a concern.

On the actual topic of going undefeated, this might be the best thing for Atlanta. Though I definitely thought it was *possible* for the falcons to run the table, it certainly wasn't *likely*. Even against teams without a winning record, they had a stacked number of divisional games. Besides, is this a good thing for them?

Perhaps. They aren't a team who's going to run roughshod over the league en route to a Super Bowl, although they are one of the better teams in the league. They don't have a playoff win under this regime, and an undefeated regular season -- a technically meaningless feat without a Lombardi Trophy -- would have only added *more* pressure to Mike Smith and Matt Ryan when their first-round matchup in the postseason arrived.

Instead, the Falcons now have a few weeks to work the kinks out and make a push to keep the NFC South lead at a comfortable level. And they get to do it without the

added pressure of people wondering each week if -- or in this case, when -- they'd lose their first game.

Team	Grade	Analysis
Colts 27, Jaguars 10		
	B	Andrew Luck made a few mistakes against Jacksonville, but the Colts were by and large dominant in an easy victory. Reggie Wayne leads the NFL in receptions (for now), and this was an impressive effort for a defense that only had four cornerbacks active when the game began. A lead of 17-3 at halftime essentially put this game out of reach early.
	F	The Jaguars basically no-showed their prime-time game on Thursday, scoring all of three points before a garbage-time Cecil Shorts touchdown. They got some bad calls against them, but it's hard to fathom a scenario that doesn't involve blowing up this team and trying to start over in 2013, especially if they keep playing this uninspired.
Ravens 55, Raiders 20		
	D-	Oakland scored some points, but its defense is a total disaster over the last two games. The Raiders were Douginated last week, and Joe Flacco shredded them on Sunday.
	B+	For as bad as Baltimore's defense can be, its offense is incredibly explosive, particularly at home. Flacco had a monster game against the Raiders, throwing three touchdown passes and running one in. Baltimore posted a franchise-record 55 points and kept pouring it on the entire game, almost like it was making a statement.
Vikings 34, Lions 24		
	D	Just when you think this team is going to start making a push for the playoffs, Detroit's offense pulls a total no-show in the first half of this game. The defense couldn't stop Christian Ponder even though he was missing Percy Harvin, and Adrian Peterson flat-out plowed through that high-priced defensive line. Calvin Johnson was huge with 207 yards, but he and Matthew Stafford generated most of their numbers in garbage time.
	B+	Minnesota needed a bounceback to slow its losing streak, and got it in a big way. Great debut for Jarius Wright, who helped Ponder calm the critics with his 221-yard, two-touchdown day. Peterson lived up to the All Day nickname on Sunday, rumbling for 171 yards and a score on 27 carries. Strong effort by the defense to limit the Lions to three first-half points.
Buccaneers 34, Chargers 24		
	C-	Philip Rivers looked spectacular early and played well for much of this game, but he threw a pair of absolutely back-breaking interceptions late, including an inexplicable pick six. The defense did very little against Tampa, and a blocked kick for a touchdown

Team Grade**Analysis**

B

plus Leonard Johnson's TD off a pick were the difference. Silly mistakes can cost teams and people their jobs in situations like this.

The Chargers came into Tampa Bay firing, and the Buccaneers hung right with them. Doug Martin ran pretty well again this week against a tough San Diego front. Josh Freeman was efficient and didn't make any major mistakes. The secondary stinks, but that's not breaking news. Tampa Bay just keeps winning and hanging in the playoff race.

Titans 37, Dolphins 3



B+

Maybe Bud Adams should threaten to fire everyone every week of the season: The Titans got up on the Fins early and never let up.

Chris Johnson flashed some of his old CJ2K form in this game, Jake Locker had some athletic plays and nice throws despite sub-par stats. The biggest surprise was a bad defense finally showing up for a week and doing it on the road, no less.



F

Reggie Bush got benched after a bad fumble, Ryan Tannehill threw three picks, and the Dolphins were barely in this game at halftime. It was surprising to see them gashed by Chris Johnson but even more surprising that they couldn't muster more than three points against a horrible defense.

Broncos 36, Panthers 14



A-

John Fox can say he didn't care about this game all he wants, but his team was throwing late with a big lead in an absolute waxing of the Panthers in Charlotte. Willis McGahee's fumbling is a concern, but Peyton Manning was good again and DeMaryius Thomas didn't suffer a major knee injury. But the real story should probably be Von Miller: The second-year linebacker was a dominant force defensively and helped harass Cam Newton all day long.



D

The Panthers scripted a fantastic early drive that resulted in a 7-0 lead ... and then fell apart. Newton made a number of bad mistakes, and the offense simply couldn't turn some of the big-time plays by the defense into points. Luke Kuechly is a very nice bright spot at this point, however.

Bengals 31, Giants 13



F

Mercifully, the Giants are coming off a Super Bowl, so we don't have to sweat Tom Coughlin's job security. But Eli Manning has been baaaaad for a few weeks in a row now, and it has to be concerning. The defense was carved up by Andy Dalton all day long and didn't manage a single sack. The offensive line was absolutely dominated.



B+

Big-time performance from their defensive line as they picked up 3 1/2 sacks on Manning. Dalton made some very nice throws and picked up four touchdowns. Having guys like Mohamed Sanu and

Team Grade**Analysis**

Andrew Hawkins keep stepping up will be critical for the Bengals down the stretch.

Patriots 37, Bills 31



C

Fred Jackson and C.J. Spiller are so good and just not used as much as they should be -- I know the Bills were down, but only 25 carries combined for them? This was nearly an impressive comeback for a Bills team that refused to die. But Ryan Fitzpatrick can't throw the ball down the field, and this defense is one of the more underwhelming units in all of football.



B-

The Patriots' London trip quieted the "they can't close teams out" chatter, and New England still won on Sunday. But it would've been nice to see the Patriots finish off a drive or two and refuse to give the Bills a shot to win this game. The secondary wasn't impressive yet again.

Saints 31, Falcons 27



C+

Matt Ryan had a chance at another improbable comeback, but they couldn't get it done. Ryan had a huge game through the air, but Atlanta never got it going on the ground and couldn't stop New Orleans' rushing attack. Maybe not the worst first loss of the season.



B+

Big win for a team that was buried and is now suddenly back in the playoff hunt. They ran the ball particularly well, Jimmy Graham is 100 percent healthy at this point, and Drew Brees had another big game. Surprisingly effective rushing defense for the Saints.

Jets vs. Seahawks



D

No rushing attack from the Jets and no passing attack either. Their defense did as much as they could but the offense provided nothing -- the only points were on a Muhammad Wilkerson fumble return -- and this is a team that looks absolutely lost at the moment.



A

Dominant performance all around for Seattle as they pounded the Jets in every facet. Marshawn Lynch is criminally underrated, Russell Wilson is spectacular at home (11 TDs, no picks this year) and Golden Tate's starting to become a viable weapon. He's got a better arm than Tim Tebow too.

Cowboys - Eagles



B

Things got weird when Michael Vick was knocked out -- Morris Claiborne got torched and made a number of crucial mistakes. But the defense and special teams ended up scoring three times and ultimately it was the difference. Nice game from Tony Romo and good effort from Felix Jones. The Cowboys are suddenly back in the playoff hunt.

Team Grade**Analysis**

D+

Nick Foles had to throw 32 times and that's not good. He had some good moments but is quite clearly a rookie. The defense continues to struggle and let Felix Jones and Dez Bryant perform well. The quarterback controversy shouldn't be one if Michael Vick's healthy, but that's not necessarily the case. It could only get uglier for Philly from here.

Rams vs. 49ers



C+

The Rams played extremely well for most of the game, pulled off a pair of fake punts, were shockingly effective in the running game, and got to see the offense blossom with the return of Danny Amendola. But they couldn't close and coughed up 17 fourth-quarter points.



C-

Alex Smith and Colin Kaepernick were a combined 18-for-25, Frank Gore ran for 97 yards but the 49ers are lucky to get out with a tie. The defense's performance is terrifying though, considering how bad the Rams offensive line is; they've now let a lot of guys run the ball well against them and they couldn't stop Amendola.

Texans vs. Bears



B-

The windy and wet conditions were supposed to favor the Bears and their turnover-producing defense. Instead, QB Jay Cutler threw two first-half interceptions before heading to the locker room with a concussion. His replacement, Jason Campbell, didn't have a turnover but he completed just 11 of 19 passes for 94 yards. And it was the offense's inability to get into the end zone that sealed their fate.



B+

The Texans are dangerous in Houston but there were questions on if they could compete on the road in a hostile environment in tough playing conditions. They can. It wasn't pretty -- QB Matt Schaub had two bad interceptions but his defense bailed him out by creating three turnovers of their own. The wet field made it tough to get after the quarterback (something the Texans are very good at) but it didn't hinder their ability to cover downfield.

Broncos return man Trindon Holliday loses ball at 1-yard line, still awarded TD

Ryan Wilson
CBSSports.com
November 11, 2012

Trindon Holliday had three punt or kick returns for touchdowns in the preseason, but it wasn't enough to keep his job in Houston; he was released on Oct. 10 and signed with the Broncos a day later. Since arriving in Denver, Holliday has already returned a kick for six against the Bengals, and Sunday vs. the Panthers he added a 76-yard punt return to give the Broncos a 17-7 second-quarter lead.

Except that Holliday lost the ball at the 1-yard line, which means the touchdown on the field should've been a touchback, and the Panthers should've had the ball at their 20.

All scoring plays are reviewed automatically, but we're not sure what the replay official was looking at here (it also meant the Panthers couldn't throw a challenge flag). Mike Pereira, the former VP of NFL officials who now serves as a Fox Sports contributor, had this to say:

Mike Pereira
@**MikePereira**

In CAR if reviewed it would've been reversed to a touchback because it was a fumble. Replay officials fault for not stopping it to review.

11 Nov 12

In related news: DeSean Jackson nods knowingly but awards Holliday no style points.

Broncos LB Von Miller unveils unfortunate sack dance against Panthers

Josh Katzowitz
CBSsports.com
November 11, 2012

How good was the Broncos' defense through the first 20 minutes of the second half vs. the Panthers (or, maybe more accurately, how inept has Carolina's offense been)? Well, this should help answer the question.

Broncos RapidReports
@**CBSBroncos**

#**Panthers** in the second half: 20 plays for 2 yards. That's an average of 3.6 inches per snap, if you were wondering.

11 Nov 12

And Denver has gotten some help from linebacker Von Miller -- who, midway through the fourth quarter, had six tackles, a sack and a forced fumble. After sacking Cam Newton early in the game, Miller, just like he predicted, celebrated by mimicking Newton's Superman celebration.

Then, the Broncos forced a safety early in the fourth quarter. And this is what Miller gave to the viewing public (via sbnation).

In a word: yikes.

Postgame analysis: Broncos 36, Panthers 14

Shawn Krest
CBSSports.com
November 11, 2012

Cam Newton's "Superman" shirt-ripping celebration was on display all afternoon Sunday at Bank of America Stadium in Charlotte. Unfortunately for the Panthers (2-7, 1-2 NFC South), Newton wasn't the one celebrating.

Denver (6-3, 2-0 AFC West) sacked Newton seven times and throttled the Carolina offense on its way to a 36-14 win.

Broncos LB Von Miller promised to mock Newton's touchdown celebration when he sacked the Panthers quarterback. It took him all of five snaps to keep his promise. Miller and the Denver defense intercepted Newton once and sacked him in the end zone for a safety.

Peyton Manning was 27 of 38 for 301 yards and a touchdown, and Trindon Holliday returned a punt 76 yards for a score to lead Denver.

When the game turned: On the first play of the second quarter, Carolina rookie Brad Nortman punted 59 yards. Holliday, who had come close to breaking long returns twice in the first quarter, broke a tackle attempt by Richie Brockel at the 24, where he caught it, and turned up the right sideline. The only other Panther who had a shot at him was Nortman, who dived and missed at the Panther 45. The touchdown and PAT gave Denver a 14-7 lead and the Broncos never looked back.

Highlight moments: Trailing 7-0 in the first quarter, Manning completed passes of 32 and 9 yards to get the Broncos to first-and-goal from the 10. He rolled right and threw across his body, finding a wide open Brandon Stokley, who scored a game-tying touchdown. ... After recovering a Willis McGahee fumble, the Panthers took over at their 34 early in the third quarter. On the first play, Newton was chased from the pocket by Miller. In the grasp and on his way down, Newton threw the ball toward Brandon LaFell on the left sideline. Tony Carter stepped in front of the ball and took the interception 40 yards for a score and a 24-7 Broncos lead.

Top-shelf performances:

- Broncos LB **Miller** -- 6 tackles, all solo, 1 sack, 4 tackles for loss, 1 quarterback hit and 1 forced fumble.
- Broncos WR **Demaryius Thomas** -- 9 catches for 135 yards

What they said about Carter's interception return:

- Panthers coach **Ron Rivera** -- "That interception for a touchdown in the third quarter, that just offset us right there."
- QB **Newton** -- "I was just trying to make a play. I saw LaFell flash in front of me as I was running away, not knowing there was a guy behind him. I should've thrown it out of bounds and taken my losses as losses. After a good play by the defense, I've got to be more mature. It's better to be second-and-10 than have a pick-6."
- QB **Manning** -- "People talk about the Broncos offense, defense and special teams, but we're one team. Any time anyone on the team wants to score a touchdown, I'm for it. Our defense played great today."

What they said about Miller's sack and celebration:

- LB **Miller** -- "It was definitely great to get it that early and break the anticipation. I really wanted to do it, although I'm sure Cam really didn't want to see it. It definitely set the tempo."
- **Rivera** -- "They rushed him off the end a couple times and brought him under a couple of times. They rushed him inside, too. They also blitzed outside of him, so we had to change our protections. He's a special player."
- QB **Newton** -- "He was a very impactful player today."

Numbers you should know: **Peyton** and Eli Manning have combined for 72 points in two games at Bank of America Stadium this season. **Newton** has produced 82 in five games. ... The **Panthers** were 0 for 11 on third-down conversions. ... The **Panthers** threw to **Steve Smith** seven times. He caught one for 19 yards.

Injury update: **Broncos** -- DE **Elvis Dumervil** left in the first half with a shoulder injury and didn't return. ... WR **Demaryius Thomas** was shaken up right before halftime, but he returned for the start of the third quarter. ... **Panthers** -- LG **Amini Silatolu** suffered a cut on his leg and left the game in the third quarter. He returned in the fourth.

Going forward: **Broncos** -- Denver takes a four-game win streak home to face the Chargers, followed by a trip to Kansas City. The team is on a roll and can take a commanding lead in the AFC West by winning those two games. ... **Panthers** -- Carolina stays home for a game against Tampa -- a rematch of a season-opening loss. Carolina travels to Philadelphia and Kansas City after that for three straight winnable games.

Broncos' Elvis Dumervil faces uneasy wait for left shoulder MRI

Andrew Mason
CBSsports.com
November 11, 2012

Sunday night will be a nervous one for Broncos DE Elvis Dumervil.

After injuring his left shoulder early in Sunday's 36-14 win over the Panthers, the Pro Bowler sat out the last three quarters, looking on as his teammates continued to hound and harass Carolina QB Cam Newton into seven sacks, the most by the Broncos in nine years.

Dumervil will undergo an MRI on Monday morning.

"I tried to go out one more time, but it didn't feel as comfortable as I would have liked it to," Dumervil said. "I've played through some pain and injuries, but this one hurt pretty bad."

Dumervil had a sack and a forced fumble before the injury Sunday and now has seven sacks this season and 16.5 in the Broncos' last 16 regular-season games.

The shoulder is the same one he strained in the Broncos' season opener last year. As a result of that injury, he missed two games.

John Fox's return to Carolina yields a win -- and a game ball

Andrew mason
CBSSports.com
November 11, 2012

Not even thick cinderblock walls that separated the Broncos' locker room from the outside world could contain the roar from the players and coaches when John Fox was presented with the game ball Sunday afternoon following Denver's 36-14 stomping of the Panthers.

Fox had downplayed the significance of his return to Carolina all week, insisting that it was just another game, one of 16. He rattled off just about every coaching cliché in existence. But the players knew what it meant to him to win this game after an acrimonious exit from Carolina in 2010 following nine seasons that were dotted with success.

"When you spend a lot of time in one place -- especially nine years -- that's a long time in this league, and it's going to mean something to you," CB Champ Bailey said. "We know what it meant to him. He didn't preach it all week. I wasn't in his shoes, but I kind of understand what he's going through."

And if any players didn't, they got the sense of what it meant after the game, when Broncos owner Pat Bowlen gave Fox the ball.

"There was no question he deserved it," Bailey said.

Added Peyton Manning: "The players play hard for him ... I think they don't want to let him down. He is very fair to the players, and he gets us ready to play."

Sunday, they were capable of playing winning football, even if it was inelegant at times. Manning fumbled once and RB Willis McGahee fumbled twice, continuing a trend that has dogged the Broncos all season. WR Eric Decker dropped an easy catch on Denver's second series, and Panthers TE Greg Olsen got wide open three times on a possession for 46 yards, including a 4-yard touchdown.

The Broncos overcame those moments of discombobulation -- just like Fox did. Sunday marked the first time he'd even walked into the visitors' locker room; he spent nine seasons as Carolina's coach without going in there -- and at times, he found himself wanting to follow old habits and take his former route to the field, through the tunnel at the north corner of the stadium instead of the one that visiting teams use, in the west corner.

"It was odd leaving out of that tunnel," Fox said. "In fact, I kind of steered to the right by accident until I finally figured out I have to go the other way."

Broncos add to Newton's, Panthers' woes with 36-14 rout

Robert Klemko
USA Today
November 11, 2012

CHARLOTTE -- Wearing teal flip flops, a blue towel around his waist and another around his shoulders, Carolina Panthers veteran wide receiver Steve Smith sat beside second-year quarterback Cam Newton, leaned in and spoke into his ear.

In the minutes after a 36-14 loss at the hands of the visiting Denver Broncos, the 23-year-old Newton, who threw a pair of interceptions on the day, sat quietly in Carolina blue dress socks, red and black tights and an undershirt, listening for the majority of a 10-minute conversation.

Neither would share the details of their talk, more than a month after Smith, 10 years Newton's elder, said he "lit into" Newton on the sidelines in the midst of 36-7 loss to the New York Giants because the quarterback was pouting rather than putting on a brave face and participating.

Smith said then he didn't regret the conversation, but wished he hadn't told the media about it.

On Sunday, Smith wouldn't say a word to anyone but Newton. At this point, there's very little left to salvage in terms of the 2012 season. The Panthers are 2-7, and the only thing more surprising about this year in the NFL than the comeback of Broncos quarterback Peyton Manning has been the stark regression of Newton. He's now thrown more interceptions (10) than passing touchdowns (8) through nine games, a season after passing for 21 scores, rushing for 14 and earning rookie of the year honors.

After Smith and he spoke, Newton put back on the suit he wore into the stadium, hours before he had sprinted from the tunnel with arms outstretched like a plane, before two picks, seven sacks and yet another loss.

"It's very embarrassing," he said. "But hopefully things are going to change. I can't keep saying that and not holding up to it, but there are brighter days for the Carolina Panthers.

"Coach Rivera always asks, "Are you a person that looks through a window and points a finger, or are you a person that looks in the mirror?" I look in the mirror."

Newton blamed himself for the interceptions, and refused to put blame on a faltering offensive line, but didn't exactly bear all of the weight of the disappointment.

On a fourth quarter sack for a safety, Newton says he was expecting an outlet option that wasn't there.

"When I looked and no one was out there I either have to run the ball or throw it away," Newton explained. "That's very bad on my part, but those are things I have to get better at."

It's true that there are bigger problems in Carolina than Newton's play. The offensive line is missing all-pro center Ryan Kalil, and looked lost and overmatched for the entirety of Sunday's loss.

In his postgame press conference, Panthers coach Ron Rivera placed a chunk of the blame on the protection.

"If you aren't protecting the quarterback, he can't throw the ball," Rivera said. "There were a couple of times when we are sitting looking at guys wide open but unfortunately he didn't have the chance to get to his second and third reads."

Meanwhile, owner Jerry Richardson, who fired long-time general manager Marty Hurney on Oct. 22, is searching for a replacement.

It's not where Richardson envisioned the Panthers would be when they took Newton No. 1 overall in last year's draft. Ironically, Sunday's glory belonged to the man taken No. 2 in 2011 – Broncos linebacker Von Miller – who may win conference defensive player of the week with a dominant six-tackle (four for loss), one-sack performance.

Miller remembered an offseason public appearance when Newton stood over him during a Q&A panel and promised the Panthers would crush the Broncos when they played this season.

It ended up the other way around, and more than a few Broncos including Miller mimicked Newton's signature Superman celebration after sacking or intercepting him. Newton's Clark Kent-inspired, clothes-ripping move has been the subject of mockery often this season, with a local newspaper drawing up the quarterback ripping open his jersey to reveal not a Superman 'S', but a Hello Kitty logo.

Still, Miller says he respects Newton as a player and doesn't believe he will stay mired in this slump for long. He rejects the notion that NFL defenses have figured out the sophomore who began the season in the MVP conversation, and now languishes among the league's worst passers in rating and wins.

"He can do so many different things. He can throw the deep ball and he can throw the mid ball," Miller says. "You can't figure out a guy that is so versatile."

But the Broncos did, leaving Newton staring with one eye in the mirror and another downfield, with nobody out there.

D.J. Williams' return from ban gives Broncos options

Lindsay H. Jones
USA Today
November 12, 2012

For nine weeks, Denver Broncos linebacker D.J. Williams sat at home watching the Broncos from his couch, first in Miami, and more recently, in his home in the Denver suburbs, as the Broncos took control of the AFC West without him.

His ban is over.

Williams' nine-game suspension -- six games for a violation of the banned substance policy, and three for breaking the personal conduct policy -- ended after the Broncos' 36-14 win in Carolina.

But now that Williams is back, the Broncos have to figure out what to do with him.

Williams has been a full-time starter, and a three-down player, since the Broncos drafted him in the first round in 2004, and has led the Broncos in tackles in four of the last five seasons. Members of the Broncos staff view Williams as their most talented inside linebacker, and like his on-field leadership.

Yet it's not as simple as just sliding Williams back into the starting lineup. Who would the Broncos kick out?

Wesley Woodyard, Williams' replacement at weakside linebacker, has had double-digit tackles in four of the last five games, and even earned AFC defensive player of the week honors earlier this month. The Broncos are undefeated since veteran Keith Brooking replaced Joe Mays at middle linebacker (a position Williams has played in the past), and rookie Danny Trevathan is showing improvement in his role in the nickel defense, particularly when he's assigned to cover pass-catching tight ends.

"I think that's what people are trying to do -- turn it into me vs. [Woodyard], or that I'm coming after Brooking," Williams recently told USA TODAY Sports. "That's not the way it works. There are three linebackers on the field, could be four, some packages with five, some packages with just 1. There's room for everybody."

And then there's a matter of conditioning. The Broncos knew Williams would be suspended for at least six games when training camp began, so they went about the preseason without him. Williams attended all but one practice -- he was excused to attend his trial on drunken driving charges in August -- but participated little. He often did scout team work or stood alongside defensive coordinator Jack Del Rio while the players who would replace him practiced.

Williams did not play in any of the preseason games, so his first game this year will be his first real action since the Broncos' playoff loss in New England in early January. He has been allowed to attend meetings at Dove Valley over the last month (three weeks plus the Broncos' bye week) but has not been allowed to practice.

The Broncos, who don't have to make a roster move to bring Williams off the reserve-suspended list until later this week to return, will likely ease Williams back into action. Williams expects to see a reduced number of snaps in his first games back, perhaps as early as Sunday against San Diego.

"I would love to go out and play 75 snaps, but to be realistic, you never know," Williams said. "No guarantees, but I feel like I have the talent to get on the field. Whether it's the first week I'm back or the second week I'm back, I don't think I'll be sitting on the bench too much."

Von Miller does Cam Newton's Superman celebration after sacking him

Chris chase
USA Today
November 11, 2012

Just like he promised, Von Miller performed Cam Newton's Superman dance after sacking the Carolina Panthers quarterback in Sunday's game.

"That would be great," Miller told Lindsay Jones of USA TODAY Sports on Thursday afternoon. "I hope I get a chance to do it."

He didn't have to wait long. On Carolina's first series, Miller grabbed Newton for an eight-yard loss and immediately mimicked Newton's signature move.

Miller told Jones he wouldn't mean the dance as a sign of disrespect to the player who was drafted just ahead of him in the 2011 NFL draft. That's a great sentiment and exactly what Miller *should* say but how can mocking a player's signature dance while he lays under you on the turf be construed as anything *but* mocking?

Not that there's anything wrong with that. Players who have signature dances deserve to have them thrown back in their faces when they get schooled. It comes with the territory.

Von Miller, Peyton Manning shine in Broncos win

Gregg Rosenthal
NFL.com
November 11, 2012

You know things are going well for the Denver Broncos when Peyton Manning is an afterthought in a blowout win on the road.

Denver's defense manhandled Cam Newton and the Carolina offensive line in a convincing 36-14 victory over the Panthers. You can't pin this one on Carolina's defense.

Until a garbage time touchdown, Manning's offense actually only put up ten points. But Trindon Holliday had a controversial punt return touchdown, Broncos safety Tony Carter returned a Newton interception forty yards, and for a score Mike Adams recorded a safety.

Don't misread us: Manning was very, very good in this game. (301 yards and a score on 38 throws.) Von Miller just was better. Miller absolutely dominated play for a second straight game with a sack, four tackles for loss, and a quarterback hit. His pressure on Newton forced the pick six. When Elvis Dumervil left the game with a shoulder injury, Robert Ayers came on strong.

AFC foes have to be concerned that the Broncos have added another pass rusher. Their defense is legitimately a weapon.

Suddenly, the Broncos look as balanced as any team in the conference.

Broncos blow out Panthers

The Sports Xchange
November 11, 2012

CHARLOTTE, N.C. -- Denver Broncos coach John Fox had the right idea when he wanted to deflect attention upon returning to Bank of America Stadium to face his former employer.

He brought along Peyton Manning and a stifling defense.

In another efficient performance, Manning and the Broncos overwhelmed the Carolina Panthers in a 36-14 outcome Sunday afternoon.

Fox, who was coach of the Panthers for nine seasons (2002-10), saw his Broncos increase their winning streak to four games.

"Coach Fox was all business during the week," Manning said. "To win this game for (him and other staff members who had been here) was something we wanted to do."

The Panthers (2-7) have lost their last four home games.

Manning was 27 for 38 for 301 yards through the air. He completed 16 of his first 17 passes.

His Carolina counterpart endured another rough day. Cam Newton was sacked seven times, with the final one resulting in a fourth-quarter safety.

Until a fourth-quarter drive when he connected on six of seven throws, Newton had completed 12 of 24 passes for 160 yards, with one of his errant tosses returned for a touchdown. He was intercepted twice in the game.

Fox, who turned 57 years old three days earlier, returned to the city where he still has a home, but he was a bit unfamiliar with the stadium accommodations.

"It's strange," he said. "I've never been in this visitors' locker room prior to even coming here as a head coach. ... But it was great getting back. I have a home here that we had in our tenure here so it was nice to get home and sleep in my bed."

He should sleep good again after the Broncos' performance. He ended up with the game ball as well.

Denver receiver Demaryius Thomas caught 11 passes for 135 yards, including a 46-yard grab to set up the last touchdown. That play was the longest from scrimmage for either team.

The Broncos (6-3) went ahead on the first play of the second quarter on Trindon Holliday's 76-yard punt return, breaking a 7-7 tie.

"With an explosive play in the game, it changes the momentum at that point," Fox said.

Denver's offense went almost 43 minutes between touchdowns, yet the lead kept growing.

"I'm in favor of anytime anybody on the team wants to score a touchdown, I'm for it," Manning said.

Matt Prater's 53-yard field goal made it 17-7, but he missed from 43 yards out with less than 2 minutes to play in the first half. The impact was minimized when Panthers kicker Justin Medlock missed from 43 yards away with 40 seconds left before halftime.

Turnovers on back-to-back plays in the third quarter resulted in a Denver touchdown when cornerback Tony Carter returned Newton's pass 40 yards after an interception. On the previous play, Carolina defensive end Charles Johnson stripped Manning, causing a fumble.

"I challenge myself to be better," Newton said. "Offensively, we have to hone in and be more focused. ... There will be better days for the Carolina Panthers."

Two of the Denver sacks were credited to defensive tackle Kevin Vickerson. The pressure on Newton made for stress-free moments in the Broncos secondary.

"They did what I expected," cornerback Champ Bailey said of the defensive front. "It doesn't surprise me. I know how hungry they are to get to the quarterback."

Considering that Denver's defense and special teams accounted for 16 points, the Panthers were relatively pleased with their defensive performance.

"We want those guys to believe in the offense," said offensive tackle Jordan Gross. "Right now, we're not doing it."

Prater's 27-yard field goal with 14:17 remaining extended the Broncos' lead to 27-7.

Manning's 10-yard touchdown pass to Brandon Stokley gave Denver its first points. It was the 420th career touchdown pass for Manning, matching him with Dan Marino for second-most in NFL history behind only Brett Favre.

"Dan Marino, after my dad retired, was my favorite quarterback growing up," Manning said.

The Panthers opened the scoring when Newton connected with tight end Greg Olsen on a 4-yard touchdown pass on the team's second possession. It was Olsen's third reception (for 46 yards) on the six-play, 77-yard drive.

Olsen, who finished with 10 catches for 102 yards, caught a 5-yard fourth-quarter touchdown pass from Newton. That drive also covered 77 yards, though it took 10 plays.

The Broncos sealed the outcome on rookie running back Ronnie Hillman's first career touchdown. It came on a 5-yard run with 3:23 remaining.

Notes: Broncos LB Von Miller followed through on a game-week wish by going with a "Superman" pose upon sacking Newton. Newton has made the "Superman" routine popular upon scoring touchdowns. Newton was the No. 1 overall draft selection in 2011 and Miller was No. 2 overall. ... Broncos DE Elvis Dumervil suffered a shoulder injury that will be evaluated, with Fox calling that the only significant ailment from the game after initial reports. ... CB Chris Harris was in the Broncos starting lineup in place of CB Tracy Porter. ... The Panthers were in monochromatic black uniforms, donning black pants and black jerseys for the first time in franchise history. ... Carolina has lost the coin toss in its first nine games. ... Punters had a noteworthy day, with Broncos P Britton Colquitt's first-quarter boots going 60 and 52 yards and a 57-yard effort in the fourth quarter. Panthers P Brad Nortman provided a 57-yarder in the first quarter, then launched a 59-yarder on the first play of the second quarter, with Holliday making the touchdown return. ... It was only Denver's second visit to Charlotte all-time, and the Broncos have won three of four meetings overall.

KLEE: Fox's homecoming sweeter than Carolina tea

Paul Klee
Colorado Springs Gazette
November 11, 2012

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – Now John Fox could let it all hang out.

The best stuff — the *real* stuff — happens when there are no cameras around. There's no company line to toe, no feelings to worry about hurting, no right thing to say.

It was roughly 45 minutes after Fox's Broncos bum-rushed the Carolina Panthers 36-14 Sunday. I counted 16 family members hugging and kissing their brother, husband and dad.

This scene, deep in the concrete underbelly of Bank of America Stadium, told a different story than Fox's weeklong message of "this is a business trip."

It turned into more pleasure than business. Fox's new team delivered a backyard beatdown of his former team — in his old backyard.

Good thing he's able to chomp gum and smile at the same time.

"Nice to have you back," a security guard told him.

"Nice to be back," Fox countered.

On his homecoming, Fox was king. His Broncos played the Panthers like jesters.

"It was odd leaving out of that (visitors) tunnel," Fox said after the Broncos won their fourth straight game. "I've been through the other one a bunch of times."

One hundred-fifty two, at least. His record in his first eight seasons as the coach at Carolina: 76-60. He was fired after his ninth.

I'll speak for the people of Colorado: Thanks, Panthers. Love that Southern hospitality.

In 22 months as Broncos coach, Fox's staff has brought stability to a reeling franchise (bye Josh McDaniels), overhauled an offense (twice), built a Super Bowl-caliber defense (seven sacks, a safety and another pick-six Sunday), survived a circus (Tim Tebow's) and helped convince Peyton Manning that Denver's a swell place to start a pizza empire.

"I certainly knew all of the head coaches of the teams I was looking at," said Manning, who tied Dan Marino for the second-most career TD passes (420) and third-most wins by a starting quarterback (147).

"I enjoy being around coach Fox," Manning added. "I think the players play hard for him. I think they all want to not let him down. He's very fair to the players. He gets us ready to play. As a result I think the players all decide they want to play well for him."

With San Diego's loss Sunday, Denver holds a two-game lead in the AFC West. Fox has the Broncos staring down back-to-back divisional titles for the first time since 1987.

Fox would tell you, with wild hand gestures and between sticks of gum, the players are responsible.

It says here Fox deserves more than the game ball he earned from owner Pat Bowlen in the Broncos locker room. He deserves more credit.

Flexibility is a rare quality within the ego-driven coaching fraternity. Old-school basketball coaches consider zone another kind of four-letter word. Baseball managers say you don't pitch to Barry Bonds with a base open, under any circumstances.

Fox has shown he's not too proud to adjust. He had a quarterback who bounced as many passes as he completed. So Fox brought back the read-option. Denver made the playoffs.

Now he has a 36-year-old Hall of Fame quarterback who looks 28 again. Manning threw for 301 yards Sunday and has eclipsed 300 in six of his past seven games. If Manning's upright, Denver will make the playoffs.

"We knew (the importance of Fox's return to Carolina)," said Von Miller, the 2011 No. 2 pick who wrecked No. 1 Cam Newton. "It didn't have to be talked about it."

"He wouldn't talk about it," Champ Bailey said. "He didn't want to preach about it or do anything special. But we all knew."

Fox isn't perfect. He waited too long to put Tebow under center. In the 2012 draft the Broncos passed on Doug Martin, an every-down back who looks like a star in Tampa Bay. He hasn't come close to solving New England's no-huddle offense.

His critics in Carolina say his system was too conservative, outdated and, yes, boring.

Fox's Broncos won a playoff game against the Steelers in his first season. They've scored at least 31 points in six wins in his second season. Denver scored a special-

teams touchdown for the second straight week and has 11 non-offensive TDs in Fox's 25 games. The defense held a team without a third-down conversion for the first time since 2000 (Carolina: 0-for-12).

If this is boring, pull the curtains and let's all take a snooze together.

"If you're doing it in all three phases, that's how you win games," Bailey said. "That's how you get 30-something points."

Fox still owns a home in Charlotte. He slept in his own bed Friday night.

"I think the guys kind of knew what this was going to be like for me," Fox said of receiving the game ball. "And it was very generous and very well thought of."

In Denver, his new home, Fox is making sweet dreams.

Fowler: Broncos make Panthers QB Cam Newton look just average

Scott Folwer
The Charlotte Observer
November 11, 2012

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — One word to describe Cam Newton on Sunday in the Broncos' 36-14 obliteration of the Carolina Panthers?

Scary.

Not scary good. Scary as in: "Cam is lucky he got out of that game without getting hurt."

The Panthers' horrendously overmatched offensive line allowed Newton to get sacked seven times and to get hit maybe a dozen more.

Newton spent the game with Denver linebacker Von Miller surgically attached.

But it wasn't scary only in that way. It was also scary as in: "Is that really all Newton has?"

For Newton was something on Sunday that he is rarely described as: average.

Yes, he had very little time. But even when he had time, too often No. 1 missed his No. 1 receiver. Steve Smith was targeted seven times and caught one pass, and that's not because Smith was dropping them. That's because Newton was throwing them 6 feet over Smith's head.

The only people doing the "Superman" thing on the Panthers' home field Sunday were Broncos openly mocking Newton. Miller did "Superman" it right after his first sack. Denver cornerback Tony Carter did it after he returned an interception 40 yards for a touchdown.

On the interception, Newton had Miller attached to him once again. But Newton was trying to make a very dangerous sideline throw while falling down, and that wasn't smart. Newton said he should have slung the ball out of bounds.

"I've got to be more mature, knowing that it's better to be second-and-10 instead of a pick six," Newton said.

On another play, Newton was sacked for a rare safety when he held onto the ball too long — not helped by the fact that an unnamed Panther he planned to use as his checkdown stayed in blocking and never got out on the route.

Still, another poor decision not to throw the ball away.

It was impossible not to compare the two quarterbacks on the field. Newton suffers in a comparison to Peyton Manning, as just about anyone would. Manning — with more time, more experience and more touch — threw for 301 yards even though the Panthers got decent pressure against him.

Newton, on the other hand, went 0-for-12 on third-down conversions. He threw for 241 yards and two touchdowns, but he also had two interceptions and little luck finding anyone downfield except tight end Greg Olsen. Newton also couldn't get loose on a single scramble (four runs, 7 yards).

Newton and Smith had a long, quiet talk in the locker room after the game, sitting side by side with Smith doing most of the talking.

Smith wouldn't comment after the game about anything, and Newton characterized their conversation this way: "Me and Steve always talk. We're a team. We're just going through a tough time. We've got to just keep fighting."

Newton called his inability to connect with Smith "frustrating."

"We've got to get him the football," Newton said. "Whether it's my fault, whether it's the plays, the reads ... it has to be a conscientious thought on each and every drive."

Newton tried hard not to blame his troubles on anyone other than himself Sunday. He said of his offensive line: "I'm not thrashing them. I don't expect anyone to thrash them."

He quoted his head coach, saying: "Coach Rivera always asks, 'Are you a person that looks through a window and points a finger at someone or are you a person that looks in the mirror?' I look in the mirror."

What does Newton see in that mirror right now? A player who simply isn't as effective as he was in his rookie year.

Now a lot of that is because of an offensive line that wasn't that great to begin with and got far worse when Pro Bowl center Ryan Kalil was lost for the year (my first choice for the Panthers' high pick in the 2013 draft would be an offensive lineman).

But Newton also just isn't playing that well. Right now, he is average.

And for a team that wants to commit to building the franchise around Newton, that's very scary.

Panthers can't stem the tide of Broncos' sack-happy pass rush

Jonathan Jones
The Charlotte Observer
November 11, 2012

CHARLOTTE, n.c. — Von Miller exited the humid visitors' locker room into the tunnel to the team bus, took off his thick-rimmed glasses and wiped sweat from his brow.

It could have been the first time the Broncos linebacker broke a sweat Sunday.

Miller led the Broncos with one sack and four tackles for loss, some of them coming through the line virtually untouched, as Denver's front seven torched the Carolina offensive line.

Quarterback Cam Newton was sacked seven times and hit many more, making the Carolina passing game ineffective.

"Everyone took their turn looking pretty bad," Panthers offensive tackle Jordan Gross said. "We wanted to run the ball against them, and we didn't run against them for very many yards. We got behind, so we had to throw the ball, and they have a good pass rush, as everyone knows, and it showed today."

The most sacks Carolina had allowed in a game all season?

Four against Seattle. Denver had five in the second half.

The onslaught started early. On the game's fifth play, Miller sacked Newton for a loss of 6 yards on third down, then struck Newton's Superman pose.

"I had it planned," Miller said. "That gave our defense a momentum boost. It was entertaining football today."

Panthers coach Ron Rivera said his staff tried to change protections, but the Broncos stayed one step ahead. They got to Newton repeatedly even without top defensive lineman Elvis Dumervil in the lineup. Dumervil left early with a shoulder injury.

"We've got to do a better job," tight end Greg Olsen said. "That's everybody. That's receivers, tight ends, the backs chipping, protection. It's very easy to say it's the five O-line but it's not. It's a lot of guys that go into sacks, and we've got to get that corrected."

Denver held Carolina to 52 yards rushing, the team's second-worst rushing performance this season. The Broncos also sacked Newton for a safety and almost

got to running back DeAngelo Williams in time for another one. On several occasions Sunday, Carolina receivers would run their routes, look for the ball and find their quarterback on the ground with a Denver defender dancing over him.

"All week on film we looked at this team as a team we can beat when they go to 1-on-1 coverage," receiver Brandon LaFell said. "For the most part we were getting open. But at the end of the day a good route is nothing without the ball."

Broncos' Fox finds his way to homecoming victory

Ron Green Jr.
Charlotte Observer
November 11, 2012

In all his years in and out of Bank of America Stadium, first as a New York Giants assistant coach and then nine seasons as the Panthers' head coach, John Fox couldn't remember being in the visitor's locker room until he went there Sunday.

Little wonder Fox almost went the wrong way when he left the locker room before the game, turning toward the tunnel the Panthers' use to access the field. He caught himself and went the other way, to coach what became a dominating 36-14 Denver victory.

When Fox returned to the visitor's locker room late in the afternoon, his players acknowledged what the victory meant by giving their coach a game ball.

"I made sure and told him I was glad we could get this one for him," defensive back and captain Champ Bailey said.

On a conference call with Charlotte-area media Wednesday, Fox said he would treat his return to Charlotte like a business trip.

That's what he did, his players said.

He didn't make it personal. He didn't use it as a motivation. It wasn't necessary.

"It wasn't brought up much but we've got a great guy here. We knew," said second-year linebacker Von Miller, who tortured the Panthers' offensive line.

"It didn't have to be talked about. We just prepared like any other week and we let it come down to Sunday.

"We definitely wanted to get it done for coach Fox. (There were) a lot of motivating factors that helped us play this game. Coach Fox was the biggest one. To be able to come back and get the win for coach Fox and the rest of the guys who came from here is great."

After the game, Fox tried to downplay the personal satisfaction that came with the lopsided victory, but his body language gave him away. Wearing an orange cap and a white shirt over a blue one with Broncos written across the chest, Fox gently bounced during his postgame media session.

It was in stark contrast to the weariness he showed in his final season with the Panthers, a 2-14 debacle.

He talked about seeing his sons, who still live in the sprawling house he built at Quail Hollow Club when he was coaching here.

Fox said, "It was nice to get home and sleep in my bed Friday night. It was good."

Peyton Manning, who picked apart the Panthers for 301 passing yards, had been through a similar scenario. He was part of an Indianapolis Colts team that went to Tampa Bay with coach Tony Dungy after he had coached the Buccaneers.

Manning led the Colts to a victory for Dungy, and the Broncos on Sunday for Fox.

"Coach Fox was all business during the week," Manning said. "I can't speak to what this really means to him.

"You like to win a game for those guys but those guys are professional. We know they have great memories of their time here. To win this game for them is something the players wanted to do."

Bailey, like Manning, has been in the league for more than a decade and sensed how much Fox wanted to fly home Sunday night with a victory. That's why the decision was made by the players to give him a game ball.

"He's one of those guys who doesn't want a lot of credit. He deserves it. This was big for him. I know it was," Bailey said.

"We kind of did (the game ball) because we knew what it meant to him. He didn't say a word about it."

When the game ended, Fox crossed the field and hugged Panthers linebacker Thomas Davis, then he met his successor, Ron Rivera, near midfield for a brief moment.

"It's hard before the game," Fox said. "There's a lot of people here I have fond feelings about and players on the other side so you try not to see them too much before the game. After the game it was nice to see a lot of those faces.

"You just feel good to win."

He's not the John Fox that Carolina Panthers fans remember

Tom Sorensen
The Charlotte Observer
November 11, 2012

Every week, the head coach of Carolina's next opponent participates in a teleconference with the writers and broadcasters who cover the Panthers.

John Fox, who will bring his Denver Broncos to Bank of America Stadium Sunday, talked Wednesday.

I asked if memories from the nine seasons he coached the Panthers are more good or bad

"I tend to approach things as the glass half full," said Fox, 57. "We did get to the Super Bowl and we got to a couple championship games, had three playoff appearances, so by most people's calculations that's pretty good."

A little defensive, but the answer probably was the most candid Fox offered. Even though he knows many of us, he never said hello, never asked how we were doing and never said anything that implied we had met.

Fox's performance was outstanding. He gets in character before he speaks, and the character is decidedly dull and boring.

If all you know about Fox was his news conference persona, you don't know the man. Compare the news conference Fox with the Fox I encountered in Auburn, Ala., at Cam Newton's 2011 Pro Day. I tapped Fox on the shoulder to say hello, and he hugged me and asked, "Do you know John?"

No. But I've heard of him.

Fox introduced me to John Elway, the legendary Denver Broncos quarterback who is the team's executive vice president of football operations. Two weeks after Fox coached his final game for the Panthers, a 21-point loss to Atlanta, Elway hired him.

I was tucked behind a newspaper – ours if you must know – one morning in a coffee shop and Fox snuck up and yelled. I can't remember what he yelled, only that it was not, "It is what it is." Only time in my life I cheated gravity like David Thompson.

Fox is a fan of Bono, from U2, and was thrilled to meet him backstage when Fox was defensive coordinator for the New York Giants.

After I wrote a 2009 column about a bout I had with cancer, Fox approached me at training camp, and several times asked if I was all right. He said he had not planned to read the story because it wasn't about the Panthers, but did anyway.

Look: In our business we often write and talk about people as if they are one thing, as if they lead their lives in a straight line.

But they're much more complex.

Yes, Fox loved defense, handoffs and draw plays. He had a relationship with draw plays. I keep waiting for him to tell Peyton Manning that on third-and-12 he has to give the ball to a fullback.

Fans of the Panthers blamed offensive coordinators for Carolina's run-based offense. The coordinators were following orders. Fox gave them a picture of what he wanted and they stayed within the lines.

Yet under Fox, Steve Smith led the league in receiving yards in 2005 and caught passes for more than 1,000 yards in four straight seasons. Quarterback Jake Delhomme made the Pro Bowl after the 2005 season, and it wasn't for the quality of his hand-offs.

Panthers fans tired of the run-based offense except when it worked. Last season they loved the more creative offense the Panthers employed under coordinator Rob Chudzinski. When it stopped working this season they complained about the absence of conventional hand-offs.

Fox no longer coaches Carolina for several reasons, among them was that he failed to win in consecutive seasons. No Panthers coach has.

Not what Richardson wants

Jerry Richardson, who owns the Panthers, wanted (and wants) a winning program, not a team that occasionally has a winning season. Richardson didn't fire Fox. He didn't renew Fox's contract.

Fox suspected, and maybe even knew, he was out after 2008. Carolina won 12 games that season and earned a first-round bye before getting pounded at home 33-13 by Arizona in a divisional playoff game.

Fox expected a contract extension. He didn't get it.

The Panthers went 8-8 in 2009. If Richardson decided then that Fox was a temp, he should have fired him.

But a lockout was looming after the 2010 season. The labor impasse between owners and players had the potential to be lengthy and expensive. When money stopped coming in Richardson did not want to lay off large numbers of non-football employees such as sales representatives, landscapers and security guards.

His coaching staff was one of the league's highest paid. Rather than fire them, and have to pay them, Richardson retained them.

I had heard from sources that the 2010 season would be Fox's last with Carolina. I was able to get Fox alone four days before the Panthers opened against the New York Giants and asked what the odds were of him returning in 2011.

Fox gave me one of the most succinct and pointed quotes of all time. Although the conversation was off the record, I told him he should let me use the quote. Nobody will think you're boring, I said.

He held me to our deal.

I wrote on opening day that Fox was out. Readers were furious at me. Then the Panthers lost their first five games. Then they were furious at Fox.

A strange team

Fox left the Panthers with a record of 78-74. Before 2010, his record was 76-60.

The 2010 Panthers were as strange a team as I have encountered. In previous drafts the choices were made jointly by Fox and general manager Marty Hurney, whom Richardson fired last month.

But Fox had little or no influence on the 2010 draft. The Panthers had hoped that rookies would get playing time. But Fox never did like to use rookies, and played quarterback Jimmy Clausen, that year's second-round pick, only because he had no alternative after Matt Moore was hurt.

The most bizarre game in franchise history might have been a 37-13 loss to Baltimore that November.

It was bizarre because, with Clausen and Moore injured, Fox entrusted his offense to veteran quarterback Brian St. Pierre.

A week earlier Pierre, whose NFL career had consisted of backing up back-ups, was changing diapers in suburban Boston. Five days after joining Carolina's practice squad, Fox started him over Tony Pike, a rookie who had been with the team since training camp.

St. Pierre had his moment, an 88-yard touchdown pass to David Gettis that cut Baltimore's lead to 20-13. St. Pierre, who did not mimic Superman, has not been heard from since.

Wearing out

As the season wore on Fox's relationships with Richardson and Hurney, especially with Richardson, wore out.

It happens. Coach Jeff Fisher wore out after 16 seasons with the Tennessee Titans. Coach Andy Reid is wearing out after 15 seasons in Philadelphia. Fox wore out in Carolina.

But let's be fair. When Fox was hired in 2002, he took over a dismal team that had gone 1-15 under George Seifert. Fox introduced himself to players by telling them they were soft. The Panthers drafted defensive end Julius Peppers and went 7-9 in Fox's first season.

Fox pulled players aside on the field to show them a technique or offer a suggestion or tell a joke. That never happened under Seifert, and players were thrilled to have a coach who cared about them. Fox had a defensive background and was especially close to defensive players.

Although Fox led the Panthers to the Super Bowl after the 2003 season, his best work was in 2005. No way was Carolina the second best team in the NFC. Yet the Panthers won playoff road games against the Giants (23-0) and Chicago (29-21) before going to Seattle, where reality intruded and the Seahawks won 34-14.

Fox liked life. He liked to have a good time. He also liked himself. People told him he was a great coach, and I suspect he believed them.

In Fox's teleconference Wednesday he called the Denver-Carolina game a business trip.

What he didn't say is that he'd love his business to include beating the Panthers by 30.

He couldn't.

It would have been interesting.

Column: A win it is for John Fox

Richard Walker
Shelby Star
November 11, 2012

CHARLOTTE — How important was Sunday's game to the Denver Broncos?

So important that after their 36-14 win over the Carolina Panthers, Broncos players gave head coach John Fox the game ball.

Fox, as you probably recall, remains the Panthers' winningest coach and the only coach to guide Carolina to a Super Bowl.

How did the usually unemotional coach handle his new team's gesture?

"This game's fun when you win," said Fox, who led Denver to an AFC West title last season and with a 6-3 record is positioned to repeat this year. "Obviously, any time you get a win on the road, it's doubly tough. You know, the guys kinda knew what this was going to be like for me and were very generous, and it's very well thought of on my part."

Clearly, Fox, who still has a home at Quail Hollow Golf Club, wanted to beat his former team — and former owner Jerry Richardson — after the hellish way his nine-year tenure ended with the Panthers.

Just as importantly, Fox wanted to visit family and friends — so much so that he came to Charlotte on Friday.

"My sons are still out here going to school," Fox said. "So it was neat to see family. We came out Friday, so I was able to see them. I have a home that I had from my tenure here. So it was nice to get home and sleep in my bed Friday night."

Once here, Fox said he had to learn his way around Bank of America Stadium — at least from the visitor's locker room.

"It was odd leaving that tunnel," Fox said of the visitors' tunnel located closer to Morehead Street. "I've been through the other a bunch of times. In fact, I kinda steered to the right by accident before I figured it out.

"It's hard before a game. There's a lot of people here that I have fond feelings about and players on the other side. But, after the game, it was nice to see a lot of those faces."

Nineteen current Panthers played for Fox. That includes wide receiver Steve Smith, offensive tackle Jordan Gross and running backs DeAngelo Williams and Jonathan Stewart among others.

That no doubt helped Fox prepare for this week's victory, which put Denver comfortably atop the AFC West standings.

"This is the most fun three hours of a head coach's work week," Fox said. "We do a lot of other things in preparation for games. But that three hours is really why you do it."

And just in case you were wondering, there was no "It is what is" from Fox after Sunday's win — or his most memorable quote from his nine-year tenure in Charlotte.

Of course, after the way his new team dismantled his old team, there was no need. Because it was what it was.

Elvis Dumervil to have MRI tomorrow on shoulder

Darin Gantt
ProFootballTalk.com
November 11, 2012

For all the good things that happened this weekend in Charlotte for the Broncos, they won't be able to enjoy them fully until they hear the results of tomorrow's medical tests.

Defensive end Elvis Dumervil said he was having an MRI Monday morning on the left shoulder injury that knocked him out of the game.

"You have to stay confident, man," Dumervil said, via Mike Klis of the *Denver Post*.

"It's hard to pinpoint what happened at what particular time. We'll know (Monday) morning and see what happens."

Dumervil said he felt a strain, but said "nothing popped," on the back of his left shoulder. He came back for one snap, but wasn't able to continue.

Happy homecoming for Fox; Broncos bash Panthers

Darin Gantt
ProFootballTalk.com
November 11, 2012

Former Panthers coach John Fox got his moment in the sun, and the Broncos improved to 6-3, shutting down the Panthers 36-14.

Broncos quarterback Peyton Manning threw for 301 yards and a touchdown, but this one was mostly about the Panthers problems on offense and special teams, which didn't give them a chance to win.

The Panthers actually played competitively on defense, forcing a pair of turnovers.

But they allowed huge plays in the other two phases, eliminating any slim chance they had.

After a Charles Johnson sack-strip gave them the ball, Panthers quarterback Cam Newton threw an egregious pick-six on first down while being tripped, making it 24-7 in the third quarter. They also allowed a punt return for a touchdown.

Newton was 21-of-36 for 241 yards, with two touchdowns and two interceptions, and the Panthers ran for just 52 yards, hitting the wall in the first quarter. When they did make a play, it was undone quickly, such as a 62-yard run by Jonathan Stewart negated by a holding penalty.

The Panthers protection was awful. Left tackle Jordan Gross is the only lineman to play every snap in the spot he started the season on the line, and Gross struggled along with the rest of his odd lot of linemates.

The Broncos were only too happy to accept, but Von Miller played the kind of disruptive game that has the Broncos all too happy the Panthers took Newton first overall in 2011.

Broncos lead at halftime, but Dumervil injured

Darin Gantt
ProFootballTalk.com
November 11, 2012

The Broncos are holding a 17-7 halftime lead over the Panthers, and they're also holding their breath.

Defensive end Elvis Dumervil left the game with a shoulder injury, and after trying to come back for one play, returned to the sidelines.

The official announcement is that he's questionable to return.

Dumervil was hurt on a sack-strip play, when he fell awkwardly after getting caught in a pile.

Manning ties Marino, Broncos get a gift

Darin Gantt
ProFootballTalk.com
November 11, 2012

The Broncos are up 17-7 over the Panthers in the second quarter, but they may have benefitted from one score that shouldn't have been.

At the end of his 76-yard punt return for a touchdown, Broncos return man Trindon Holliday flipped the ball casually to the ground. Only problem? He didn't appear to have crossed the goal line yet.

That would have given the Panthers a touchback, instead of a touchdown deficit, which was just stretched to 10 on Matt Prater's 53-yard field goal.

Broncos quarterback Peyton Manning tied the game previously, hitting a wide open Brandon Stokley for his 420th career touchdown pass, tying Dan Marino for second on the all-time list.

Panthers take early lead on Broncos

Darin Gantt
ProFootballTalk.com
November 11, 2012

The Panthers pulled an old college trick, and surprised the team with all-black uniforms today.

It worked early on, as they drove 77 yards for a quick touchdown, with Cam Newton hitting a ridiculously open Greg Olsen for a 4-yard touchdown.

Olsen has three catches for 46 yards already, as they're looking his way often.

And as much as the players enjoy their new uniforms, the locals are enjoying the lead on their former coach John Fox.

D.J. Williams returns on Monday

Mike Florio
ProFootballTalk.com
November 11, 2012

Broncos linebacker D.J. Williams, the team's first-round pick in 2004, has served a six-game suspension for violating the league's policy on performance-enhancing substances via the alleged production of a non-human urine specimen. Today, he serves the third and final game of a suspension for a drunk-driving arrest.

On Monday, D.J. Williams rejoins the team.

Mike Klis of the *Denver Post* reports that Williams returns with a restructured contract. Originally due to earn \$5 million this year and \$6 million in 2013, Klis reports that Williams will now get even less than the \$2.07 million he was due to make under the prorated deal.

It's expected that Williams will spend the first week or two getting back into shape. Since the Broncos have been thriving without him (thanks to the latest Papa John's franchisee), anything Williams can do for the team down the stretch will be regarded as a bonus.

Touchdowns All Around

Gray Caldwell
DenverBroncos.com
November 11, 2012

On Sunday, the Broncos got touchdowns from the offense, defense and special teams in a 36-14 win against the Carolina Panthers, Denver's fourth consecutive victory.

CHARLOTTE -- With a chance to get his team back in the game late in the third quarter, Carolina quarterback Cam Newton took a shotgun snap, ready to take off on a designed run.

Before he could even take a step forward, linebacker Von Miller sent the 6-foot-5, 245-pound quarterback flying onto his back for a 4-yard loss, forcing a punt.

Sunday at Bank of America Stadium, it was that type of defensive effort that made sure a potent Panthers offense never got rolling in a 36-14 Broncos victory, Denver's fourth in a row.

"It's an explosive offense, you have a pretty good stable of backs there, you have a quarterback that has unique abilities, so we knew it was going to be tough coming in," said Head Coach John Fox, who coached in Carolina for nine seasons. "I thought all-in-all our defensive staff did a terrific job."

The defense didn't allow the Panthers to convert a single one of their 12 third downs, sacked Newton seven times, picked him twice and held Carolina to just 250 total yards. The unit forced seven three-and-outs, including four drives in which the Panthers actually lost yardage.

"Our defense was outstanding today," said quarterback Peyton Manning, who tied Dan Marino with his 420th touchdown pass and 147th career win Sunday. "It was fun to watch."

Most importantly, the defense accounted for two scores of its own, thanks to a 40-yard interception return for a touchdown by cornerback Tony Carter and a safety on a sack by safety Mike Adams.

"I think there was definitely a heightened urgency," defensive end Derek Wolfe said. "Their quarterback is a great player. When their quarterback is one of their better players, you have to get after him, and we definitely did that."

Meanwhile, Denver's special teams held up its end of the bargain, as well.

Returner Trindon Holliday averaged more than 15 yards per punt return, giving the Broncos excellent field position all afternoon. Denver started nine drives at its own 30-yard line or better, including four that started past the 40.

Holliday also found the end zone himself, racing 76 yards down the sideline for his second return touchdown of the year.

"It feels great to be able to come back and do it back-to-back games," Holliday said. "My guys did a great job blocking for me. I just caught the ball, saw the guys blocking for me to the right, saw the hole and just hit it."

As Denver found so many alternative ways to score, the offense chipped in just two touchdowns in the rout -- a 10-yard pass from Manning to wide receiver Brandon Stokley on a misdirection play in the first quarter and a 5-yard run by Ronnie Hillman late in the fourth.

Two field goals courtesy of Matt Prater closed out the scoring.

"We don't rely on just one guy, or offense or defense or special teams -- touchdowns can come from anywhere," Miller said. "You never know how Sunday's going to go, you've just got to go out there and play football. That's what we did."

Carolina's points came on the club's second drive -- a 4-yard pass from Newton to tight end Greg Olsen -- and second-to-last drive -- a 5-yard Newton-to-Olsen touchdown.

The win moved the Broncos to 6-3 and earned Fox a game ball in the locker room afterward.

"Any time a player or coach comes back to a place that they used to work, you want to win for that person," Stokley said. "I think everybody in the locker room really wanted to win for Coach and the other coaches that were here. So it was nice to do that."

Miller Time

Stuart Zaas
DenverBroncos.com
November 11, 2012

Broncos linebacker Von Miller sacked Panthers quarterback Cam Newton on Carolina's opening drive and finished the game with four tackles for a loss and a forced fumble.

CHARLOTTE – On the Panthers' first series of the game, quarterback Cam Newton dropped back on third down and saw nothing but linebacker Von Miller charging at him.

Earlier in the week, Miller talked about doing Newton's Superman celebration if he were able to get to the quarterback. Five plays into the game, he was doing just that.

Miller sacked Newton for a 6-yard loss and set the tone for a game in which the Broncos' pass rush made itself at home in the Panthers' backfield.

"It was great, especially to get it that early and break the anticipation," Miller said. "You can talk about something and there's so much anticipation. To go out there and get it done pretty quick, I think that's great. Especially for our defense. We've got a lot of crazy guys on defense. When you can go out and show some excitement early, that really got us going."

Denver sacked Newton a season-high seven times, which represents the most for the club since the 2003 season. Miller's first-quarter sack gave him 10 on the season, becoming one of just 11 players to reach double-digit sacks totals in each of his first two years.

Miller finished second on the team with six tackles – four of which were behind the line of scrimmage – and one forced fumble.

"I played him in the Pro Bowl," said Miller, who was selected No. 2 overall by the Broncos in the 2011 draft – one spot behind Newton. "I've seen how big he is. Everything about Super Cam, I think we were prepared on it. He can run the ball pretty good, he can throw the ball pretty good, he can shed defenders and he makes great decisions. I think he showed that today, but we were able to make a couple more plays and come out with the win."

Even when the rushers couldn't bring down Newton, they affected his comfort level in the pocket. The second-year quarterback was hit an additional seven times during the game, hampering his ability to throw accurate passes.

The secondary capitalized on the pass rush with seven pass breakups, including Tony Carter's 40-yard interception return for a touchdown – a play in which Miller's pressure forced Newton to underthrow the intended target.

"Definitely, when the pass rush is on, it makes it a lot easier in the secondary," Carter said. "The quarterback has a play clock in his head and the DBs have a play clock in their mind. And we know one it hits a certain time, either that ball's got to come out or we're getting a sack. Glad to have those guys on my team."

Despite losing Pro-Bowl defensive end Elvis Dumervil to a shoulder injury at the end of the first quarter, defensive end Robert Ayers stepped in and the Broncos front four kept on coming.

Pressure up front and tight coverage from the secondary had the Panthers on their heels all game. Carolina's leading receiver entering the game, Steve Smith, was held to just one catch for 19 yards, despite being targeted seven times.

"Our guys up front, Von, he was on a mission, and when we lost Elvis, Robert Ayers came in and did the same thing," cornerback Champ Bailey said. "It's what I expect from those guys and it doesn't surprise me that we did that."

The front line and secondary came together to complement one other on the Broncos' punctuation mark, a fourth-quarter safety that gave Denver a 29-7 lead.

Defensive Coordinator Jack Del Rio dialed up pressure and safety Mike Adams ended up winning the race to the quarterback in the end zone for his fifth career sack and first since the 2010 season.

"I think it started in practice," Miller said of the team's defensive effort. "We had a great week of preparation, just like the weeks before. It was hard to get some practice against the type of offense they can run, but overall I think we did pretty well this week and I think it showed in the game."

After earning the league's Defensive Rookie of the Year Award a year ago, Miller has emerged as an every-down linebacker who can do more than just rush the passer.

He now leads the NFL with 21 tackles for a loss on the season – an average of more than two per game.

On the season, he has made 39 tackles with more than half coming for losses.

Four of Miller's six tackles on Sunday came behind the line of scrimmage and resulted in a total loss of 24 yards for the Panthers.

"He was in beast mode today," said defensive tackle Kevin Vickerson, who finished with a career-best two sacks in the win. "He can be one of the best linebackers to play the game. He's a good guy, a good player, explosive -- all of the above."

A week after Miller set a career-high with a hat trick of sacks against another fellow 2011 draft pick, the Panthers tried anything they could to slow down the sensational sophomore.

None of it worked against the player that has wreaked havoc on opposing offensive coaches all season long.

"To be real honest with you, I kind of like Von matched up with anybody," Head Coach John Fox said. "So I wouldn't be critical of how they tried to do it. A lot of people have tried different things and he's pretty special."

Notebook: Fox Victorious in Return

Tyler Everett
DenverBroncos.com
November 11, 2012

Fox gets game ball in win over former team; Holliday swings momentum; Team still looking to improve.

CHARLOTTE – Before Sunday, Head Coach John Fox had plenty of experience on the sidelines at Bank of America Stadium. Nine years' worth, to be exact.

But Sunday was his first time as a visitor.

"Well it was strange," Fox said. "I've never been in this visitor's locker room. Prior to even coming here as a head coach I had never been here as an assistant coach. That part was strange for sure. But, it was great getting back. My sons are still out here going to school. It was neat to see family – we came out Friday, so I was able to at least see them. I have a home here that we had in our tenure here so it was nice getting home and sleep in my bed Friday night. It was good."

During both the week prior to the game and the game itself, Fox made a concerted effort to keep the emotions associated with coaching against his former team on the backburner. He said he finally allowed himself to think about the relationships he formed in Carolina when the game was over.

"It is hard before the game," Fox said. "There are a lot of people here that I have fond feelings about and players on the other side, so you try not to see them too much before the game, but after the game it was nice to see a lot of those faces."

Coaching for the first time as a visitor on Carolina's home field, Fox led the Broncos to a 36-14 victory over a team he coached from 2002-10. While Fox downplayed the importance of squaring off with his former team, his players understood the significance of Sunday's win.

"When you spend a lot of time in one place, especially nine years – that's a long time in this league, it's going to mean something to you to beat them," cornerback Champ Bailey said. "We knew what it meant to him. He didn't preach it all week, but I wasn't in his shoes, but I kind of understand what he's going through."

After the game, Fox was an easy choice to be the recipient of the team's game ball. It was a decision made by Owner Pat Bowlen and one the entire locker room stood behind.

Fox was just one of several members of the Broncos coaching staff who had spent time in Carolina. That added even more meaning to the victory for quarterback Peyton Manning.

"You like to win a game for those guys, but those guys were professional all week," Manning said. "I know they have great memories from their time here, but to win that game, and to win this game for them, that was something the players wanted to do."

HOLLIDAY STRIKES AGAIN

After one quarter Sunday, the Broncos and Panthers were tied at 7 and momentum could swing either way with an explosive play.

A week after changing the complexion of the Bengals game on the first play of the third quarter, wide receiver Trindon Holliday struck again.

Holliday fielded a 59-yard punt by Carolina's Brad Nortman at his own 24-yard line. After securing the catch, Holliday paused briefly to find an open lane.

Then, in the blink of an eye, Holliday was at full speed and approaching the sideline thanks to a big block by linebacker Nate Irving. For the second time in as many weeks, Holliday had proven that all he needs for a game-changing touchdown is a small crease. He knew long before he got into the end zone that he was on his way to another score.

"It was a called return, so I caught the ball, I jabbed to the left and I had seen my teammates making a good block for me on the right side," Holliday said of his 76-yard touchdown return. "So I just hit the hole."

"After I break the first wave, I think pretty much it's over with," Holliday added.

With touchdowns in back-to-back weeks, Holliday's big play Sunday marked a pair of career firsts – his first score on a punt return as well as his first time finding the end zone in consecutive weeks.

"It feels great to be able to come back and do it back-to-back games," he said. "I'm just going to build on this, go to practice this week and be ready to go."

Including his three return scores in the preseason, Holliday has now scored five return touchdowns in 2012. After being waived by the Texans, he signed with Denver prior to the team's Week 6 game against San Diego.

"I was brought here to return kicks and punts and make plays for this team," Holliday said. "I just try to do my best when I get out there and make it happen for the team."

After Holliday's score to start the second quarter, Denver outscored Carolina 22-7 the rest of the way. After the game, the Broncos recognized Holliday's big play as the spark for the team's strong play over the final three quarters.

"Any time you score I think it changes the game," Fox said. "They went right down the field and scored on us. We answered it and it was still kind of nip-and-tuck. Every once in awhile it gets like that in a game and that was an explosive play in the game that changed the momentum at that point."

STILL ROOM TO GROW

With Sunday's victory, the Broncos have reeled off four consecutive wins to improve from 2-3 to 6-3.

It all started with a historic-comeback win over the Chargers in Week 6 that gave San Diego and Denver identical records at that time.

Since then, the Chargers have dropped two of their next three, allowing the Broncos to open a two-game lead in the AFC West. The teams will meet again in a Week 11 rematch in Denver, which represents an opportunity to take a three-game division lead heading into the final six games of the season. But to do that, Denver will be looking to improve on its own play.

Sunday, Denver lost two fumbles in Carolina territory and also dropped a few passes. Improving on such errors will be a point of emphasis in practice this week, said wide receiver Brandon Stokley.

"That's our goal is to keep improving," Stokley said. "I thought today was just an average game for us offensively. I thought the defense played great. Our special teams played great. But offensively, there in the second half, we got kind of in a lull there and didn't do much with a couple drives. There's definitely a lot of work to do."

Even with the defense recording seven sacks, including a safety, and a pair of interceptions, one of which was returned for a touchdown, Bailey said he expects improvement going forward.

"We've still got a lot of things we have to iron out," Bailey said. "We need to watch this tape and focus on what we need to get better because we're not perfect. No team is, but (to be) where we want to be, we're not even close."

After a strong performance by the defense and special teams, which outscored Carolina's entire team 16-14, the Broncos left little to be desired in two of the game's three phases. But the goal isn't to merely do enough to win. Fox said he is pushing the team to a far loftier standard.

"You strive for perfection, but it never happens," Fox said. "We played well enough in each phase that were all factors in the game. Whether it is a defensive score, a punt return for a touchdown by Trindon and our offense is our offense. We had some drops and we fumbled some balls and we left some points out there no doubt. Those are things we'll talk about and work on when we debrief when we get back."

Broncos at Panthers: Key Plays

Stuart Zaas
DenverBroncos.com
November 11, 2012

Third-and-4 from the Carolina 38: On the Panthers' first drive of the game, linebacker Von Miller burst into the backfield and brought down Cam Newton for a 6-yard loss. That play set the tone for a Denver defense that totaled seven sacks in the win.

Third-and-8 from the Carolina 9: Under heavy pressure, Newton heaved a pass down the right sideline for Louis Murphy, who was covered closely by Tony Carter. The pass sailed incomplete forcing the Panthers to punt from deep in their own territory. The Broncos converted the ensuing strong field position into a 10-yard touchdown strike from Peyton Manning to Brandon Stokley that tied the game 7-7.

Third-and-4 from the Carolina 26: Another third down resulted in more pressure from the Denver front four as defensive end Elvis Dumervil got to Newton and forced his league-leading fifth fumble. Newton recovered the loose ball, which turned out to work in the Broncos' favor as on the next play, Trindon Holliday returned a punt 76 yards for a touchdown, giving Denver a lead that it would not relinquish.

Third-and-8 from the Carolina 24: It looked like the Panthers had made a big play to recapture momentum when Newton hit Murphy for a 34-yard gain, but the play was called back due to offensive pass interference and Carolina was forced to punt.

1st-and-10 from the Carolina 28: The Broncos' drive came to a halt when Manning was sacked and fumbled the football, which was recovered by the Panthers. Again, a Carolina fumble recovery proved favorable for the Broncos when on the next play, Carter stepped in front of Newton's pass and returned it 40 yards for a score to give Denver a 24-7 lead.

Third-and-10 from the Carolina 35: Another third down, another Broncos sack. This time it was cornerback Chris Harris who came on a blitz and brought down Newton for a 3-yard loss to force a punt.

2nd-and-7 from the Carolina 14: Defense End Robert Ayers, who was filling in for an injured Dumervil sacked Newton for a 12-yard loss at the Carolina 2-yard line. On the next play, safety Mike Adams brought down Newton in an end zone for the Broncos' second safety of the season.

Broncos at Panthers: Quotables

Stuart Zaas
DenverBroncos.com
November 11, 2012

Head Coach John Fox

On returning to Carolina

"Well it was strange. I've never been in this visitor's locker room. Prior to even coming here as a head coach I had never been here as an assistant coach. That part was strange for sure. But, it was great getting back. My sons are still out here going to school. It was neat to see family – we came out Friday, so I was able to at least see them. I have a home here that we had in our tenure here so it was nice getting home and sleep in my bed Friday night. It was good."

On defense recovering after giving up an early drive

"We tend to do this, I don't know if it's jitters or what, but we left a couple guys free and a tribute to their team, they executed well. We made some adjustments but I thought all-in-all, our defensive staff did a terrific job. It's an explosive offense, you have a pretty good stable of backs there, you have a quarterback that has unique abilities, so we knew it was going to be tough coming in and we knew that they would be very inspired."

On Von Miller

"Well, he's a dynamic guy. I think this kind of meant something to him. Sometimes where you are in the draft and that kind of stuff kind of motivates guys. You'll have to ask Von, but he definitely came to play today, that's for sure."

Quarterback Peyton Manning

On how the defense and special teams scores help the offense

"Well sure, our defense – they were pretty awesome today. And then, two weeks in a row with a kickoff return for a touchdown, I just can't tell you what that does for the entire team, especially on offense. Carolina scores, they kick off, they have some momentum and then boom, you run it back for a touchdown and it can be deflating for the other side. Defense and special teams were awesome today. Offensively, I thought we were close on some things. Obviously, I've never taken winning for granted, but there are some things we can fix and need to fix and we'll learn from this film."

On his improvement since the start of the season

"It was hard to know what to expect on both accounts. This is totally new territory for me with a different team and I didn't know what kind of progress I would make physically. I've made some, I continue to have some that I still need to make and I continue to have to do my rehab. The team, I think we have improved on certain things and are developing some type of chemistry. This is not a team that has been

together for four or five years, so we still have some things that we can do better. But, any time you can learn a little bit about each other, make some progress and win some games, that's a good thing, but we still need to get better, I think. Especially down this homestretch."

On tying Dan Marino with 420 TDs

"Well, Dan Marino, after my dad retired, was my favorite quarterback growing up. I think it's pretty well documented through the years when I've been asked about Dan Marino how I feel about him. I've never felt comfortable kind of being mentioned amongst him. But, a lot of players have caught a lot of those touchdowns, so I'm grateful for all the receivers and the protection I've received along the way. Marino is one of my all-time favorites and he's been very good to me since he stopped playing, and I've really appreciated his friendship."

Wide receiver Trindon Holliday

On the return

"It was a called return, so I caught the ball, I jabbed to the left and I had seen my teammates making a good block for me on the right side, so I just hit the hole."

On if he'd ever have a punt return for a score and scoring in consecutive weeks

"No, first one. It feels great to be able to come back and do it back-to-back games. I'm just going to build on this, go to practice this week and be ready to go."

On special teams scores changing momentum

"Oh yeah. I was brought here to return kicks and punts and make plays for this team. I just try to do my best when I get out there and make it happen for the team."

Wide receiver Brandon Stokley

On the offense continuing to get better

"That's our goal is to keep improving. I thought today was just an average game for us offensively. I thought the defense played great. Our special teams played great. But offensively, there in the second half, we got kind of in a lull there and didn't do much with a couple drives. There's definitely a lot of work to do."

On the whole team's effort

"That's what you have to do when you come on the road. You need everybody. I thought all three phases played well enough to win. It's a tough place to come and get a win and we were able to do that."

On winning for Head Coach John Fox

"You always want, any time you have somebody from another team, whether it's a player or coach, you want to play well for that person because there is always a little extra something special whenever they come back to a place that they worked or played at."

Cornerback Champ Bailey

On the strong play by the front seven

"They did sort of what I expected. I thought he would make some more plays, but our guys up front, Von, he was on a mission, and when we lost Elvis, Robert Ayers came in and did the same thing. It's what I expect from those guys and it doesn't surprise me that we did that."

On winning for Fox

"When you spend a lot of time in one place, especially nine years – that's a long time in this league, it's going to mean something to you to beat them. We knew what it meant to him. He didn't preach it all week, but I wasn't in his shoes, but I kind of understand what he's going through."

On all three phases contributing

"That's how you have to be if you want to have a push in the playoffs or even get to the playoffs – you want to have all three phases clicking. We don't want to have any weaknesses. I know we have a few things we need to iron out, but we're working on that."

Linebacker Von Miller

On the win

"I think it started in practice. We had a great week of preparation, just like the weeks before. It was hard to get some practice against the type of offense they can run, but overall I think we did pretty well this week and I think it showed in the game."

On Cam Newton

"I played him in the Pro Bowl. I've seen how big he is. Everything about Super Cam, I think we were prepared on it. He can run the ball pretty good, he can throw the ball pretty good, he can shed defenders and he makes great decisions. I think he showed that today, but we were able to make a couple more plays and come out with the win."

On possibly running out of sack dances

"You can never run out of sack dances. It's always different on every play. The excitement is always different every stadium, every play. I don't think I'll ever run out of sack dances. If I do, I'll just get with Keith Brooking. I'm sure he can show me a couple."

Broncos at Panthers: Inactives

Stuart Zaas
DenverBroncos.com
November 11, 2012

Below are today's inactives:

Broncos

QB Caleb Hanie
CB Tracy Porter
RB Knowshon Moreno
S Duke Ihenacho
G Chris Kuper
TE Julius Thomas
DT Sealver Siliga

Panthers

QB Jimmy Clausen
WR Joe Adams
S D.J. Campbell
LB Jason Williams
T Bruce Campbell
DE Antway Applewhite
DE Thomas Keiser

Below is a picture of the official inactive sheet that Head Coach John Fox submitted:

Broncos at Panthers: Gameday Coverage

Tyler Everett
DenverBroncos.com
November 11, 2012

BRONCOS DEFEAT PANTHERS 36-14: All three phases of the team found the end zone on Sunday afternoon as Denver rolled to a 36-14 road victory and improved to 6-3.

Stay tuned to DenverBroncos.com throughout the day and night for continued in-depth coverage on the team's fourth straight win.

BRONCOS AT PANTHERS PREVIEW: Watch NFL Film's preview and take a look at the breakdown by DenverBroncos.com to get ready for kickoff.

BRONCOS ON TWITTER: Follow the action on Twitter, as well, via the Broncos' official gameday account. @BroncosGameday will keep fans updated with live, in-game updates throughout tonight's matchup. To chime in with your tweets, use #DENvsCAR.

NFL GAMEPASS: For international Broncos fans located outside the United States and Mexico, watch tonight's game live and in HD with NFL GamePass.

BRONCOS MOBILE APP: For those of you who follow the action on your smartphone, there's a free official Broncos mobile app. On your smartphone, visit BroncosMobile.com to download it.

BRONCOS TV: ON SITE: BANK OF AMERICA STADIUM: Check out this week's episode of Broncos TV: On Site as Chris Hall and Gray Caldwell preview today's matchup between the Broncos and Panthers.

BRONCOS ON INSTAGRAM: The Broncos have joined Instagram. Follow the team's account, DenverBroncos, for exclusive, behind-the-scenes photos from Dove Valley, road trips and gameday.

PREGAME PHOTO GALLERY: Take a look at photos from pregame as the Broncos prepare to take on Carolina.

SALUTE TO SERVICE: In honor of Veteran's Day, the NFL is saluting all members of the U.S. military at each of today's games, with logos of military ribbons on the game balls as well as the players' helmets, the words 'Salute To Service' painted behind the end zones.

INACTIVES: The players who will be inactive for today's contest have been announced.

BRONCOS WIN TOSS: The Broncos have won the game's coin toss and chosen to defer to the second half.

PANTHERS STRIKE FIRST: The Panthers are on the board after moving 77 yards in six plays on a scoring drive culminating in a 4-yard touchdown pass.

BRONCOS ANSWER, TIE GAME AT 7: With a 59-yard drive culminating in a 10-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Peyton Manning to wide receiver Brandon Stokley, Denver has tied the game.

HOLLIDAY PUTS BRONCOS IN FRONT: A 76-yard punt return for a touchdown by wide receiver Trindon Holliday has given Denver a 14-7 lead.

PRATER CONNECTS FROM 53: Kicker Matt Prater has extended Denver's lead to 10 points with a 53-yard field goal.

INJURY UPDATE: The Broncos have announced that defensive end Elvis Dumervil has suffered a shoulder injury. His return is questionable.

MISSED FIELD GOALS CONCLUDE FIRST HALF: The Broncos and Panthers traded missed field goals with time winding down in the first half to keep the score at 17-7, Broncos.

CARTER'S PICK-SIX MAKES IT 24-7: Thanks to the Broncos' second non-offensive touchdown of the game, this one a 40-yard interception return for a touchdown by cornerback Tony Carter, Denver has a 17-point lead. Listen to the audio highlight [here](#).

BRONCOS MAKE IT 27-7: After four completions in a row by quarterback Peyton Manning covered 60 yards, the Broncos converted a 27-yard field goal that extended the lead to 20 points.

ADAMS SAFETY PADS LEAD: The Broncos backed Carolina up near its own end zone to set up the team's second safety of the year.

PANTHERS CUT LEAD: Carolina drove down the field and cut into Denver's deficit on a 5-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Cam Newton to tight end Greg Olsen.

BRONCOS SCORE AGAIN; MANNING TOPS 300, THOMAS OVER 100: A 5-yard touchdown run by running back Ronnie Hillman stretched Denver's lead to 36-14.

Broncos Defeat Panthers 36-14

Sam Davis
DenverBroncos.com
November 11, 2012

The Carolina Panthers scored the first points of the game on Sunday afternoon, but after that, it was all Broncos. Denver scored the next 29 points and finished with a 36-14 victory at Bank of America Stadium in Charlotte, improving to a 6-3 record.

Each unit for the Broncos – the offense, the defense and special teams – scored a touchdown in the first three quarters.

After Carolina jumped out to a 7-0 lead, Denver responded with a touchdown of its own as quarterback Peyton Manning connected with wide receiver Brandon Stokley for a 10-yard touchdown.

A few minutes later, wide receiver Trindon Holliday scored on a 76-yard punt return touchdown, his second return for a touchdown in as many games.

Early in the third quarter, cornerback Tony Carter scored his second defensive touchdown of the year as he intercepted Panthers quarterback Cam Newton and returned it 40 yards for a touchdown. That gave the Broncos a 24-7 lead, but the defense wasn't finished.

In the fourth quarter, safety Mike Adams sacked Newton in the end zone for a safety, increasing the Denver lead to 29-7.

Rookie running back Ronnie Hillman capped it off for the Broncos with his first career touchdown on a 5-yard rush.

The defense sacked Newton a season-high seven times. Defensive tackle Kevin Vickerson led the way with two sacks and linebacker Von Miller recorded six tackles, including his 10th sack of the year and a forced fumble.

Manning finished with 27-of-38 passing, 301 yards and a touchdown. Wide receiver Demaryius Thomas led the way offensively with nine catches for a game-high 135 yards.

Broncos Score Again; Manning Tops 300, Thomas Over 100

Tyler Everett
DenverBroncos.com
November 11, 2012

Denver added one more touchdown for good measure on a drive that took just four plays. The Broncos got into the end zone on the first touchdown of rookie running back Ronnie Hillman's career, a five-yard run along the left sideline that made it 36-14.

The drive also marked milestones for both quarterback Peyton Manning and wide receiver Demaryius Thomas, as Manning has once again topped 300 yards passing and Thomas has gone over 100 yards receiving.

For Manning, it's the 77th of his career, including postseason, and the sixth 300-yard passing game of the season, with all of those coming in the last seven games. In his career, Manning's teams are 46-30 when he goes over 300 yards. Earlier in the game, he tied Dan Marino for second all-time in career touchdown passes with 420.

Thomas now has five games in 2012 with at least 100 yards receiving and eight for his career.

Panthers Cut Lead

The Panthers trimmed the Denver lead to 27-14 with a 10-play, 77-yard drive.

Taking over at its own 23-yard line, Carolina mounted a scoring drive that started with a 9-yard run by running back Jonathan Stewart. The Panthers moved into Denver territory on back-to-back completions of 13 and 8 yards from quarterback Cam Newton to tight end Greg Olsen. Two plays later, Newton found Olsen once again, this time for a gain of 18.

The Panthers moved inside the Denver red zone on a 9-yard completion to wide receiver Armanti Edwards that was followed by a 3-yard run by fullback Mike Tolbert.

The drive culminated in a 5-yard scoring strike from Newton to Olsen that made it 27-14 with 5:09 to play.

Adams Safety Pads Lead

Back-to-back sacks have helped the Broncos score on defense or special teams for the third time this afternoon.

After defensive end Robert Ayers sacked quarterback Cam Newton on the Panthers' 2-yard line, Carolina faced 3rd-and-19 from the shadow of their own goal line.

Safety Mike Adams was one of several defenders who penetrated the Carolina offensive line, and Adams wrapped up Newton for his first career safety, giving the Broncos their second of the season.

The sack is the fifth of Adams career and the first for the safety since 2010.

The sack also marks the seventh of the afternoon for Denver, the most the team has recorded in a single game since the 2003 season.

Broncos Make It 27-7

Denver took a 20-point lead after a 9-play, 62-yard drive highlighted by a string of four straight completions by quarterback Peyton Manning.

The Broncos started the drive on their own 30-yard line with a 2-yard run by running back Ronnie Hillman before Manning completed four straight passes to put the ball on the Carolina 8-yard line.

The first two completions covered 10 and 11 yards and both went to wide receiver Brandon Stokley. Manning then found wide receiver Demaryius Thomas for 17 yards before a 22-yard completion down the sideline to tight end Joel Dreessen penetrated the Panthers' red zone.

The drive then stalled when a run for no gain was followed by a pair of incompletions, and Denver picked up a 27-yard field goal by kicker Matt Prater, making Prater 2-for-3 on the afternoon.

Carter's Pick-Six Makes it 24-7

On the Panthers' first play after a Denver turnover, linebacker Von Miller pressured and hit Carolina quarterback Cam Newton, forcing him to underthrow a pass toward the sideline, which Denver cornerback Tony Carter picked off in stride before racing 40 yards untouched into the end zone. Carter's touchdown stretches the Denver lead to 24-7.

It's the second time this season that Carter has scored a defensive touchdown, as he also returned a fumble 65 yards for a touchdown against San Diego. The interception is also the second of both 2012 and his career.

Missed Field Goals Conclude First Half

The Broncos had a chance to stretch their lead to 20-7, but kicker Matt Prater's 43-yard field goal attempt was no good. The missed field goal prevented Denver from

getting any points out of a drive that saw the Broncos move from their own 29-yard line to the Carolina 25.

The Panthers responded by getting into field goal range on a pair of 19-yard completions by quarterback Cam Newton, who found Smith over the middle on the first play of the drive, then picked up 19 more on a screen pass to running back Jonathan Stewart. But Carolina came up empty when kicker Justin Medlock missed his 43-yard field goal attempt wide left.

On the last possession of the half, the Broncos picked up one first down but were unable to move any further.

At halftime, the Broncos have outgained Carolina 167-146 and hold a 9-7 edge in first downs. Denver also holds a narrow advantage in time of possession, at 15:37 to 14:32.

Quarterback Peyton Manning has completed 16-of-20 passes for 135 yards and a touchdown, while Denver has limited Panthers quarterback Cam Newton to nine completions on 16 attempts for 127 yards and a touchdown.

Fans can relive both Manning's touchdown completion to wide receiver Brandon Stokley and wide receiver Trindon Holliday's punt return for a touchdown with audio highlights courtesy of AM 850 KOA.

A video highlight of Stokley's touchdown is available [here](#).

Injury Update

The Broncos have announced that defensive end Elvis Dumervil has sustained a shoulder injury. His return has been ruled out.

Prater Connects From 53

The Broncos padded their lead to 10 points on a short drive ending in points thanks to the strong leg of kicker Matt Prater, who improved to 11-for-11 on the season.

After taking over at their own 45-yard line, Denver converted one first down and moved to the Carolina 36-yard line to set up Prater's 53-yarder, which made it through the uprights with room to spare.

Prater is the franchise's all-time most accurate kicker (101-of-123.) He is also the most accurate kicker in NFL history from beyond 50 yards, having converted 15-of-19 (79%) from that range.

Holliday Puts Broncos In Front

A week after a kickoff return for a touchdown against Cincinnati, wide receiver Trindon Holliday has given the Broncos a 14-7 lead on a 76-yard punt return for a score.

It marks the first punt return for a touchdown of Holliday's career.

Fielding the punt at his own 24-yard line, Holliday hesitated a second to find his lane, then burst through the Panthers' coverage unit and down the right sideline for the touchdown.

After returning three kicks for touchdowns for the Texans in the preseason, including a kickoff against Carolina, Holliday was signed by the Broncos before Week 6.

Holliday is now the third Bronco to return both a punt and a kickoff for a touchdown in the same season.

Broncos Answer, Tie Game at 7

The Broncos tied the game with their first scoring drive of the afternoon, a 5-play, 59-yard march that quarterback Peyton Manning capped off with a touchdown pass to wide open wide receiver Brandon Stokley.

With that touchdown, Manning is now tied with Dan Marino for second all-time in career touchdown passes with 420.

After a 5-yard run by running back Willis McGahee on the first play of the drive, Manning looked deep to wide receiver Demaryius Thomas, who made a leaping grab over the middle for a 32-yard gain that put the ball on the Carolina 22-yard line. The catch gives Thomas a league-leading 13 receptions of at least 25-plus yards.

Following a short run by McGahee and a 9-yard completion to tight end Joel Dreessen, Manning's touchdown to Stokley finished the drive.

Panthers Strike First

Carolina has a 7-0 lead after picking up yards in chunks on a 6-play, 77-yard drive culminating in a 4-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Cam Newton to tight end Greg Olsen.

The drive was highlighted by back-to-back 26 yard pass completions by Panthers quarterback Cam Newton, one to Olsen followed by a big gain on a screen pass to fullback Mike Tolbert.

From inside the Broncos 30-yard line, Newton again found Olsen for a 16-yard gain before capping the drive on a 4-yard throw to Olsen.

Broncos Win Toss

The Broncos have won the coin toss by calling heads and chosen to defer their choice to the second half, so Denver will start the game on defense.

The Broncos captains for today's game are quarterback Peyton Manning, defensive end Elvis Dumervil, cornerback Champ Bailey, linebacker Wesley Woodyard and tackle Ryan Clady.

The Broncos starting defensive linemen are Dumervil and Derek Wolfe at defensive end, with Kevin Vickerson and Justin Bannan at defensive tackle. The linebackers are Von Miller on the strong side, Keith Brooking in the middle and Wesley Woodyard on the weak side. In the secondary, the starting cornerbacks are Bailey and Chris Harris, with Mike Adams and Rahim Moore at the safeties.

On offense, the Broncos starters at the skill positions are Manning, running back Willis McGahee, wide receivers Eric Decker and Demaryius Thomas and tight ends Joel Dreessen and Virgil Green. The starters along the offensive line are tackles Clady and Orlando Franklin, guards Manny Ramirez and Zane Beadles, with J.D. Walton at center.

