

Kiszla: Broncos do the new math: 4 NFL games + 4 Pro Bowl running backs = less than zero

By Mark Kiszla
Denver Post
October 2, 2017

The slap was so hard it felt like slander, and the message stung: The Broncos are soft. They can't stop the run.

Hey, who were the knuckleheads that spewed that garbage? Please. Remind the Broncos again.

"We've played four straight games and we've played four all-pro running backs. And they've done nothing against us," defensive end Shelby Harris bellowed Sunday, after the Broncos knocked the stuffing out of Oakland in a 16-10 victory that will leave a mark on their hated AFC West Division rivals.

A work of art? No, this game was more like a sweaty day's work at the junkyard. It sounded like broken glass and crushed metal. Raiders quarterback Derek Carr fell and couldn't get up during the second half. The silver and black left Colorado all black and blue.

"Our run defense has been stout the entire year," Broncos coach Vance Joseph said.

Not to suggest the Broncos are keeping score, but here's a tally the members of Denver's defense would be happy to recite by heart. Through four games, Denver has indeed faced four Pro Bowl running backs.

Let's do the math.

Melvin Gordon of the Los Angeles Chargers: 18 carries, 54 yards.

Ezekiel Elliott of Dallas: nine carries, 8 yards.

LeSean McCoy of Buffalo: 14 carries, 21 yards.

Marshawn Lynch of Oakland: nine carries, 12 yards.

That's four running backs with 12 combined trips to the Pro Bowl to their credit.

And here's their total production versus Denver: 50 carries, 95 yards.

The Broncos have faced a murderer's row of NFL running backs, and killed their stats, to say nothing of their spirit. On 50 carries, the average gain of Lynch, McCoy, Elliott and Gordon has been 68 inches.

Wait ... what? A grown man should be able to fall forward 68 inches. But Denver has made four above-the-marquee backs look as if they couldn't play dead in a Western movie.

Let's review. They call him Money Lynch; he left Colorado bankrupt. At Buffalo, the Broncos threw shade at McCoy. Derek Wolfe and crew hit Elliott, the NFL rushing champ a year ago, so hard that he quit. After

Gordon flashed for 21 yards on the very first snap of the season against the Denver defense, he got stuck in traffic.

What has been the mindset of Denver's defensive line against these great running backs?

"Whip their butt," Harris said.

Beating the Raiders was especially sweet for Harris, a 26-year-old defender who has been cut six times in his young career and came to Denver looking for a job after being told by Oakland, the New York Jets and Dallas he was not good enough to make a real impact in the NFL.

"Playing the old team, hitting the old quarterback and getting the old 'W,' that's a pretty good day," said Harris, credited with the sack in the third quarter that sidelined Carr with a back injury. "The whole thing was not letting Marshawn get built up and breaking tackles and running over people. So today was great. He had no room to run."

The Real Big D of the Broncos caused Oakland coach Jack Del Rio to get desperate early. Down 10-0 in the second quarter, the Raiders faced fourth down at Denver's 31-yard line. Instead of attempting a long field goal, Del Rio went for it, needing to gain only 3 feet to move the chains.

The Broncos, however, refused to give an inch. When Lynch was handed the football for a run up the gut, they punched back, stuffing him from no gain.

"Had to get that stop," said Will Parks, who darted in from his safety position to meet Lynch in the hole and make the tackle.

"Going for it on fourth and one? We kind of take that as an insult. We pride ourselves as being the best defense in the league. Now it's a tough league and the Raiders are a great organization. But as long as we go out there and execute, what we do? We feel like nobody can hang with us."

Yes, pro football is a job. It's a job, however, the guys in the front seven of Denver's defense have taken very personally since being cited for months as the soft underbelly to the No-Fly Zone. True confession: I might have been one of those knuckleheads who questioned if the Broncos were tough enough to get it done against the run.

"Don't act like you weren't," said Harris, laughing.

The job of Wolfe, Harris and the big D-linemen is to deliver pain. It's a pain that Lynch will feel in his bones.

As far the Denver defense is concerned, it doesn't matter how slick is your game or how fancy is your name. Money, Shady, Zeke or Flash. It's all the same. The Broncos will make you a promise: Getting out of bed on Monday is going to hurt.

Broncos vs. Top Running Backs

The Broncos' reputation as one of the NFL's best rush defenses grew Sunday as they made Raiders running back Marshawn Lynch a non-factor, limiting him to 12 yards on nine carries; Oakland had only

24 yards rushing as a team. Through four games, the Broncos have limited opposing starting running backs to 95 yards, and no team has scored a rushing touchdown against Denver.

Player	Team	Carries		Yards	TDs
Melvin Gordon	Chargers	18	54	0	
Ezekiel Elliott	Cowboys	9	8	0	
LeSean McCoy	Bills	14	21	0	
Marshawn Lynch	Raiders	9	12	0	

Behind explosive run game and stout defense, Broncos eke out win over Raiders

By Nicki Jhabvala
Denver Post
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Nan Miller had a message for the Broncos as they readied to face their divisional nemesis Sunday afternoon. Her late husband lived to beat that pesky team from Oakland and he never cared if it took a fight or a brawl or every ounce of his players' energy. So long as they got it done.

The Broncos honored their former coach, Red Miller, who passed away last week, with a video tribute during the game, but Nan hoped the Broncos would go beyond: Beat those Raiders for Red.

Message received. But pretty, it wasn't.

The Broncos' defense held late and their run game led the way as Denver eked out a 16-10 victory to claim sole possession of second place in the AFC West. Safety Justin Simmons' interception with less than two minutes left sealed the victory.

"The first quarter (of the season) is over and we're 3-1 and headed to a bye, so that was huge for us today," head coach Vance Joseph said. "What I like about our football team right now is our run defense has been excellent.

"Running the football, with our offensive line and the backs, has been excellent. My issue with our football team right now is we make a lot of critical errors. That's got to stop. Offensively, we were 0-for-4 in the red zone, one false start and a holding penalty, and defensively, we gave up two big plays in the passing game. ... We got to fix those things moving forward."

BOX SCORE: Broncos 16, Raiders 10

Broncos quarterback Trevor Siemian completed 16 of 26 passes for 179 yards, one touchdown and a 94.9 passer rating. But he was also sacked four times as pass protection broke down under the pressure of Khalil Mack and Mario Edwards.

So, the Broncos relied on their running backs, who broke loose for 142 yards on 28 attempts, and their defense that held Oakland to 24 rushing yards on 15 carries. Marshawn Lynch had nine of those carries for a mere 12 yards. Through four games, the Broncos have held opponents to 203 yards, the fewest in team history in the first four weeks of the season, and have contained opposing starting running backs to an average of 1.9 yards per carry.

"Our run defense has been stout the entire year," Joseph said. "I've been very proud of how those guys have played the run."

After a quick three-and-out and the first sack of Siemian, the Broncos put together an 88-yard scoring drive capped with a pair of completions to tight end A.J. Derby for a total 51 yards — a 29-yard catch

that set up a 22-yard touchdown. Derby caught the tip of the football on the scoring pass with a few fingertips and waltzed into the end zone with only one hand grasping the ball.

“It was just a great throw by Trevor and a great job by the O-line giving him time,” Derby said. “I just saw the ball and made a play. It felt like three fingers, but I haven’t seen it so I have no idea.”

The touchdown was the first of his career, and it opened the gates as Jamaal Charles found holes to run and the Raiders were penalized 30 yards for defensive pass interference, setting up a 28-yard field goal by Brandon McManus later in the first quarter for a 10-0 lead. Charles, appearing much like the explosive back he was before multiple knee surgeries, finished with five carries for 33 yards. C.J. Anderson added 95 and Devontae Booker, making his 2017 debut, contributed 14 more.

“We’re all going to have our time and have our moments to make plays,” Anderson said. “We all have different roles and we use our roles and our abilities within the game in the different roles. Maybe if the game is going another way, then maybe it’s a Jamaal Charles day or a Booker day, things to that nature. We all ran the ball well and that’s how we want to keep it. Hopefully, we can keep catching the ball out of the backfield and just trying to be the spark to this football team.”

But the early momentum didn’t last.

One play in the second quarter kept the Broncos’ lead in check as the Raiders took advantage of Denver’s five-defensive back look. Von Miller was not on the field and Derek Carr found receiver Johnny Holton for a 64-yard, over-the-shoulder touchdown grab.

The Broncos’ offense that racked up 140 yards in the first quarter notched only 65 in the second — and was forced to punt three times.

Denver returned from the halftime break in much the same fashion, with a re-dedication to pounding the ball on the ground in one quarter, then watching its momentum fade in the next. On the Broncos’ first possession of the third quarter, Anderson broke out for 53 yards on three carries — including one for 40 yards — to set up a 37-yard field goal by McManus and a 13-7 lead. Then, in three successive plays, all three phases pitched in as defensive end Derek Wolfe sacked Carr on third down, Isaiah McKenzie picked up 29 yards on a punt return and Anderson barreled up the middle for 12-yard gain, setting up another McManus field goal for a 16-7 lead.

Late in the third quarter, Carr was sacked by Shelby Harris and knocked out of the game with what coach Jack Del Rio later said were back spasms. A failed fake punt by and an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty on Oakland’s punter Marquette King gave the Broncos a prime opportunity to blow open the game. But McManus hit the upright on a 29-yard field-goal attempt and the Raiders stormed back behind backup quarterback EJ Manuel.

The Broncos had many chances to close it out, but couldn’t capitalize.

“I just felt like we were always one play away from really getting momentum,” Siemian said. “We just didn’t really have a rhythm and they did a good job of mixing up coverages, defenses and safety pressures. They kept us on our toes, but we’ve got to find a way to stay in rhythm, stay on the field and get it to our guys.”

With little success on the ground, Manuel aired it and completed passes of 28 and 22 yards during a 73-yard scoring drive in the fourth quarter to pull the Raiders within 16-10.

After Denver went three-and-out, the Raiders got the ball back with a chance to win on their 42-yard line with 4 minutes, 16 seconds left. They advanced as far as Denver's 36 but Simmons's interception ended the suspense.

"It felt great," Simmons said. "It was a great opportunity to make a play."

Nan Miller's message? Heard loud and clear.

"It was really important for us to win today at home," Siemian said. "So I'm beyond excited that we finished 3-1 in that first quarter of the season."

Broncos vs. Top Running Backs

The Broncos' reputation as one of the NFL's best rush defenses grew Sunday as they made Raiders running back Marshawn Lynch a non-factor, limiting him to 12 yards on nine carries; Oakland had only 24 yards rushing as a team. Through four games, the Broncos have limited opposing starting running backs to 95 yards, and no team has scored a rushing touchdown against Denver.

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John Bowlen, brother of Broncos' owner Pat, looking to sell minority interest in team

By Nicki Jhabvala
Denver Post
October 2, 2017

Full ownership of the Broncos may not remain in the Bowlen family much longer.

John Bowlen, the younger brother of Broncos majority owner Pat Bowlen, is looking to sell his minority interest in the team, which, according to a source, is roughly 30-35 percent.

The impetus for selling is out of a desire to preserve Pat Bowlen's legacy and because of dissatisfaction with the perceived execution of the succession plan.

However, there is said to be no animosity between John Bowlen or the team over the matter.

"While a difficult decision, I have decided to sell my minority interest in the Broncos," John Bowlen posted in a statement on Twitter, corroborating an earlier report from The Denver Post. "My brother Pat's leadership has been greatly missed."

The Broncos remain among the NFL's most successful franchises with a valuation of \$2.4 billion, according to Forbes magazine's latest estimate, a massive leap from the \$78 million the Bowlens paid former owner Edgar Kaiser in 1984.

Because Pat was unable to cover the full purchase price, his siblings, including John, helped foot the bill and, over the years, they have been selling interest back to Pat. In 1996, Pat's brother William Bowlen sold his interest, and in 1997 his sister Mary Elizabeth Jagger did the same. When their mother, Arvella Regis Bowlen, died in 2006, her interests were split among Pat and John, making them sole owners of the team.

John Bowlen has also been selling his interest back to the family, but now is ready to move on.

Pat Bowlen stepped down from his day-to-day duties as owner in 2014 because of the progression of Alzheimer's disease. The team was placed in a family trust to serve as a vehicle to transfer controlling ownership to one of Pat Bowlen's seven children, appointed by the trust's three trustees, Broncos president/CEO Joe Ellis, team counsel Rich Slivka and local attorney Mary Kelly.

John Bowlen does not have a vote in the daily operation of the team and a sale of his interest would not affect the broader transition for Pat's majority interest; his children will receive equal stake and one is still in line to be elected controlling owner.

"As it relates to Pat Bowlen's controlling interest of the team, it is not for sale," Ellis told The Post on Sunday.

The Broncos later released a statement that acknowledged John Bowlen "recently was approached by someone who expressed interest in his share of the team."

In an extensive interview in September, Ellis said the team has not been given a timetable by the league to select its next controlling owner, but Commissioner Roger Goodell has made it clear on numerous occasions that the NFL prefers a single owner to represent and be the sole voice of each team.

While Pat is the Broncos' owner in name, the operations, decisions and statements made on behalf of the franchise are in the hands of the trustees.

"We work on the basis of 32 individual owners each having a vote and when league matters come up, whatever they may be, we work on a vote of 24 of the 32," Goodell said ahead of Super Bowl 50. "It's a very important principle to owners and their partners. They want to know who their partner is. They want to know that they're responsible for how the team is operated locally and they want to know that their partner is sitting at the table when they're making difficult decisions."

Goodell, who was a panelist at a fan forum at the Broncos' Dove Valley facility in August, said the team is "very well-run" and in compliance with the league's ownership policies.

"(Pat Bowlen) understood that he wanted the Broncos to have the best possible transition and he's established a system in Joe Ellis and the trust, who I think has done a terrific job to keep people like John Elway and others that are going to ensure that this team is still represented in this community the way Pat wanted it represented," Goodell said. "They still work on winning and winning with class, and I think the ownership has done an excellent job, including Joe and others, of really being active in league matters. John is on the competition committee and making an enormous contribution there. Joe is on several of our committees, and I think that would make Pat proud."

"Our membership is very happy with that and it's consistent with the way Pat wanted it done. Pat outlined exactly the way it's operating. From our standpoint, no. But we want to make sure that the team is always in compliance."

The Broncos defense was on its heels in the fourth quarter. Then it answered the bell.

By Nick Kosmider
Denver Post
October 2, 2017

The other 10 players on the field for the Broncos had done their job.

The cornerbacks had jammed the Oakland wide receivers at the line of scrimmage enough to gain an incremental edge. The front seven had come screaming at EJ Manuel, the Raiders' backup quarterback who had his team 41 yards from an improbable come-from-behind victory.

The last job on the play, which came with less than two minutes remaining in the Broncos' 16-10 victory on Sunday, belonged to Denver safety Justin Simmons. All the second-year defensive back had to do was camp under the high-arching deep ball, leap up and snatch it away from wide receiver Amari Cooper.

Mission accomplished. Disaster avoided.

"It was a great rush up front and the corners did a great job of getting their hands on the receivers," Simmons said of the play he made at the 8-yard line that saved a white-knuckle victory. "It made my job easy in the back end to just go get the football."

As pressure mounted Sunday, swelling in the chests of 76,909 fans at Sports Authority Field, a familiar trait emerged from a defense that has learned to slow its collective heartbeat the past three seasons. The Broncos closed.

"That's what makes you a good team or a bad team," Broncos cornerback Aqib Talib said. "You have to be able to finish those games and come out with those wins. We have great confidence in ourselves. We don't second guess ourselves in those kind of situations."

It was a performance with no absence of drama. A breakdown in the secondary in the second quarter led to a 64-yard touchdown pass from Derek Carr to Johnny Holton, suddenly squeezing a game the Broncos had dominated.

"My issue with our football team is we make a lot of critical errors," Broncos coach Vance Joseph said. "That has to stop."

The Denver defense responded to the big-play flop by haunting Carr, limiting him to 8 yards passing on his four drives following the touchdown pass and sacking him twice. On the latter takedown, with five minutes remaining in the third quarter, Carr caught an Adam Gotsis knee to the back and never returned.

Enter Manuel, who hadn't thrown a meaningful pass in 10 months. The former first-round draft pick found his rhythm in the fourth quarter, however. The Raiders, trailing 16-7, took over at their own 7-yard line with 8:30 left and Manuel started firing.

Manuel found tight end Jared Cook for 28 yards down the left seam. Then he zipped a pass to wide receiver Seth Roberts for 22 yards. Two short passes after that had the Raiders in the red zone. The Denver defense stiffened, forcing a field goal, but Oakland had life.

“We know EJ Manuel is a veteran quarterback. We knew that if he came in, he’d be ready,” Simmons said. “We knew he’d be able to diagnose the defense. We just tried to make sure we were giving him the same looks we were giving Carr. I hope he’s doing well. It’s tough to see someone go down like that.”

After a three-and-out by the Broncos’ offense, followed by a 37-yard punt from Riley Dixon, Manuel and the Raiders got the ball back at their own 42-yard line with 4:16 left. Manuel quickly completed three passes. Then, facing a second-and-15 at the Denver 41-yard line, he took his shot.

Simmons, propped into the spotlight after the Broncos waived veteran T.J. Ward, hung in the air like Russell Westbrook. He snared the ball, held it as he dropped to the turf and then sprinted up the sideline in celebration.

“Get the ball back and finish the game. That was it,” safety Will Parks said. “That’s what happened. As simple as that.”

Not much came easy for the Broncos on Sunday. Except, that is, at closing time.

Running back Devontae Booker set to make season debut with Broncos

By Nick Kosmider
Denver Post
October 2, 2017

Running back Devontae Booker was among the Broncos' 46 active players Sunday for their game against the Raiders, putting him in line to make his season debut.

Booker underwent surgery in late July to repair a fractured wrist and missed all of training camp. The fourth-round pick in the 2016 NFL draft was a full participant for the Broncos in practice the past two weeks.

Booker led the Broncos last season with 612 yards rushing. His 31 receptions — for 265 yards — were the third-most on the team.

“Booker had a great week,” Broncos coach Vance Joseph said Friday. “He’s gotten better each day.”

Also active and set to make his Broncos debut was veteran defensive end Ahtyba Rubin, who signed with Denver three weeks ago after being waived by the Seattle Seahawks. Wide receiver Jordan Taylor was also active for the first time.

The addition of Booker to the Denver backfield moved rookie De’Angelo Henderson to the list of inactives. Henderson played in each of the Broncos first three games but had just one carry, which came on a fake punt last week against the Bills.

The other inactives for the Broncos on Sunday: quarterback Paxton Lynch, offensive guard Billy Turner, defensive end Zach Kerr, nose tackle Kyle Peko, cornerback Lorenzo Doss and wide receiver Cody Latimer, who was limited practice last week as he dealt with a knee injury.

Among the inactives for the Raiders was wide receiver Michael Crabtree.

Tight end A.J. Derby produces eye-popping highlight; Broncos red-zone woes persist

By Nick Kosmider
Denver Post
October 2, 2017

A.J. Derby played in the 14th game of his career Sunday. The Broncos tight end was unable to catch a touchdown pass in his first 13.

When Derby finally did cross the goal line, in the first quarter against the Raiders, he did so in style.

Streaking down the right sideline, Derby shot his right arm above his head and snagged the pass from Trevor Siemian at the 8-yard line. The tight end never brought his other hand onto the ball as he tiptoed down the sideline and into the end zone for a 22-yard score that put the Broncos up 7-0.

It was a play straight out a YouTube reel of Odell Beckham acrobatics. Only with a much more subdued reaction by the starring actor.

"It was just a great throw by Trevor, and the offensive line did a great job on their good front seven," Derby said. "I just made a play."

It was the most eye-popping play of Derby's career, but it wasn't the only one he made Sunday. The play before the touchdown, he hauled in a 29-yard reception along the sideline, the longest of his career.

"We were just saying how that drive was kind of the 'AJ Derby Show,'" Siemian said. "He had a similar route the play before (the touchdown), and he did a good job getting open. That was a pretty good day, so I'm happy for him."

Derby finished with four catches for a career-high 75 yards.

Red zone woes. For the second straight game, the Broncos lamented missed opportunities in the red zone. Denver marched inside the Oakland 20-yard line four times and had only four field-goal attempts, one of which was missed, to show for it.

"We're hurting ourselves down there," Siemian said. "I've got to watch everything, but we have to find a way to get touchdowns instead of field goals."

A false start penalty and two sacks of Siemian by Khalil Mack were among the culprits.

"We have to find a way to put the ball in the box and bury teams," running back C.J. Anderson said. "We don't want to keep games close like that. We need to bury them."

Not faked. The Broncos failed in their attempt at a fake punt during their loss at Buffalo a week ago. They weren't about to be on the wrong end of that kind of play again.

The Raiders, trailing 16-7 and facing a fourth-and-11 at their own 33-yard line with 5:12 left in the third quarter, rolled the dice on a fake punt. Oakland punter Marquette King sprinted to the right, but he had nowhere to go. Jordan Taylor tackled King for a 3-yard loss, and King compounded the damage by throwing the ball at Broncos fullback Andy Janovich, drawing a 15-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.

Broncos special teams coach Brock Olivo said the Broncos were prepared for the athletic King, the league's top punter in both overall and net average, to do more than boot the ball.

"We were looking for a spark," Raiders coach Jack Del Rio said. "It didn't work."

But the Raiders limited the damage when Brandon McManus missed a 29-yard field goal, his third wayward attempt of the season, on Denver's ensuing possession.

Footnotes. Todd Davis was the Broncos' game day captain. ... The Broncos have now won 31 consecutive games when they win the turnover battle, the longest active streak in the league.

Grades and game balls from Broncos' 16-10 victory over the Raiders

By Nick Kosmider
Denver Post
October 2, 2017

Offense: C

Running backs C.J. Anderson and Jamaal Charles took advantage of some big holes but quarterback Trevor Siemian never found a rhythm after a hot start. Protection issues continued to plague Denver.

Defense: A-

The Broncos bounced back after 64-yard Derek Carr TD pass to dominate for three quarters. Backup QB EJ Manuel did fourth-quarter damage against Denver's secondary, but safety Justin Simmons sealed the victory with an interception with 1:46 left.

Special teams: B-

A penalty negated a big punt return and Brandon McManus missed a 29-yard field-goal attempt after the Broncos snuffed out an Oakland fake punt. Isaiah McKenzie had a 29-yard punt return that set up a field goal.

Coaching: B

The Broncos used jumbo formations in the second half to pound the Raiders in the ground game, a key adjustment as Oakland began generating pressure on Siemian.

Game balls

Justin Simmons, S. His fourth-quarter interception of a deep ball from Oakland backup QB EJ Manuel sealed a white-knuckle victory.

Domata Peko, NT. He may have registered only two tackles, but the veteran defensive lineman anchored another dominant performance by Denver's rush defense.

A.J. Derby, TE. Had four catches for a career-high 75 yards and a spectacular one-handed touchdown grab that gave the Broncos a 7-0 lead.

Broncos honor plan to stand during national anthem before game against Raiders

By Nick Kosmider
Denver Post
October 2, 2017

The Broncos followed through with their national anthem plan.

Every member of the team stood during the anthem before Sunday's game against the Raiders, as they said they would, a week after 32 Denver players knelt as a measure of protest ahead of their game in Buffalo.

Broncos linebacker Brandon Marshall, who knelt for seven games last season and again at Buffalo, stood with his left fist raised in the air Sunday.

More than 200 players across the NFL protested during the anthem last week, a response to president Donald Trump saying two days earlier during a rally in Alabama that owners should "fire" players who knelt during the anthem.

"Last week, members of our team joined their brothers around the NFL in a powerful display of unity," the players said in their Thursday statement. "It was an emotional time for everyone, including the fans who support us each and every week. As controversial as it appeared, we needed to show our collective strength and resolve. Our voice needed to be heard loud and clear.

"We may have different values and beliefs, but there's one thing we all agree on: We're a team and we stand together — no matter how divisive some comments and issues can be, nothing should ever get in the way of that. Starting Sunday, we'll be standing together."

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell on Sunday shared the Broncos statement in a memo to member's of the league office, ESPN reported.

Raiders quarterback Derek Carr exited Broncos game with injury

By Kyle Fredrickson

Denver Post

October 2, 2017

Raiders quarterback Derek Carr left Sunday's game against the Broncos with back spasms and did not return.

Oakland trailed 16-7 late in the third quarter when Carr was sacked on a first-down play by Broncos defensive end Adam Gotsis. Carr was seen grabbing his lower back on the turf, was helped off the field and exited to the injury tent for evaluation. He was later taken to the lockerroom to have X-rays. Carr was replaced by backup quarterback E.J. Manuel.

Denver won 16-10.

Prior to his exit, Carr completed 10 of 18 passes for 143 yards and a touchdown. Carr and Raiders coach Jack Del Rio said after the game that they don't believe the injury is serious.

Raiders QB Derek Carr: It's going to take a lot for me not to be out there

By Kyle Fredrickson
Denver Post
October 2, 2017

The best term to describe a Sunday smash that sidelined Raiders' quarterback Derek Carr against the Broncos? Awkward.

Denver defeated Oakland, 16-10, at Mile High Stadium, but not until after the Raiders' Pro Bowl quarterback took a late third-quarter snap at his own 34-yard line, scrambled, and was sacked by Shelby Harris, then kneed in the back by Adam Gotsis. As Carr stumbled to the turf in a sitting position, the left arm of Gotsis pulled Carr's helmet toward his own toes, causing Carr's lower back to twist. He grimaced in pain on the grass, was helped to the locker room and did not return.

Enter EJ Manuel: A former Buffalo Bills' first-round pick turned Raiders' backup who joined the team in March.

"My biggest thing was getting in a rhythm as fast as possible," Manuel said.

Carr, whose injury was later announced as "back spasms" by Raiders' coach Jack Del Rio, is not expected to miss significant playing time. He had completed 10-of-18 passes for 143 yards, including a 64-yard touchdown strike to Johnny Holton, the first pass of over 20 yards he had completed all season.

The Broncos led 16-7 when Manuel, in his fifth season out of Florida State, completed his first seven passes, including consecutive completions of 28 yards to tight end Jared Cook and 22 yards to wide receiver Seth Roberts. Manuel's second drive went 73 yards in nine plays, capped by a 38-yard Giorgio Tavecchio field goal to cut Denver's lead to 16-10.

"Looking at a lot of guys in the huddle in their eyes, I felt like they were confident," Manuel said, "which gave me more confidence."

When a Broncos' drive stalled late in the fourth quarter, forcing a Riley Dixon punt that went out of bounds at the Oakland 42, the Raiders' offense made one last push to take the lead. Eight plays later, Manuel faced second-and-15 at the Denver 42 and threw a deep ball toward the left sideline to Amari Cooper — only to have it intercepted by safety Justin Simmons with 1:56 left.

"Once the ball was in the air and I knew that (Simmons) was around, it was all about him snagging the ball, squeezing it and bringing it down," Broncos safety Will Parks said. "And that's what happened."

Said Del Rio: "I really thought we were going to win that game. With two minutes left and the ball right there ... I felt really good about about the prospects of celebrating."

Denver moved to 3-1 on the year. For the Raiders, a dark-horse preseason Super Bowl pick, concern related to a 2-2 record is only heightened following Carr's health concerns and a largely ineffective offense. "I'm going to do the treatment and all those kinds of things," Carr said. "You guys know me, it's going to take a lot for me not to be out there."

Denver run defense goes from near worst to first in 3-1 start

By Mike Klis

9 News

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Let's start with the Denver defense's second play of the season.

Melvin Gordon, the Los Angeles Chargers' star running back, rushed for only 33 yards on 17 carries. Less than 2 yards a carry (taking away that first carry that went for 21 yards). That's game 1, a Broncos win.

Ezekiel Elliott, the NFL's best running back by a wide margin, is held to 8 yards on 9 carries. Less than 1 yard per carry. That's game 2, a lopsided Broncos win against the Dallas Cowboys.

LeSean McCoy, who many people would pick as the league's second-best back, is held to 21 yards on 14 carries. Less than 2 yards per carry. That's game 3, a loss to the Buffalo Bills because the Denver D couldn't solve the athletic play of quarterback Tyrod Taylor.

Marshawn Lynch, who used to be Beast Mode, was made to look like a washed up, over-the-hill running back who should have stayed retired rather than take on Denver's newfound rush defense Sunday. Lynch gained a pathetic 12 yards on 9 carries. Closer to 1 yard per carry than 2. That's game 4, a 16-10 Broncos' win against Lynch and the Oakland Raiders.

"I don't know if he was frustrated," Broncos inside linebacker Todd Davis said of Lynch. "But I do know we were definitely getting after him today."

Add it up and Gordon (not including his first carry), Elliott, McCoy and Lynch combined for 74 yards on 49 carries, or 1.5 yards per carry, against the 2017 version of the Denver defense.

"That's four special backs and really four special offensive lines," said Broncos' head coach Vance Joseph.

What in the names of Sylvester Williams and T.J. Ward is going on here?

This is the same Denver defense that last year ranked 28th in the 32-team NFL against the run, allowing 130.3 yards per game. The Broncos are No. 1 by a wide margin four games through this season, allowing just 50.8 yards per game.

"That was our main focus through our whole offseason, we needed to shore up our run defense," Davis said. "We have the best (defensive) backfield in football but we have to complement them with a run D.

Joseph, Davis, and star outside linebacker Von Miller all mentioned Domata Peko, who replaced Williams as the nose tackle, as a difference maker. Miller added second-year defensive end Adam Gotsis "is playing red hot right now." The other defensive end, Derek Wolfe, is playing like 2015 again.

But there has also been a lot of talk about how the two inside linebackers, Davis and Brandon Marshall, are playing downhill against the run. Moving forward on the attack, rather than waiting for the gaps to open, then fill.

"They're playing the run completely different this year," Broncos running back C.J. Anderson, who practices against the Denver D during the week, said about the linebackers.

Anderson wouldn't go into details.

"The biggest thing is the big guys up front," Davis said. "The linebackers are the same but the (coaches) are allowing us to do more."

Denver defense swarms Raiders for 16-10 win

By Mike Klis

9 News

October 2, 2017

Offense, defense, special teams. It's not a cliché. At least it wasn't during a Denver Broncos' three-play sequence in the third quarter.

Broncos defensive end Derek Wolfe sacked Oakland Raiders' quarterback Derek Carr for an 8-yard loss. Defense.

With the ball back on the Raiders' 9 yard line, Oakland's Marquette King punted low for 51 yards where Broncos' rookie Isaiah McKenzie scooted left for a 29-yard return. Special teams.

With the Broncos' drive starting just 31 yards from a touchdown, C.J. Anderson on the first play slashed for 12 yards. Offense.

Defense, special teams, offense is not the order usually recited. But it was complementary football nonetheless.

Brandon McManus wound up kicking a 46-yard field goal for a 16-7 lead. It got nerve-wrecking for the Broncos at the end, as it took second-year safety Justin Simmons to outposition Raider receiver Amari Cooper for a deep ball thrown by EJ Manuel, but the Broncos held on for a 16-10 win.

The Broncos are now 3-1 with wins against the Dallas Cowboys and Raiders, who combined for 25 wins last season, heading into their bye week.

"Definitely pleased to be 3-1," said Broncos head coach Vance Joseph. "What I like about our football team right now is our run defense has been excellent. Running the football with our offensive line and our backs has been excellent.

"My issue with our football team right now -- we make a lot of critical errors. That has to stop."

There was concern that the Broncos were 0 of 4 in scoring touchdowns from the red zone. Their lone touchdown came just outside the red zone as Trevor Siemian hit A.J. "Hand" Derby with a 22-yard scoring pass in the first quarter. Not only 0 of 4 in touchdowns, but just 3 of 4 in field goals as Brandon McManus missed a 29-yarder in the fourth quarter that helped keep Oakland in the game.

"I think we're hurting ourselves down there," said Siemian, who after a fast start finished 16 of 26 for 179 yards with one touchdown and zero interceptions. "I've got to watch everything, but we have to find a way to get touchdowns instead of field goals. I thought the first week we did a good job of that. We'll figure it out, clean it up on the bye and be ready to go."

The Raiders, who lost Carr to a back injury later in the second half, fell to 2-2.

"I'm not happy about that but that's what it is," said Raiders coach Jack Del Rio.

Can't fault the Raiders too much for not knowing how to cover A.J. Derby. There wasn't much film of the Broncos' tight end to watch.

Through the first three games of the 2017 season, Derby had accumulated just 39 receiving yards.

On back-to-back plays in the first quarter Sunday on a glorious-turned-cloudy October afternoon at eventually-to-be-renamed Sports Authority Field at Mile High, Derby had two catches for 51 yards, including a one-handed, 22-yard snag for a touchdown.

After both teams started with three-and-outs, Siemian got the Broncos going on their second possession with an 88-yard drive that needed just seven plays to complete.

He hit Bennie Fowler III on the left sideline for 17 yards, then hung tough to convert a third-and-seven play. Siemian was escaping the pocket right when he was clobbered from behind by Raiders' pass-rushing star Khalil Mack. Despite the contact, Siemian got enough on the throw to leave a jump ball in the direction of Fowler, who out-muscled defensive back David Amerson for the 18-yard completion.

Siemian then went to Derby for 29 yards on a catch-and-run, and then went back to the tight end on the next play. Derby ran a sideline-and-go that froze his defender and left him alone down the right sideline. Siemian's throw was an inch-too-far-from perfect but Derby reached up with his right hand and gathered it in, then kept the ball in his one hand without securing it with the other while crossing the goal line.

"I didn't even know (my left hand) didn't touch it," Derby said. "I haven't see the play so I can't say. I felt like three gingers. I haven't seen it so I have no idea."

Apparently, football players play without thinking.

On their next drive, the Broncos drove from their own 11 to the Oakland 5 before a false start penalty on left tackle Garrett Bolles thwarted the goal-to-go chance. McManus kicked a short field goal for a 10-0 lead.

The Broncos were in complete command with six minutes left in the half. They had their 10-point lead and punter Riley Dixon pinned the Raiders back on their own one-yard line.

But then Carr found the leaks in the Broncos' pass defense. He got out of his end zone with an 11-yard completion to tight end Lee Smith. A third down pass to running Jalen Richard picked up 20.

And then Carr connected deep with receiver Johnny Holton, who on a flag pattern left to right beat Broncos' safety Darian Stewart for a 64-yard touchdown.

Siemian was sacked four times, twice by the great Khalil Mack, but held strong. C.J. Anderson had 95 tough yards on 20 carries and four catches for 17 yards.

The Denver D held Raiders running back Marshawn Lynch to 12 yards on nine carries. Carr was 10 of 18 for 143 yards before he was knocked out. Manuel nearly brought the Raiders back, completing 11 of 17 for 106 yards before Simmons thwarted his comeback.

It's the second year in a row Simmons' remarkable athleticism finished off a Broncos win in the game before their bye. He leaped over the line of scrimmage to block an extra point that teammate Will Parks returned for a 2-point conversion and gave the Broncos a 25-23 win.

His leaping interception on a too-high, too-short and too-far-inside throw by Manuel inside his own 10-yard line with 1:56 left halted the Raiders' comeback bid.

"I had to go attack the ball whether it was thrown in the middle or up in the air, just high point the ball and be playmaker," Simmons said.

"Justin Simmons made a great interception there," said Broncos defensive end Derek Wolfe. "Beast Mode (Lynch) had 12 yards. Who's next? That's what I say."

After next week's bye, the Broncos play the 0-4 New York Giants on Oct. 15 in Denver.

Pat Bowlen's brother John seeks to sell minority interest of Denver Broncos

By Mike Klis

9 News

October 2, 2017

First, his brother and lifelong business partner, Pat Bowlen, was afflicted with Alzheimer's disease.

Then John Bowlen lost his Western Canada oil and gas company last year, and he realized his days as the Denver Broncos' minority owner were numbered.

John Bowlen is now wanting to sell his 31 to 35 percent minority interest in the team, according to his wife, Kerry -- a minority share that does not include any voting rights. The Denver Post first reported John Bowlen's desire to sell.

The Bowlen Trust owns 65 to nearly 70 percent of the Broncos and 100 percent control of the team.

And now John Bowlen apparently wants to sell that minority interest.

"I want to make this very, very clear: This has nothing to do with what Joe or Rich are doing," Kerry Bowlen, John's wife, said in an interview with 9NEWS. "There's no animosity at all. It's just John and Pat were always partners. And now that Pat is no longer involved with running the team, it's just purely time to go. Let a new owner come in. And for us financially, spiritually, it's time as well."

The Broncos put a statement that softened John Bowlen's desire to sell and also addressed The Denver Post assertion that his desire to sell was because he was dissatisfied with the Trust's succession.

"Broncos Minority Owner John Bowlen, accompanied by his advisor, indicated at our Sept. 18 board meeting that he is extremely pleased with the way the organization is being operated under Joe Ellis in the absence of his brother, Owner Pat Bowlen.

"John has never made any statements to the contrary, and at this meeting, he voiced his full support for the contract extensions given to Ellis and other key team executives."

Hold on there. The statement revealed Ellis just received formal approval for a contract extension.

The Broncos added in their statement: "John also indicated that although he is not actively looking to sell his minority, non-voting stake in the team, he recently was approached by someone who expressed interest in his share of the team. ...

"As it relates to Owner Pat Bowlen's controlling interest of the Denver Broncos, it is not for sale. The Pat Bowlen Trust is continuing to execute Pat's succession plan with the hope of keeping the team in the Bowlen family."

Kerry Bowlen said John had lost his family business, Regent Resources Ltd., that had been started by John and Pat Bowlen's father Paul Bowlen, to bankruptcy in November 2016.

"It was a devastating loss," Kerry Bowlen said.

As for the majority interest and full voting control of the Broncos, the trustees are running the team until one of Pat Bowlen's seven children is deemed to have earned the right to run the club.

Ellis, with John Elway overseeing the football operations department, has been running the day-to-day operations of the Broncos since 2011.

The Broncos' franchise is believed to worth more than \$2 billion, so 35 percent of the franchise would come in at \$700 million-plus. Complicating that sale is that minority interest comes with no voting rights.

"I think [having no voting rights] complicates [the sale] but if somebody has the passion to be involved with a team of this caliber I don't think it makes or breaks a deal," Kerry Bowlen said.

Opposing backs find Broncos' defense a road to nowhere

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

October 2, 2017

Four games into the season, none of the marquee running backs to have faced the Denver Broncos have rushed for 100 yards.

Want really impressive? Those four backs haven't rushed for 100 yards combined.

Yes, in a 3-1 start with plenty of work still to be done, the Broncos have the league's No. 1 run defense.

"We just work so hard at it," linebacker Todd Davis said. "We always think there's more work to do, but we're invested in it. We don't want people to be able to move the ball on us. We're committed and we're getting it done."

The Broncos have pounded, swarmed and stymied, in order, Melvin Gordon, Ezekiel Elliott, LeSean McCoy and Marshawn Lynch. Those four backs, a list that includes two former rushing champions (Elliott and McCoy), three who have topped 1,500 rushing yards in a season (Elliott, McCoy and Lynch) and 12 Pro Bowl appearances, have combined for 50 carries and 95 yards versus the Broncos in 2017.

That's a double-take-worthy 1.92 yards per carry to go with zero rushing touchdowns against Denver. Overall, the Broncos haven't surrendered a rushing touchdown in four games and opponents have averaged just 2.4 yards per carry.

"I think the energy and culture is different," linebacker Von Miller said. "Domata [Peko] is playing great for us, [Derek] Wolfe is playing great, Adam Gotsis is playing red-hot right now. When those guys are playing the way they play, it makes everybody's job easier, especially in the run."

Much of the Broncos' cast on defense remains what it was last season, but the addition of Peko, the kind of double-team swallowing nose tackle the Broncos haven't had in years, as well as the emergence of Gotsis in his second NFL season, has freed Wolfe to be disruptive as well. But with players like Zach Kerr, a 334-pounder signed in free agency, as well as the 310-pound Ahtyba Rubin, who was signed after he was released by the Seahawks, the Broncos are simply more burly up front.

Defensive coordinator Joe Woods, who in his first year calling plays has kept the framework of Wade Phillips' scheme, also has the Broncos' linebackers attacking the line of scrimmage a little more on early downs. The result has been everything the Broncos had hoped it would be when they made repairing the run defense an offseason priority.

"That's really four special backs, really four special offensive lines," coach Vance Joseph said. "Our run defense has been really stout. Again, adding Peko and Kerr and Ahtyba Rubin now, and obviously coaching it different than it was coached in the past."

The Broncos held Elliott to a career-low 8 yards on his nine carries in Week 2, and in Sunday's 16-10 win over the Raiders, they held Lynch to 12 yards on nine carries. That was Lynch's lowest single-game total since he rushed for 11 yards on six carries against the Pittsburgh Steelers in 2011.

"We're going against guys who have been to the Pro Bowl and we're shutting them down," Peko said. "It's been great. Big shout out to the defensive line and the front seven. Big shout out to the defense, because stopping the run is not just up front ... it's everybody."

Another example of how steady the Broncos' run defense has been: After giving up a 21-yard scamper to Gordon on the first play from scrimmage in the season opener, Denver hasn't surrendered a run over 10 yards since.

"It all goes together," cornerback Chris Harris Jr. said. "If they can't run the ball, they have to pass it and we always think that puts us in the best position. If they can't run it, we like our chances."

Broncos grind out a win to get to 3-1 with plenty of aspirations

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

October 2, 2017

It isn't exactly how the Denver Broncos would draw it up, but they now head into an early bye at 3-1 and having flashed enough of their power to assert themselves in what figures to be a fierce AFC West race.

The Broncos pounded out a 16-10 win over the Oakland Raiders Sunday at Sports Authority Field at Mile High that wasn't really decided until safety Justin Simmons pulled down an interception with just under two minutes to play. And now they get perhaps the only week off the team might not want.

The last time the Broncos had a bye this early on the football calendar was in 2014, when the Broncos had a Week 4 bye. That team, with Peyton Manning at quarterback, went 10-3 after the bye but ran out of steam in the postseason. But that's a problem for another day. These Broncos will take a quality first quarter of the season, having held serve with all three of their wins at home.

Still, a Week 5 bye means there are a pile of weeks left to play when the team returns. The Broncos will go all the way to a Week 15 appearance on a Thursday night in December before they can carve out an "extra" day off.

It's why what went on in downtown Denver on Sunday afternoon -- their second division win to go with the opening-week victory over the Los Angeles Chargers -- carried some additional weight, why it rose above just-another-game status.

The Broncos used a first-quarter ambush, when they had 140 yards worth of offense and scored 10 points, to put themselves in the hands of their defense once again. Quarterback Trevor Siemian was 7-of-9 passing in that opening quarter for 115 yards and a touchdown.

The touchdown, a one-handed snare and run by tight end A.J. Derby, finished off a drive in which the Broncos again showed that if they protect Siemian, he can keep the offense moving using a variety of receivers. The Broncos also later kicked in a power-run game to snap themselves out of some significant second-quarter doldrums, including a 40-yard run by C.J. Anderson on a play in which the Broncos had six offensive linemen in the game to go with two tight ends.

And the defense, save for a bobble in coverage that allowed Raiders quarterback Derek Carr to find wide receiver Johnny Holton for a 64-yard touchdown, did what the Broncos have become accustomed to their defense doing. The Raiders had just 24 yards rushing; Marshawn Lynch was held to 12 yards on his nine carries. The Broncos have now muted Melvin Gordon, Ezekiel Elliott, LeSean McCoy and Lynch in their opening four weeks.

Carr left the game late in the third quarter with a back injury, which left EJ Manuel to try his luck. It all kept the Broncos from what would have been an ugly 2-2 start after last week's loss.

However, the Broncos have shown they don't slam the door enough when they have the chance -- in two of their wins, they allowed a double-digit lead to become a one-possession game, including on Sunday. Siemian gets hit too often (he was sacked four times) and has to leave the pocket too often against four-man pressures. Brandon McManus missed his third field goal of the season, and the Broncos still have moments when the offense can't seem to decide on the pace it wants, when despite all of the good they've done in a game their opponent still feels there is a chance at the end.

Those all go on the agenda for the coming weeks. But the Broncos had better get their rest, because it will be a long time before they get a chance to take another breath.

Denver Broncos hold on for a 16-10 win over Oakland Raiders

By Arnie Stapleton
Associated Press
October 2, 2017

The Denver Broncos throttled running back Marshawn Lynch and sent quarterback Derek Carr to the sideline with a back injury, then sealed their 16-10 win over Oakland on Sunday on safety Justin Simmons' interception of EJ Manuel at the Denver 8 in the closing minutes.

Despite holding Lynch to 12 yards on nine carries, the Broncos found themselves in danger of frittering away an AFC West showdown they had dominated when Riley Dixon's punt traveled just 37 yards to the Oakland 42 with 4:16 remaining.

Trailing by six, Manuel heaved a high toss to Amari Cooper just after the 2-minute warning but Simmons, who won the job from three-time Pro Bowl safety T.J. Ward this summer, came down with the ball just shy of the goal line and took it out to 8. The Broncos ran out the clock to hit their bye week at 3-1.

Oakland (2-2) had cut its deficit to six on Giorgio Tavecchio's 38-yard field goal with 5:23 remaining.

That came after Brandon McManus hit the left upright from 29 yards out early in the fourth quarter after nailing kicks from 28, 36 and 46 yards.

Denver's only touchdown was a doozy, a one-handed grab of Trevor Siemian's 22-yard pass by tight end A.J. Derby.

The Raiders couldn't do much against Denver's fortified front seven that also stuffed Melvin Gordon, Ezekiel Elliott and LeSean McCoy. They managed just 24 yards on 15 carries for a 1.6-yard rushing average.

Carr left the game in the third quarter with a back injury after he was sacked by Shelby Harris and was hit by Adam Gotsis as he twisted awkwardly. Coach Jack Del Rio said Carr suffered from back spasms.

Four plays later, the Broncos sniffed out a fake punt on fourth-and-11 from the Raiders 33 and wide receiver Jordan Taylor stuffed punter Marquette King, who was whistled for unsportsmanlike conduct for throwing the football at fullback Andy Janovich as he got up.

The Broncos took over at the Oakland 15 but McManus missed from 29 yards out.

Carr (10 of 18 for 143 yards) was replaced by Manuel, who drove the Raiders 73 yards for Tavecchio's 38-yard field goal. Manuel finished 11 of 17 for 106 yards.

The Broncos jumped out to a 10-0 lead on a 28-yard field goal by McManus and the one-handed touchdown grab by Derby, who led the Broncos with 75 yards on four catches.

Derby lined up from the fullback position and raced past rookie middle linebacker Marquel Lee, then reached with his right arm to snare the slightly overthrown pass from Siemian. He never broke stride -- nor did he gather the ball with his other hand -- on his last couple of steps into the end zone.

LONG TIME COMING: The Broncos looked like they were in prime shape late in the first half when Bennie Fowler downed a punt at the Oakland 1, but Carr instead produced Oakland's first 99-yard touchdown drive since Oct. 2, 2011, against New England. He found Johnny Holton racing past safety Darian Stewart and hit him in stride for a 64-yard scoring strike .

GOOSE EGGS: The Broncos haven't allowed a first-quarter score all season. They led 10-0 before the Raiders had managed their initial first down, which wouldn't come until the 11-minute mark of the second quarter.

UP NEXT:

Raiders: Return home to host the Baltimore Ravens.

Broncos: After a bye week, host the New York Giants for fourth home game, a stretch that will be followed by three consecutive road games.

Denver's spectacular run defense leads way to 3-1 start

By Arnie Stapleton

Associated Press

October 2, 2017

Melvin Gordon, Ezekiel Elliott, LeSean McCoy and now Marshawn Lynch.

This otherwise fearsome foursome — an enviable group of running backs that collectively rushed for nearly 4,000 yards and 38 touchdowns last season even with Lynch on a one-year hiatus — has been bruised, battered, bombarded and bulldozed by the Broncos in 2017 .

Denver limited Lynch to a dozen yards on nine carries Sunday in a 16-10 victory over the Oakland Raiders, who gained just 24 yards on the ground.

"Our run defense has been stout the entire year," Broncos coach Vance Joseph said. "So, I have been very proud of how those guys have played the run. With a back like that and an offensive line like that, that's really special, 24 yards."

Nose tackle Domata Peko, the gem of Denver's offseason free-agent additions, marveled, "We're going against guys who have been to Pro Bowls and we're shutting them down. It's been great. Big shout-out to the defensive line and the front seven. Shout out to our defense, because stopping the run is not just up front, it's the whole team. This defense is playing great."

Together, Gordon, Elliott, McCoy and Lynch managed a measly 96 yards on 49 carries for a 1.9-yard average and zero touchdowns against the Broncos (3-1).

"That's really four special backs and really four special offensive lines," Joseph said. "Our run defense has been really stout."

Joseph noted the additions of Peko, Zack Kerr and Ahtyba Rubin along with a change in coaching philosophy have been the big difference this season.

Broncos running back C.J. Anderson, who led Denver's 143-yard rushing effort with 95 yards on 20 carries, saw something special in training camp as Joseph and new coordinator Joe Woods installed a more aggressive run defense.

Anderson said Denver's linebackers "are playing the run completely different this year."

"I'm not going to go into detail and give up how they're playing the run, we'll let you guys figure that out ... but they play the run completely different this year and I think that's what's helping them," Anderson said. "I noticed that maybe the first three or four days in training camp because of the way they were making us cut."

OK, so here's what Denver's doing differently:

Peko replaced Sylvester Williams and is playing the same responsible, consistently good defense he did all those years in Cincinnati. He's never getting his hips turned and he's absolutely eating up double teams.

Inside linebackers Todd Davis and Brandon Marshall are playing closer to the line of scrimmage on early downs, attacking the ball instead of inching back in the read-and-react style they played under former defensive coordinator Wade Phillips.

This means the guards have to account for the linebackers and that, in turns, means defensive ends Derek Wolfe and Adam Gotsis are getting way fewer double teams than they used to.

Add outside linebackers Von Miller and Shaq Barrett pinching the edges and keeping the backs from bouncing outside.

Of course, they're able to load the box because cornerbacks Chris Harris Jr., Aqib Talib and Bradley Roby can cover anyone 1-on-1.

The result is that since ever Gordon reeled off a 21-yard run on his first carry in the opener, the Broncos have allowed opponents' lead backs a paltry 1.5 yards per carry.

Denver's inability to stuff the run last season defanged their famed "No Fly Zone" secondary and premier pass rush and ushered in an end to their five-year playoff run.

It's what's guiding their turnaround this season.

"I think the energy and culture is different" this year, Miller suggested.

The Broncos have manhandled two of the best offensive lines in wins over the Raiders (2-2) and Cowboys in a three-week span.

"We just have the mindset that we don't care if they're the best," Barrett said. "We want to be the best defense, and in order for us to be the best defense, we have to take out all the top dogs on offense. We have those guys on our schedule, so we can prove against the top offensive lines that we are great."

Notes: In addition to QB Derek Carr (back), Raiders CB David Amerson left the game with a concussion.

Fake punt failure leads to frustration for Raiders' King

By Arnie Stapleton

Associated Press

October 2, 2017

A fake punt by the Raiders late in the third quarter ended in a spectacular failure and an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty against flamboyant punter Marquette King.

The damaging sequence didn't cost the Raiders (2-2) in terms of points, though, because Denver's Brandon McManus missed the 29-yard field goal attempt that followed when his kick hit an upright and bounced away.

Raiders coach Jack Del Rio called for the fake punt with his team facing a fourth-and-11 at its own 33 in the 16-10 loss Sunday. King tried to sweep around right end but was met by the Broncos contain-man, wide receiver Jordan Taylor, who tackled him for a 3-yard loss at the Oakland 30.

A frustrated King, who celebrated an earlier 49-yard punt by riding an imaginary horse, threw the ball into the back of Broncos fullback Andy Janovich and was flagged, allowing Denver to tack on 15 more yards to the change of possession.

Del Rio said he called for the fake punt in a bid for a momentum swing because the Broncos (3-1) were dominating the line of scrimmage.

"We were looking for a spark and looking to take something that we thought we had and make it work, but it didn't work," Del Rio said. "We are very fortunate that it did not bite us."

King may not be so lucky. He could be fined by the league for the taunting foul and figures to be on the receiving end of a stern talking to from his head coach.

"I have not said anything yet," Del Rio said, "but you can be assured that I will."

Other takeaways from the Broncos' grind-it-out win that defensive end Derek Wolfe called a thing of beauty:

RUN REVERSAL : A year ago, Denver's run defense was its weak link, defanging the "No Fly Zone" secondary and Von Miller's harassment of QBs. So far, it's their strength and the primary reason they're 3-1 heading into their bye.

Melvin Gordon, Ezekiel Elliott, LeSean McCoy and now Marshawn Lynch have averaged a measly 1.9 yards a carry against the Broncos. Lynch gained 12 yards on nine carries Sunday and the Raiders managed only 12 more from its other rushers.

"Our run defense has been stout the entire year," Broncos coach Vance Joseph said. "So, I have been very proud of how those guys have played the run. With a back like that and an offensive line like that, that's really special, 24 yards."

SAFETY VALVE: Second-year Broncos safety Justin Simmons turned away the Raiders' final drive with a game-sealing interception . And fellow safety Will Parks, who joined the Broncos in the same draft class as Simmons collected five solo tackles, a pass breakup and a special teams stop.

Simmons, who beat out perennial Pro Bowl safety T.J. Ward in training camp, snared EJ Manuel's pass to Amari Cooper at the Denver 8 with just under 2 minutes remaining.

"One of our young bulls stepped up like a vet in the clutch, high-pointed the ball, you cannot do much better than that. So that is a big-time play by J," said cornerback Aqib Talib.

BRONCOS BACKS: The Broncos have a crowded backfield now that Devontae Booker is back from a broken wrist that sidelined him all of July, August and September. He carried three times for 14 yards, Jamaal Charles ran five times for 33 yards and C.J. Anderson rushed 20 times for 95 yards.

Altogether, the Broncos gained 143 yards on the ground, highlighted by Anderson's 40-yard scamper.

"We're all going to have our time ad our moments to make plays," Anderson said. "We all ran the ball well and that's how we want to keep it."

Anderson's mother, by the way, wore Anderson's No. 22 jersey underneath a Raiders jacket in the stands. She's from Oakland. "I knew she was going to do that," Anderson said . "She loves her team."

RED ZONE, RED-FACED: Broncos coach Vance Joseph wasn't happy with the Broncos' red-zone troubles.

"It wasn't very good, we were 0-for-4," he said. "Again, it's really self-inflicted wounds. It's a false start and there's a holding penalty, and so we can't do that. We've got to score points down there and score touchdowns down there and we had a missed field goal. That part of our offense we have to fix quickly."

STANDING TOGETHER: The Raiders and Broncos had the most players who protested during the national anthem in response to the president's comments. Almost all the Raiders sat on the bench at Washington and 32 Broncos knelt at Buffalo.

On Sunday, only Lynch wasn't standing for sax virtuoso Trey Daniels' rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner." Lynch sat by the Gatorade on the Raiders sideline. On the Broncos sideline, LB Brandon Marshall stood with his teammates with his left fist raised high.

Broncos face Raiders in critical AFC West cagematch

By Troy Renck

KMGH

October 2, 2017

Deep into the fourth quarter, when the fans roared with equal parts frustration and exhilaration, the future seemed like an orange brick road back into the playoffs.

The present, however, was becoming increasingly uncomfortable. In a game they dominated in time of possession and yardage, the Broncos struggled to finish. The Raiders, even with quarterback Derek Carr out with a back injury, operated as the cockroach in the garage that kept chirping despite swallowing a full can of Raid.

The defense checked all the boxes, making the ending even harder to reconcile. Marshawn Lynch ran to nowhere, reduced to an afterthought. Carr delivered one big play, but was otherwise pedestrian before exiting in the third quarter after Adam Gotsis wrenched his back on a sack. Oakland had eight three-and-outs, matching the Denver's defense total before the game.

And yet, here the Broncos stood. Clouds darkened. Music hummed with the Black Eyed Peas insisting 'Tonight's gonna be a good night.' The Raiders, guided by E.J. Manuel, attempted one last stab trailing by one score with two minutes remaining.

Manuel lofted the ball down the left sideline. Justin Simmons reacted with fervor, showing off his 40-inch vertical leap with an acrobatic interception.

Victory sealed. Broncos country, exhale.

The Broncos scraped out a 16-10 win, the feeling more of a relief than a reason to boast. But they need not apologize for the victory.

"We were talking about it, that it felt like we were dominating but it was close," Simmons told Denver7. "I had to make a play."

Improvement is necessary. But sitting near the top of the division is a better place to correct mistakes.

The Broncos suffocated the Raiders offense, holding Oakland to 2-of-15 on third and fourth downs and 254 total yards. The Broncos have allowed 203 yards rushing this season, a league-low 50.7 per game. Four straight Pro Bowl running backs -- Melvin Gordon, Zeke Elliott, Shady McCoy, Lynch -- produced 95 yards on 50 carries. To put their astonishing U-turn in perspective, the Broncos permitted 218 yards on the ground last season in a loss at Oakland.

"Running the ball, and stopping the run, that's how you win in the NFL," cornerback Aqib Talib said. "Our front seven did a hell of a job today. When they do that, it makes it a lot easier for (coordinator) Joe (Woods) to call plays and for us on the back end."

There are wrinkles that require ironing, of course. Denver has required a botched field goal and interception to pull off two of their three wins. "We need to clean up the penalties, limit the big plays,

and, um, I forget the third thing," linebacker Shaquil Barrett said. That there are only two speaks to the defense's dominance.

The offense continues to evolve, requiring more seasoning. Getting a lead has not been a problem. Running away and hiding has. The Broncos have pumped the brakes, turning their pace car routine into a wild full throttle race to the checkered flag.

It's not one issue as Sunday showed. The Broncos could not produce a touchdown in the red zone in four attempts.

Trevor Siemian knows for the Broncos to win he must play better. For a team built to secure close games, turnovers don't work. The Broncos require boring efficiency. Like a metronome. A predictable beat.

"I think we are hurting ourselves in the red zone. We have to find a way to get touchdowns, not field goals," said Sieman, who completed 16 of 26 passes for 179 yards, while getting sacked four times. "We'll figure it out, clean it up on the bye and be ready to go."

The Broncos jumped out to a 7-0 first quarter lead because of a new weapon. Tight end A.J. Derby emerged from witness protection, catching two passes for 51 yards on an 88-yard march.

"It was the A.J. Derby show," Siemian quipped of the drive.

Derby will never forget his first touchdown. Not because it was the first. Of course that makes it worthy of landing on a shelf in his home. The degree of difficulty, however, made it more noteworthy. Derby delivered a one-handed grab before sneaking into the end zone from 22 yards out.

"His role is to win inside coverage in zone against safeties and linebackers," coach Vance Joseph said. "I am very pleased with him. A big day."

With Lynch futile, the Broncos continued to add on. Brandon McManus clicked a 28-yard field goal as the lead widened to 10-0. The Broncos finished with 140 yards in the first quarter, a terrific launch. Yet had 93 in the second half.

One mistake undermined Denver's potential dominance. Carr discovered an unlikely weapon. with Michael "No Chains" Crabtree watching from the sideline in street clothes, Carr took the shotgun snap and looked to his right.

Why? Glad you asked. Johnny Holton was streaking down the field. He had to be a decoy, right? In 18 career games, the Raiders had targeted him three times. Make it four. Holton jogged under a 64-yard scoring strike, outrunning safety Darian Stewart, who was caught flat-footed on the play.

Control is not measured by statistics, but the scoreboard. And the Broncos' 10-7 lead left some in the sellout crowd of 76,499 feeling squeamish. The difference between the past two seasons emerged. No team was worse than the Broncos after halftime a year ago. The Broncos entered Sunday with 27 third quarter points, good for third best in the NFL.

In a grimy slugfest, the Broncos clenched their fist and stayed on the ground. C.J. Anderson scampered 40 yards up the middle and down the right sideline. He finished with 95 yards on 20 carries. He has 330 on the season, 107 shy of last year's total.

"Some things early were a little frustrating," Anderson said. "I kept telling myself to keep grinding and stay with it. Trust your boys upfront and good things will happen. And that's what you saw today."

The drive stalled, but led to points. McManus' 36-yarder pushed Denver ahead 13-7 in the third. He added a 46-yarder on Denver's next drive that featured the kind of break that swings the pendulum on a season.

It was difficult to believe if not seen. Right tackle Menelik Watson, grinding through a matchup with elite linebacker Khalil Mack, left the game for one play after his left ankle was rolled up on in a pile. Donald Stephenson entered. Siemian fielded the snap, and Stephenson had no shot. Mack raced around him into Siemian's back. As the quarterback fell to the ground the ball squirted loose. The Raiders recovered. And then, a surprise reversal. The officials decided Siemian's knee was on the ground before the ball popped out.

The Broncos defense played off the momentum of the 16-7 lead. The group, which made life miserable for Lynch (nine carries, 12 yards), delivered four straight three-and-outs. Marquette King attempted a fake punt that backfired so badly it should have sealed the win. His hopeless gallop followed with King firing the football at Jordan "Sunshine" Taylor, who tackled him. Had Taylor a wry sense of humor, he would have performed the Buckin' Bronco celebration across the field.

He showed restraint. The Broncos, meanwhile, showed mercy. McManus ricocheted a 29-yard field goal off the left upright, providing Oakland a sliver of sliver lining. A comeback proved unlikely with quarterback Carr sidelined with a third quarter back injury following an Adam Gotsis sack.

"We had our chances at the end. I thought we stayed in the fight," Raiders coach Jack Del Rio said. "I'd rather be here with a big smile on my face talking about how we managed to pull it off. It just didn't happen."

It was the type of game won in the mud not in the grass. Style matters little in the NFL, other than for your fantasy team. You know what the call ugly wins in the NFL? Wins. The Broncos enter the bye week 3-1 with all of their goals in front of them.

There's nothing bad about boring when you are victorious.

"My issue with our football team right now -- we make a lot of critical errors. That has to stop," Joseph said. "Definitely pleased to be 3-1. That was huge for us today. What I like is that our run defense has been excellent. And running the football, we have been excellent."

Broncos respond to claims that John Bowlen is looking to sell his minority interest in the team

By Oscar Contreras

KMGH

October 2, 2017

The Denver Broncos are responding to claims made by an anonymous source to the Denver Post, after the newspaper reported Pat Bowlen's younger brother is interested in selling his minority interest in the team, putting full ownership of the Broncos in the Bowlen family at risk.

A source who spoke with the Denver Post told the paper impetus for John Bowlen to sell his minority interest was out of a desire "to preserve Pat Bowlen's legacy and because of dissatisfaction with the perceived execution of the succession plan."

But in a statement from the Broncos obtained by Denver7 Sunday afternoon, the team said John is "extremely pleased with the way the organization is being operated under Joe Ellis" in the absence of his brother.

"John has never made any statements to the contrary, and ... informed multiple members of the organization that the opinions attributed to him by an anonymous source in a media report did not come from him and do not represent his views," said Broncos spokesman Patrick Smyth.

Smyth also said that although John is not looking to sell his minority, he was recently approached by someone who expressed interest in his share of the team.

Multiple sources confirmed to Denver7's Broncos Insider Troy Renck that John Bowlen has not talked about selling his minority interest and was on board with the extension given to Broncos CEO and President Joe Ellis.

If a sale of his minority interest were to occur, however, it would not affect a broader transition for Pat Bowlen's majority interest, since John does not have a vote in the daily operation of the Broncos, according to the Denver Post.

The newspaper reports Pat's brother, William, sold his interest in 1996, followed a year later by their sister, Mary Elizabeth Jagger. After the 2006 death of their mother, Arvella Regis Bowlen, her interest was divided among Pat and John, who became owners up until 2004, when the team was placed in a family trust to transfer ownership to one of his seven children.

The Broncos are among the most valuable sports in the league, at the value of \$2.4 billion, according to an estimate from Forbes magazine.

Broncos' Brandon Marshall raises fist, Raiders' Marshawn Lynch wears anti-Trump shirt before game

By Oscar Contreras

KMGH

October 2, 2017

The feud between President Donald Trump and the NFL over controversial remarks made last week did not stop Sunday, as teams across the league protested once again in many different ways, including here in Denver.

Even though the Broncos said earlier this week they would stand together as a team during the national anthem, Brandon Marshall did not let the announcement stop him from protesting in his own way.

The Broncos wide receiver was spotted raising his left fist while standing during the national anthem, according to Denver7's Broncos Insider Troy Renck.

But it wasn't clear what the Raiders would do after running back Marshawn Lynch was spotted wearing an anti-Trump t-shirt before the game at Mile High Stadium.

Both an NFL insider for ESPN as well as a business reporter for the network tweeted photos of Lynch wearing an "Everybody vs. Trump" t-shirt as he arrived to the game Sunday.

ESPN's Darren Rovell dug up a little more and found out the t-shirt was made by Oakland-based Dope Era.

Lynch was among the many players in the league who took a knee during the national anthem, even before Trump said players should be fired for doing so.

On Saturday, President Trump tweeted it was "Very important that NFL players STAND tomorrow, and always, for the playing of our National Anthem."

Why it happened: Broncos 16, Raiders 10

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
October 2, 2017

Clouds built and the score tightened, but by the end of the afternoon, the Broncos had their second divisional win of the season, hitting the bye with a crucial 16-10 win over the Oakland Raiders. Why did the win happen?

Because the Broncos continued their run of strong starts

Slow starts were an issue last year, but so far this season, the Broncos have been the league's best first-quarter team, outscoring their foes 27-0 through four weeks.

After a first-series three-and-out, the Broncos sprinted to the lead they would hold for the rest of the game on their next possession, dashing 88 yards in seven plays to a 22-yard touchdown pass from Trevor Siemian to A.J. Derby. Derby and wide receiver Bennie Fowler III propelled the Broncos downfield, providing all but two of the yards on that series.

The offense tacked on a field goal on its next series, a 79-yard march that gave the Broncos the cushion it needed to hang on the rest of the way.

Because the interior targets came up big

Derby and Fowler combined for 110 yards on six receptions Sunday, leading the way for the Broncos. As was the case in Week 1, the interior targets represented reliable options -- especially early in the game -- to keep the chains moving.

"When you're facing a lot of cover-two or shell coverage, [Demaryius Thomas] and [Emmanuel Sanders] are really taken out of the ballgame, so it opens up windows for Derby, and that's his role for our football team, to win inside coverage in zones versus safeties and linebackers," Joseph said.

Because the Broncos continued running the football effectively

C.J. Anderson, Jamaal Charles and Devontae Booker combined to accumulate 142 rushing yards on 28 attempts as the Broncos continued their consistent ground work of the first three weeks.

The Broncos won their 22nd consecutive regular-season game when rushing for 125 or more yards.

Because the Broncos made the Raiders one-dimensional

As they did to the Chargers, Cowboys and Bills in Weeks 1-3, the Broncos dominated at the line of scrimmage and prevented a foe from establishing a running game, holding the Raiders to 24 yards on 15 attempts -- a meager 1.6 yards per carry.

"It's extremely hard [to overcome], especially if you're a run-first offense like the Raiders are," Joseph said. "But again, our run defense has been stout the entire year. With a back like [Marshawn Lynch] and an offensive line like that, that's really special, to [hold them to] 24 yards."

The Broncos have allowed just 203 rushing yards through four games -- the fewest allowed by the Broncos to this point in the season in team history. The average of 2.42 yards per carry allowed is also the lowest permitted by the Broncos to this point in a season.

"Defensively, we played really stout today, outside of the two big plays -- and the one, obviously, for the [64-yard] touchdown," Joseph said. "We can't do that, but I'm very pleased with our defense."

Because the Broncos played the field-position game well

Outstanding work by punter Riley Dixon and the Broncos' punt-coverage team forced the Raiders to begin three possessions from inside of their 15-yard line, including two that began inside the Oakland 10.

But the biggest thing that helped the Broncos get the better of the field-position battle was by avoiding the turnovers that plagued them in the first three weeks. Opponents started eight possessions in Denver territory during September, five of which were set up by giveaways. Sunday, the Raiders began all of their possessions on their side of midfield.

The Broncos, conversely, began two of their drives in Oakland territory thanks to a 29-yard Isaiah McKenzie punt return that was a set up by a Derek Wolfe third-down sack and a successful read of Marquette King's fake punt that saw Jordan Taylor bring down Oakland's punter at the Raiders' 30-yard line. A subsequent unsportsmanlike-conduct penalty when King threw the ball at a cluster of Broncos after the play gave Denver the football at the Oakland 15.

But Denver's offense struggled in the red zone throughout the day, and could only convert these two opportunities into a single Brandon McManus field goal. Denver got no touchdowns and just three field goals from four red-zone trips on the day.

"It wasn't very good," Joseph said of the Broncos' red-zone offense. "We were 0-for-4, and it's really self-inflicted wounds."

Because Justin Simmons played the last possession perfectly

Simmons read E.J. Manuel's intent perfectly and got in position for his first interception of the season -- and the Broncos' first takeaway since the final minute of their Week 2 win over the Cowboys.

Justin Simmons fulfills big expectations with game-ending interception

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
October 2, 2017

Justin Simmons knew what was coming on that last throw.

He recognized that the Raiders had run the play before, so he sat back, tracked the pass and out-jumped Oakland's Amari Cooper for an interception to clinch a 16-10 victory.

"All game I was trying to be patient, play my role in the back end, get the ball down when it gets to me, go attack the ball — if it's thrown in the middle — up in the air, just go high-point the football and be a play-maker," Simmons said. "The coaches trust in me [and] my teammates trusted in me."

The Raiders had been driving, hoping to stun the Broncos with a last-minute touchdown. But starting quarterback Derek Carr had left the game with a back injury and EJ Manuel came in.

"We knew if he came in, he would be ready and he would be able to diagnose the defense," Simmons said. "So we just tried to make sure we were giving him the same looks that we were giving Carr."

With no timeouts remaining and less than five minutes left, the Raiders were in a tough spot, which is exactly where the "No-Fly Zone" likes its opponents.

"He was due," Chris Harris Jr. said. "We definitely needed the play and he made a huge play for us. We need him to make those impact plays and have some confidence."

Confidence was exactly what his teammates saw on that pick.

"We don't second-guess ourselves in those situations," Aqib Talib said, "and 'J' definitely didn't second-guess himself right there. He went up and made a great play."

The Broncos knew Simmons could make those kinds of plays. They saw flashes of it during his rookie season, and they saw even more during the offseason as he made the strides that led to his new role as a starter in the "No-Fly Zone."

"Justin is obviously a great young player, very intelligent, very athletic," Head Coach Vance Joseph said. "That play he made tonight was a big-time play, and that's what we've seen from this guy the last four or five months. So moving forward, he's going to get better and better as he plays more football, but I've been very pleased with how he's handled himself as a first-time starter."

Siemian Says: Red-zone efficiency, situational awareness key to converting opportunities

By Aric DiLalla
DenverBroncos.com
October 2, 2017

Sixteen points could've been more.

Far more.

That seemed to be Trevor Siemian's take after Sunday's 16-10 win, a game in which the Broncos excelled in the first quarter and struggled offensively the rest of the way. During that first period, the Broncos put up 140 yards and 10 points and earned eight first downs while holding the ball for nine minutes and 21 seconds. Siemian went 7-of-9 for 115 yards, one touchdown and a 155.8 quarterback rating.

But the rest of the way, Siemian added just 64 passing yards to his total as he completed nine more passes.

"It was interesting," Siemian said. "I just felt like we were always, like, one play away from really getting momentum, seizing momentum. We just didn't really have a rhythm. They did a really good job of mixing up coverages and defenses and safety pressure — some good things on their end. They kept us on our toes.

"We've got to find a way to kind of stay in that rhythm, stay on the field and get it to our guys."

There was no place that lack of rhythm manifested itself more than in the red zone, where the Broncos failed to score a touchdown on all four of their official red-zone trips.

Late in the first quarter, a pass interference call on free safety Reggie Nelson gave the Broncos the ball at the Oakland 9-yard line. C.J. Anderson picked up 3 yards on first down and gained another yard on second to move Denver to the 5-yard line. A false start on left tackle Garrett Bolles pushed the Broncos back, though, and Siemian was flushed out of the pocket on third down and had to throw the ball away.

The Broncos wouldn't return to the red zone until their first drive of the third quarter, and it wasn't a true red-zone trip. On third-and-7, Siemian scrambled to the Oakland 18-yard line, but that fourth-down play was the only one Denver snapped inside the 20-yard line.

On their next drive, though, the Broncos missed an opportunity to take advantage of positive field position that stemmed from an Isaiah McKenzie punt return. Siemian was sacked by Khalil Mack for an 8-yard loss, and Denver had to settle for a Brandon McManus field goal.

That likely wouldn't be deemed a good sack under Siemian's evaluation method, which he explained following Sunday's game.

“I just think you understand, kind of situationally, you’re backed up, you’re obviously not taking any sacks,” Siemian said. “You’re in the red zone, you’re really down low and it’s third-and-5, you take a sack and you kick a 25-yard field goal vs. a 20-yard field goal. It’s not that big of a difference.

“That’s something I’m trying to get better at, just kind of having situational awareness. There’s times to throw it away, and there’s times to take a sack and it’s a good sack. Those are things I’m working on. I’ll look back and see how I did.”

To Siemian’s credit, he avoided sacks that would’ve pushed the Broncos out of field-goal range, and the four he took Sunday were for a combined 24 yards.

There’s still room, however, for Siemian and the Broncos offense to improve. The upcoming bye week should give the team plenty of time to evaluate these situations, like the one that came off a failed fake punt in the fourth quarter.

In that sudden-change situation, the Broncos again failed to punch the ball in. After a completion to Emmanuel Sanders brought Denver to the 4-yard line, Siemian had a pass batted at the line of scrimmage that hung in the air until Sanders caught it for a 10-yard loss.

Denver couldn’t make up the lost ground, and McManus missed a 29-yard field goal to keep the Raiders within striking distance.

“I think we’re hurting ourselves down there,” Siemian said. “I’ve got to watch everything, but got to find a way to get touchdowns instead of field goals — which, I thought the first week, we did a good job of.

“We’ll figure it out, we’ll clean it up on the bye and be ready to go.”

Defining Moments: Broncos 16, Raiders 10

By Aric DiLalla
DenverBroncos.com
October 2, 2017

These were the plays that led to the Broncos' win on Sunday over the Raiders.

Starting off right

On the Broncos' second drive of the game, they marched 88 yards in seven plays to take an early 7-0 lead. Trevor Siemian found Bennie Fowler III for a pair of catches that went for 17 yards and 18 yards, respectively, and helped the Broncos move near midfield. Siemian then turned to A.J. Derby. First, he found the tight end for a 29-yard gain that brought Denver to the cusp of the red zone. On the very next play, Siemian targeted Derby again, this time down the right sideline. Derby stabbed at the ball with one hand, gained control and held on as he ran into the end zone. The early score would be the only touchdown for the Broncos all afternoon.

Stuffed behind the line

The Broncos stopped the Raiders on all three of Oakland's fourth-down attempts in the game, but the most impressive may have come early in the second quarter. Down 10-0, Jack Del Rio kept his offense on the field for a fourth-and-1 from the Denver 31-yard line. The Raiders handed the ball to bruising running back Marshawn Lynch, but safety Will Parks knifed in to stop him for no gain.

Breaking one off

On the Broncos' first possession of the second half, C.J. Anderson broke through the line for the Broncos' longest run of the season. The 40-yard scamper gave the Broncos the ball at the Oakland 25-yard line and allowed them to take a 13-7 lead in the moments that followed.

Weaving his way through

With the Broncos holding a six-point lead, punt returner Isaiah McKenzie put his team in position to grab a two-possession lead. After catching the ball at the Denver 40-yard line, McKenzie weaved his way along the left sideline to pick up 29 yards and give the Broncos great starting field position. Though the Broncos' offense couldn't move the ball into the end zone, McKenzie's return put Brandon McManus in position for a 46-yard field goal.

Can't fool us

Just after Derek Carr left the game with an apparent lower-back injury, Oakland reached into its playbook to generate offense. On fourth-and-11 from the Oakland 33-yard line, the Raiders tried to get tricky. When Raiders punter Marquette King caught the snap, he took off to his right and tried to run for the first down. Jordan Taylor read the play perfectly, though, and stopped King well short of the first-down marker. An unsportsmanlike conduct penalty on King gave the Broncos another 15 yards and halted an Oakland drive.

Von being Von

On backup quarterback EJ Manuel's first full drive, he was introduced to outside linebacker Von Miller. On third-and-4, Miller flew around the Raiders' right tackle without being touched and picked up his fourth sack of the season. Miller now has 84 career sacks, the most in the league since 2011.

Sealing a victory

On the Raiders' final chance to steal a win, the Broncos' defense came up big. Manuel looked deep for Amari Cooper on second-and-15 from the Denver 41-yard line, but safety Justin Simmons jumped to pick off the pass and end the Raiders' day.

The Broncos have other promotions here, in addition to following promotions available the day after the game:

- Papa John's is offering the "When the Broncos win, you win!" promotion, which gives fans 50 percent off regular menu price online orders the day after every Broncos win with promo code "Broncos"
- Download the McDonald's app for free Broncos gameday offers! Additionally, get a \$1 Big Mac sandwich or Sausage McMuffin with Egg the day after every Broncos Game as well as 30 percent off any hat after every Broncos game at Denver Broncos Team Stores with the McDonald's key tag.
- At participating Conoco stations, grab a free 12oz cup of coffee between 6 a.m. and 10 a.m. the day after a Broncos win.
- At King Soopers, get a free raised or cake donut -- just swipe your SooperCard the day after a Broncos win.

Injury updates vs. the Oakland Raiders

By Aric DiLalla

DenverBroncos.com

October 2, 2017

Stay tuned to this page for a running list of injury updates during Sunday's game against the Oakland Raiders.

4:23 MT: Offensive tackle Menelik Watson was helped off the field after he was rolled up on during a running play with 6:21 to play in the third quarter.

Watson would return to action.

4:30 MT: Guard Max Garcia was helped off the field following a field goal in the third quarter.

Garcia later returned to the game.

Statement from the Broncos

By Staff

DenverBroncos.com

October 2, 2017

Please see below for a statement from the Denver Broncos:

“Broncos Minority Owner John Bowlen, accompanied by his advisor, indicated at our Sept. 18 board meeting that he is extremely pleased with the way the organization is being operated under Joe Ellis in the absence of his brother, Owner Pat Bowlen.

“John has never made any statements to the contrary, and at this meeting he voiced his full support for the contract extensions given to Ellis and other key team executives. John also indicated that although he is not actively looking to sell his minority, non-voting stake in the team, he recently was approached by someone who expressed interest in his share of the team.

“This afternoon, John informed multiple members of the organization that the opinions attributed to him by an anonymous source in a media report did not come from him and do not represent his views.

“As it relates to Owner Pat Bowlen’s controlling interest of the Denver Broncos, it is not for sale. The Pat Bowlen Trust is continuing to execute Pat’s succession plan with the hope of keeping the team in the Bowlen family.”

Paul Klee: Behind "No Fly Zone" and "Ground Control," Broncos must never apologize for beating Raiders

By Paul Klee
Colorado Springs Gazette
October 2, 2017

Just win.

Maybe?

Never apologize for beating the Raiders. Not Sunday, when it was bumpy and disjointed on offense. "We couldn't find a rhythm," Broncos quarterback Trevor Siemian said. Not in Los Angeles (back in the day), Ughland (now), Las Vegas (in 2019, thankfully) or on the moon. Never, ever, ever.

"I love my Mom," Bay Area native C.J. Anderson said after Denver just (barely) won, 16-10. "She loves me."

Neva Craig loves her C.J., all right — as much as she loves her Raiders. And that's a lot, enough that on Sunday, under the autumn chill at Mile High, Mom wore her Broncos-orange No. 22 jersey — beneath the familiar comfort of a black Raiders jacket. When C.J. got the ball, she cheered like Mom does. When the Raiders got the ball, she did the same. Now that's true love.

"I knew she was going to do that," said Anderson, a family man, who once used his first big paycheck to buy a new car for his grandmother, Barbara Gaddies, to replace her A/C-less 1997 Saturn. "She loves her team."

NFL rivalries are different now. Different in that it's accepted — applauded, even — when Broncos sackmaster Von Miller hosts Raiders sackmaster Khalil Mack for a pass-rushing meeting of the minds in the offseason. That sprung to mind Sunday as Mack said "howdy" to Siemian with a pair of punishing sacks. Sure that's a good idea, Von?

The Broncos never trailed but never buried the Raiders, either. It will be different, too, when the Broncos travel to Ughland for the rematch on Nov. 26. Las Vegas soon will be the Raiders' home, but Denver lately has owned Oakland. The Broncos are 10-2 against the Raiders since Tebow Time. Over those 12 games the Broncos beat the Raiders by an average of two touchdowns.

The rivalry doesn't mean as much to the players as it means to the fans. The players are about that business, boss. And it was bad for Shelby Harris' business when, after two years with the Raiders, he was cut by the Raiders. Now Harris is a 289-pound force for the best run defense in the NFL.

"It felt especially good today," Harris said afterward in the winning locker room.

The Broncos are 3-1 heading into their bye week. They haven't been perfect, but they have been promising, and there has been more good than bad. The good: Denver's work in the running game — on offense and on defense — is the stuff Super Bowl teams are made of. When a team ranks first in rushing 'D' and third in rushing 'O', it's a title threat. Those are the rules.

The bad: the Broncos 'O' is a one-trick pony. The offensive line must be better in pass protection so Siemian makes it through the season. Siemian must be better passing so the Broncos make it to the postseason. The Broncos paid Demaryius Thomas \$781,250, according to Spotrac.com, for one catch on Sunday. They paid Emmanuel Sanders \$428,125 for four catches. The most talented players on offense must be targeted more than 10 times in a game.

"I just felt like we were always one play away from really getting momentum," Siemian said.

As I wrote this in the press box at Mile High, boos rained down on Sunday Night Football — boos from the crowd in Seattle, directed at the Seahawks who kneeled for the national anthem. The Broncos stood, the Raiders mostly stood (aside from Marshawn Lynch, who sat on the bench). At kickoff there were more empty seats than I could remember for a Broncos-Raiders game at Mile High. Traffic? Dissent? Protest fatigue? You know better than I.

Football-wise, what Denver is doing on defense, against the run, trumps all else. The "No Fly Zone" ended Sunday's game with an interception by safety Justin Simmons. "No Fly" now has a worthy dance partner — "Ground Control." All-Star tailbacks Melvin Gordon, Ezekiel Elliott, LeSean McCoy and Marshawn Lynch have 12 Pro Bowls among them. They averaged 1.9 yards per carry vs. the Broncos. For all the hype heaped on the offensive lines from Dallas and Oakland, the Broncos run defense stuffed them like flounder.

"It doesn't stop here," Adam Gotsis said.

Sorry, not sorry.

"Who's next?" Derek Wolfe said. "That's what I say."

The Broncos should never, ever apologize for beating the Raiders.

Woody Paige: Broncos become men on the run

By Woody Paige
Colorado Springs Gazette
October 2, 2017

For the lines, they are a changin'.

The Broncos' 3-4 defensive linemen and linebackers have morphed into The Magnificent 7 bulwark. And the offense is propounding Run AC/DB

In four games behind a new, improved offensive line, C.J. Anderson, Jamaal Charles, De'Angelo Henderson and now Devontae Booker primarily are responsible for 572 rushing yards (143-yard average), which places the Broncos among the NFL elite.

On defense, the Broncos' front has held runners to only 203 yards – 50.75 per game. The Broncos probably will be No. 1 in the league approaching their bye week.

Last season the Broncos finished 27th in the run game (88.3 yards per game) and 28th against the run (130.3).

For the times, they are a changin', Bob Dylan.

This is the offense, and the defense, the Broncos have been pursuing for years. A No-Rush Zone to go with the No-Fly Zone, a running game to consume time and win close games.

The Broncos didn't dominate the Raiders on Sunday, but they ran them down and shut them up. Boring, maybe, and close, for sure, but the Broncos have won three in a row at home with a style Lombardi and Kubiak would admire.

Run, and stop the runners.

Rodin's Thinker should consider: Four of the NFL's prime-stake running have been limited to a cumulative total of fewer than 100 yards.

In the opener the Chargers' Melvin Gordon had 18 carries for 54 yards. San Diego ended up with a measly 64 yards on 22 rushing attempts.

Then the Cowboys' Ezekiel Elliott, the league's premier rusher as a rookie, flew into Denver, and crawled out after running (?) nine times for eight yards. Eight! Dallas finished with 40 rushing yards, most of them by quarterback Dak Prescott.

In Buffalo, where the Broncos did lose, LeSean McCoy produced a shady effort – 14 rushes for 21 yards – a 1.5-yard average. The Broncos' defense rationed out just 75 yards on the grass.

And, on Sunday, Marshawn Lynch, who has returned to the NFL and gone home to Oakland, arrived to challenged defensive ends Derek Wolfe and Adam Gotsis, and nose tackle Domata Peko Sr., and linebackers Von Miller, Brandon Marshall, Todd Davis and Shaq Barrett.

Beast Mode was transformed into Least Mode.

He managed 432 ... inches while being stuffed on nine tries.

The Raiders got 24 yards rushing, while the Broncos had almost six times as many (143).

The Magnificent 7 is ready and waiting for the Chiefs' Kareem ""Of the Crop"" Hunt in several weeks.

The Broncos are big in the trenches and twisting like wrenches.

Jack Del Rio, the Broncos' former defensive coordinator, was lamenting his offense's effort. ""Players, coaches, scheme, (play) calling – it all adds up ... The inability to run the ball with our physical group is the most disappointing.”

Broncos coach Vance Joseph piled praised on his team's ability to run, run, run and constrain the rush, rush, rush. “We rushed for (143) yards, so absolutely pleased with the entire offense as running the football.”

On the other side, “Again, our run defense has been stout the entire year. I have been very proud of how these guys have played the run. With a back like that and offensive line like that, that's really special.”

And that's that.

Barrett said he wasn't sure what the Raiders' longest run was, but “I'm pretty sure it wasn't very long if they only had 24 yards.”

The longest run gain for Oakland was 21 feet.

Anderson had a 40-yard run, and Charles a 16-yarder for the Broncos. They have been come together like peanut butter and jelly.

“Keep grinding, trust your boys up front and things will happen. That's what happened (Sunday),” Anderson said.

His idol, Terrell Davis, must be proud, and the Broncos' old Orange Crush defense, returning soon for a reunion, must be pleased.

With 7:13 remaining in the third quarter, the Broncos, ahead only by six, started a possession at the Raiders' 31. There was only one wideout as lineman Donald Stephenson reported in as an eligible receiver. There is no play in the book for Stephenson to catch anything.

The Broncos were going to run, and challenged the Raiders to respond.

The game was decided at the end by a Justin Simmons interception.

The Broncos and 76,909 observers had felt the rush of exhilaration.

Derby's sensational one-handed catch helps push Broncos to victory

By David Ramsey
Colorado Springs Gazette
October 2, 2017

A.J. Derby made a supremely difficult catch look easy.

In the first quarter of the Broncos 16-10 victory over the Raiders, quarterback Trevor Siemian lofted a pass to Derby on the west sideline. The pass looked overthrown, just out of Derby's reach.

But Derby reached high into the air with his right hand, seized the ball with that one hand, stayed in-bounds and trotted into the end zone.

"That was a pretty good catch," Siemian said of the 29-yard TD catch that was much more than pretty good.

After the game, Derby said he had yet to watch a catch that much of The Front Range had seen.

"I haven't seen it," he said, "so I'm just ready to go watch it and try to get better for the next time we play."

The next time might be different. The Raiders might send more defenders his way.

On Sunday, Raiders defenders concentrated on Demaryius Thomas and Emmanuel Sanders, which allowed Derby to find open spaces. He finished with four catches for 75 yards on a day when Thomas and Sanders combined for only 38 yards.

It was the best day of Derby's career.

"It felt great," he said. "I felt like I've been running good routes all year and now I'm just trying to keep making plays."

Rapid Reaction: Broncos trudge to victory over stumbling Raiders

By David Ramsey
Colorado Springs Gazette
October 2, 2017

The Broncos victory over the Raiders was not dazzling.

It was familiar.

Two seasons ago, the Broncos marched to a Super Bowl title with wins like the one we watched Sunday afternoon. The Broncos trudged to a 16-10 win over the Raiders and they let their arch-rivals stay breathing for far too long.

In other words, the Broncos followed the script of the 2015 season, when they barely won week after week.

The Raiders (2-2) face a tough road to the playoffs. I'm not saying the Raiders are done. I am saying they will struggle to arrive in the postseason.

The Broncos looked mighty two weeks ago against the Bills. They have seldom looked mighty since, but they are 3-1 and the road to the playoffs is wide open.

Here are three reasons why the Broncos outlasted the Raiders:

One – A spectacular catch

A.J. Derby's 22-yard touchdown catch in the first quarter traveled somewhere beyond spectacular. When you watch the replay, be sure to take a close look at Derby's eyes. He lowers his view to the field almost as soon as the ball touches his right hand.

The Broncos offense never looked so crisp again.

Two – Stone hands by the Raiders

EJ Manuel performed noble work at quarterback after Derek Carr left the game with an injured neck. Manuel, who weighs a hefty 235 pounds, nearly cut the Broncos lead to 16-14 on a smooth drive in the fourth quarter.

If the Raiders had scored a touchdown instead of a field goal, The Front Range might have been a grumpy destination today.

Manuel placed touchdown passes in his Jared Cook's hands twice on the drive. One problem: Cook failed to catch both passes.

Granted, the pass on first down was a tough catch, and Cook almost held on for the touchdown.

Manuel's third-down throw to Jared Cook was a thing of beauty. Perfect throw, but it bounced - and it really bounced - right off Cook's hands.

Boxer Roberto Duran was known for his "hands of stone."

Cook deserves the same description.

Three – The Broncos defense

After three quarters, the Raiders had five first downs, 160 net yards and failed on 9-of-10 third downs. The offense revived in the fourth quarter, but the Raiders rush attack never woke up. Oakland finished with only 24 yards on the ground.

In 2015, the Broncos offense was mediocre, but an elite, violent defense carried the franchise to NFL supremacy.

For three quarters, the Broncos defense again looked violent and elite.

Raiders' offensive woes piling up with Derek Carr ailing, run game disappearing

By Lindsay Jones
USA Today
October 2, 2017

As much as Derek Carr has become the face of the Oakland Raiders offense, the team's heart is in its offensive line, one of the biggest and highest-paid units in the NFL.

Or at least it's supposed to be.

What's so concerning to the Raiders as they lost 16-10 to the Denver Broncos wasn't just that Carr was hobbled by back spasms. It was that for a second consecutive game, Oakland was disrupted up front.

The Raiders had just 32 rushing yards in a loss last week to the Washington Redskins, yet the output worsened Sunday with just 24 yards on 15 carries, including 12 yards (on nine carries) for veteran running back Marshawn Lynch.

"We've been out of rhythm for too long," head coach Jack Del Rio said. "Our inability to run the ball, with our physical group, is the most disappointing. We have to get that rectified, and we will."

Contrast that with a game against the Broncos in Oakland last November, when the Raiders rushed for 218 yards. The Raiders had a different starting tailback in that game (Latavius Murray, who signed with the Vikings in March), but four of the same five offensive linemen. The only change was at right tackle, where Marshall Newhouse has replaced Menelik Watson, who now plays for the Broncos.

The Raiders have invested a league-high 26% of their salary cap in the offensive line, according to Spotrac. They have become accustomed to the ground game to take over when the passing game is ailing, as it has been for the past two weeks.

"I'm kind of like you all too. I can't wait to get on this plane and look at this film, because I want answers too," left tackle Donald Penn said. "I'm ready to get on my iPad so I can get some answers too and figure out what exactly went wrong. We've got to figure it out."

Del Rio was optimistic Sunday evening that Carr would be able to return quickly, but the quarterback was still in significant discomfort as he left Sports Authority Field at Mile High.

Carr was first examined inside a blue tent on the Raiders' sideline in the fourth quarter and then retreated to the locker room, where athletic trainers tried to get the spasms to subside. Carr, watching on TV as his backup EJ Manuel tried to lead a fourth-quarter rally, had an X-Ray and then tried to throw, but the pain was still too severe for him to return.

"It just wasn't ready," Carr said. "Not saying it won't be, it just wasn't today."

Del Rio sounded optimistic about Carr's prognosis postgame, and the quarterback tried to echo that enthusiasm. But Carr's status will now just be one more issue a reeling Raiders team must address as

they return to Oakland for a three-game home stand. Oakland faces the Baltimore Ravens next week before a pair of division games against the Los Angeles Chargers and Kansas Chiefs.

After Sunday's loss, the Raiders now trail both the Broncos (3-1) and Chiefs (3-0) in the competitive AFC West. The Chiefs, who host the Washington Redskins on Monday night, are the NFL's last remaining unbeaten team.

Inside the visitors postgame locker room in Denver, Raiders players seemed to know that any chance of improvement would start with the running game.

Certainly the Broncos' run defense, which was allowing just 60 rushing yards per game over the first three weeks, had a big role in Sunday's struggles for Oakland. Denver consistently hit Lynch at or behind the line of scrimmage and prevented him from breaking free of tackles in his typical fashion.

The Raiders, who fell behind 7-0 early in the first quarter, attempted just 14 running plays, and only a few of them were designed to go anywhere but between the tackles.

"I can't sit here and tell you who or what is the biggest culprit, so to me, I will take the responsibility myself," Del Rio said. "Just put it on me and say that coach says we are going to get it fixed. We will work at it together."

Raiders' offensive woes piling up with Derek Carr ailing, run game disappearing

By Lindsay Jones
USA Today
October 2, 2017

The Oakland Raiders lost quarterback Derek Carr to a back injury late in the third quarter Sunday, and then they lost even more ground in the competitive AFC West with a 16-10 loss to the Denver Broncos.

The Raiders have now dropped two consecutive road games and fall to third place behind the 3-0 Kansas City Chiefs, who host the Washington Redskins on Monday, and the 3-1 Broncos.

The Raiders were trailing 16-7 when Carr was injured in what was another ugly offensive performance for Oakland. The Raiders' lone touchdown came on a 64-yard touchdown from Carr to receiver Johnny Holton. Backup EJ Manuel led a field goal drive to cut Denver's lead to six points with 5:23 remaining, but Broncos safety Justin Simmons' interception with 1:46 remaining ended Oakland's rally.

While Denver's offense was again uninspiring – its only touchdown, a 22-yard pass from Trevor Siemian to tight end A.J. Derby came on the first drive of the game – the defense put together yet another impressive performance in holding the Raiders to just 24 rushing yards.

Raiders running back Marshawn Lynch had just 12 rushing yards on nine carries in a shutdown performance that has become standard for Denver's defense. The Broncos have held each of their first four opponents to fewer than 75 rushing yards.

That's a significant change from last year, when the Raiders rushed for 218 yards against Denver in a 30-20 Raiders win in Oakland.

The Broncos' offseason plan was as much a response to that game as anything, with general manager John Elway signing a trio of defensive tackles, Domata Peko, Zach Kerr and Shelby Harris, in free agency. It was Harris, a former Raider who spent part of last season on the Cowboys' practice squad, who made the initial hit on Carr that knocked the Raiders' quarterback from the game.

Carr landed awkwardly as Broncos' defensive end Adam Gotsis wrung an arm around the quarterback's neck.

The Raiders were poised to win the AFC West last season before Carr suffered a broken leg in Week 16. Oakland lost the season finale and then fell in the wild-card round without him.

C.J. Anderson gives Broncos reason to cheer, even as mom is torn by Raiders fandom

By Lindsay Jones
USA Today
October 2, 2017

C.J. Anderson tucked a white, grass-stained No. 24 jersey under his arm, cradling the souvenir as he made his exit from the Denver Broncos locker room Sunday evening after the Broncos' 16-10 win over the Raiders.

The Marshawn Lynch jersey wasn't heading home with Anderson, however. The running back's final carry of the day was to bring that jersey straight to his mother, Neva Craig, whose loyalties were still torn during the game between her son's team and her hometown Oakland Raiders.

Craig wore an orange Broncos jersey Sunday – under a black Raiders jacket.

"That's just her," Anderson told USA TODAY Sports, adding that he knew his mom was planning to wear the Raiders gear to Sports Authority Field at Mile High.

Anderson, who is from Vallejo, Calif., just north of Oakland, has been friends with Lynch, the Raiders' hometown star, for years. Like Lynch, Anderson also played running back at the University of California. Their families are friendly, too.

"That's her other son," Anderson said, referring to Lynch.

If Anderson was the little brother in this relationship for so long, it's hard to argue who is the better running back right now.

Anderson rushed for 95 yards on 20 carries – with 40 of those coming on one second-half run. Jamaal Charles added 33 rushing yards on five carries, and Devontae Booker had 14 in his first action of the season.

For Anderson, it was his third game with at least 20 carries this year, with his heavier work load coinciding with the Broncos' three wins. He had just eight rushing attempts in the Broncos' loss to the Buffalo Bills last week.

That's a stark difference from last season, in which he had only two games with 20 carries all of last season, in Weeks 1 and 2, and suffered a season-ending knee injury in mid-October.

Anderson reduced his body fat in the offseason, hoping that getting leaner would not just make him faster, but also help him handle a heavier work load. So far, it is working.

Anderson and the running game, with a surprising boost from Charles, the longtime Kansas City Chief who joined the Broncos in May, has been the bright spot of the Broncos' offense during their 3-1 start.

With an average of 143 yards per game, the Broncos are tied for third for the league's best rushing attack through four games.

"We just want to keep that going. Impose our will and control the game we want to," Anderson said.

Rams Are Great, Patriots Are Not and More NFL Oddities ‘Nobody Saw Coming’ After Four Weeks

By Peter King

MMQB

October 2, 2017

We’re almost 25 percent of the way through the 2017 season (28 of 32 teams have played four of their 16 games as of this morning), and this is what blows me away about the NFL through the first quarter:

- The Rams are the story of the year, with the coach of the first quarter in 31-year-old Sean McVay (nudging Andy Reid) bizarrely turning a moribund offense into the best offense of the first month.
- If you had the Rams, Texans and Jags as three of the four highest-scoring offenses in the NFL after a quarter of the season, you’re officially very smart about football.
- The President Donald Trump-spawned kneel/sit/stand/fist-raise anthem hullabaloo is the football news story of the first quarter, to be sure. It reached peak hilarity Sunday in Baltimore, when the PA announcer asked the crowd to pray for “kindness, unity, equality and justice” in America, and the Ravens dropped to one knee and bowed their heads in prayer, and this is what happened: “BOOOOOOOOOO!”
- The guru of defensive gurus, Bill Belichick, who might go down as the best defensive coach in history, has the worst D in football.
- Deshaun Watson had led the Texans to 90 points in the past two games, his second and third NFL starts. That’s more points than 16 teams have scored this season.
- The Bills are 3-1. Coach Sean McDermott has made a very big deal (some inside the team would say an obnoxiously big deal) about not turning the ball over. The Bills turned it over on their first possession of the season, a tipped interception. In their 43 possessions since: zero turnovers ... including another clean game in Sunday’s 23-17 upset of Atlanta.
- The 86th pick in the draft, Kareem Hunt, leads the NFL in rushing with 401 yards—and he’s the only back among the top 20 rushers to have played in three games so far, not four.
- The Giants, one of the logical NFC Super Bowl picks in August, are 0-4. They’ve lost two straight games on walkoff field goals.
- Sunday: Buffalo (on the road) 23, Atlanta 17 ... Rams (on the road) 35, Dallas 20 ... Carolina (on the road) 33, New England 30. In the outlier game: Houston (at home) 57, Tennessee 14. Fifty-seven on a Dick LeBeau team, with a rookie quarterback doing the damage.

“Nobody saw a lot of these coming,” McVay said over the phone from Texas on Sunday afternoon. “But that’s the NFL every year, isn’t it?”

McVay is scary precocious. It showed in his post-game scrum with the team Sunday, after the Rams walked into Jerry World and beat the Cowboys 35-30. He sounded like a veteran head coach, not one who 11 years ago this week was walking across the Miami (Ohio) campus in Oxford, Ohio, scurrying to class as a senior.

“Love the way you guys continue to compete from first snap to last snap!” he barked, all eyes on him. “Great win! Three-and-one—we accomplished our goal of finishing the first quarter that way. Enjoy it! Love you guys. Love where we’re going.” Then he handed out game balls to kicker Greg Zeurlein and defensive coordinator Wade Phillips (for beating the team he used to head-coach) ... and told Phillips to break the team down, and then snuck out of the way so Phillips could be the center of attention for a few moments.

Not only did it look like McVay had been there before at the ripe old age of 31, but he let Phillips have the moment. Smart move. McVay’s made a lot of those. Like running some involved pass plays for Jared Goff on first downs, when foes are gearing for the run and again-brilliant back Todd Gurley, and when Goff can take advantage of play-action to get some route combinations when he knows he’ll have someone open. “What I like about the offense is I know I’ll always have a receiver open,” Goff told me in training camp. What’s also helped: picking up Sammy Watkins in trade, Robert Woods in free agency, and Cooper Kupp in the draft. Along with speedy but heretofore underachieving Tavon Austin, that’s a very good top four receiver group. McVay’s route combinations create the kind of traffic that ensures Goff will keep seeing open receivers.

“What I’ve appreciated about Jared,” McVay said Sunday, “is that no pressure gets to him. No moment’s felt too big for him, not even today on a stage like this, in this stadium against the Dallas Cowboys. He’s very even-keel.”

Add two veteran linemen—left tackle Andrew Whitworth and center John Sullivan—and Gurley’s impact (596 total yards, seven touchdowns), and you’ve got the kind of difference-making on the ground the 2016 Rams just didn’t have. Gurley couldn’t breathe last season. “This guy is a hell of a versatile back,” McVay said. “Maybe he’s not [Darren] Sproles as a receiver out of the backfield, but I think he’s excellent in the open field, which is one of the reasons you really want him to catch balls in space.”

Also: GM Les Snead was on a cold streak at the end of last season, when he barely survived the ax that got Jeff Fisher. But Whitworth was a superior signing. Sullivan and Woods have become major additions. Snead’s architecture and McVay’s could have the Rams in contention in December, and who’d have thought that would happen with a coach who gets carded in L.A.

Said McVay: “We’re growing. We’re going in the right direction.” To put it mildly.

Think of Houston’s long streak of quarterback futility through two weeks this season: 21 straight games of never scoring 30 points, despite spending \$72 million on Brock Osweiler last year, despite trading two first-round picks to acquire Watson this year. But then Watson dueled Tom Brady and put up 33 points in a loss to the Patriots last week, and this week put up a franchise-record 57 in front of a disbelieving home crowd Sunday.

The disbelieving crowd included a disbelieving owner.

“We’ve never had this kind of offense before,” said Bob McNair, who founded the team in 2002. “What was the final—57 points? We’ve never scored 57 points before. That’s sounding more like a basketball game.”

The expectation about Watson was probably unfair to begin. When he was drafted, he was transitioning from a wide-open spread scheme at Clemson to a fairly conservative, balanced O’Brien offensive scheme. It was expected Watson might play at some point this year, but not the majority of the year as long as Tom Savage stayed healthy. But in the summer, during the time the Texans were off before training camp, coach Bill O’Brien would throw Watson the occasional text with a quiz, to see how advanced he was, and how much he’d studied in the spring and early summer. O’Brien marveled at never being able to stump Watson. Maybe we should have expected this. After all, there’s one quarterback in history who’s thrown for more than 400 yards against a Nick Saban-coached defense twice. Only one. Watson.

“He’s seeing a lot of different things—third-down blitzes for the first time, red area things for the first time,” O’Brien said. “I think he’s made some really good decisions. That’s the kind of guy he is. He’s a very calm guy. He’s a very thoughtful guy.”

So far for Watson, he’s started against Cincinnati on a short-week Thursday (win), started against Tom Brady in a Foxboro duel (loss) and at home for the first time against rising Tennessee (43-point win). Next week: The last unbeaten team (at least till Monday night) in the NFL, Kansas City, is at Houston. Every week’s a test with Alabama-like pressure.

Three & Out: Derek Carr Suffers Back Injury as Raiders Lose To Broncos

By Michael Beller

MMQB

October 2, 2017

1. We're on Derek Carr watch. The Raiders know what life looks like without Carr, and it isn't pretty. Oakland's renaissance 2016 season came to an abrupt end after Carr broke his leg at the end of the regular season; Oakland had already clinched a playoff berth at that point, but stood little chance in their wild-card game against the Texans.

Carr left in the third quarter of the Raiders' loss to the Broncos on Sunday after taking on awkward hit in the backfield. The Raiders labeled the injury as back spasms, and Carr was unable to return to the game, leaving the offense in the hands of E.J. Manuel. Carr didn't look to be in serious pain when he walked to the locker room, but there won't be any telling how serious the injury is until the team evaluates it further early this week. Given the strength of the AFC West, the Raiders could be in serious trouble if Carr is forced to miss multiple weeks.

2. Denver's defense is the class of the league. The Broncos entered Week 4 allowing a league-best 263 yards per game, and they improved that number by holding the Raiders to 251 yards. Denver wasn't much better offensively, totaling just 298 yards, but they were in complete control of the game. They had the ball for more than 60% of the time, won the turnover battle, held the Raiders to 11 first downs and 4.6 yards per play, and led from wire to wire. The defense has held three of its four opponents to 21 points or fewer, keeping offenses led by Philip Rivers, Dak Prescott and Carr in check. The team will need more consistent offense to stick with the Chiefs and Raiders in the loaded AFC West, but their defense will have them in the playoff hunt all season.

3. Every AFC West divisional game will be a must-watch. The Chiefs are 3-0 and host the Redskins on Monday Night Football. The Raiders moved to 3-1 with the win over the Raiders, while the visitors fell to 2-2. The Chargers, after losing at home to the Eagles, are one of the most dangerous 0-4 teams in recent memory. Assuming Carr doesn't miss too much time, the top-three teams in the AFC West are all threats to win the division. That will make any time two of them get together appointment television with playoff implications. The Broncos are 2-0 in the division, with wins over the Raiders and Chargers. The first-place Chiefs have yet to play the Broncos or Raiders, but they own possibly the most impressive win in the division, their Week 1 42-27 thrashing of the Patriots. The Raiders loss to the Broncos on Sunday was their first division game of the season. The way these three teams perform in their remaining division games could determine who wins the AFC West, who gets a wild card spot, and who falls short of the playoffs.

Derek Carr leaves Broncos game early with back injury after being hit

By Frank Schwab
Yahoo! Sports
October 2, 2017

Every Oakland Raiders fan cringed on Sunday afternoon when quarterback Derek Carr was hit, grabbed his back and didn't get up right away in a 16-10 loss in Denver.

Carr was scrambling around to avoid the pass rush when he ran forward. Carr was going down and was hit high by Denver Broncos lineman Adam Gotsis. Carr's torso bent forward and he immediately reached for his back.

Carr was down for a few moments, but eventually walked off under his own power. EJ Manuel replaced him at quarterback. After Manuel finished out the series, Carr walked back to the locker room gingerly. Raiders coach Jack Del Rio said Carr's back tightened up and made it sound like this won't be a long-term issue.

It was a strange coincidence that Tony Romo was calling the game for CBS. Romo was tackled on a similar play last year, in which he was tackled and bent forward in the preseason and injured his back. Romo would never start a game for the Cowboys again.

It was a bad flashback for Raiders fans. Last season Carr was tackled in an awkward way late in the season against the Indianapolis Colts, and broke his leg. The Raiders completely fell apart without him in Week 17 and a playoff game against the Houston Texans.

The Raiders had Super Bowl hopes this season, but that's obviously centered around Carr, who briefly became the highest paid player in NFL history this summer. Now the Raiders need to hope their franchise quarterback is OK, or their season could go sour quickly.

Broncos blot out Beast Mode with revived run defense

By Michael Silver

NFL.com

October 2, 2017

They muted Melvin Gordon, erased Ezekiel Elliott and snuffed Shady, a.k.a. LeSean McCoy. So when the Denver Broncos suited up Sunday for a battle with the Oakland Raiders and their punishing, recently unretired running back, they were fairly confident they could blot out Beast Mode, too.

Nine carries for 12 yards later, Marshawn Lynch had been made painfully aware of a new reality in the Rockies: The Broncos, who last year seemed to be defending opposing runners with red capes and shouts of "Toro!" have called B.S. on that state of affairs. Four games into the 2017 season, it's clear that Denver is giving no ground -- and that's a major reason it looks poised to make some serious noise in the AFC.

In a battle of AFC West rivals coming off disappointing defeats, the Broncos (3-1) smothered the Raiders' offense in a 16-10 victory at Sports Authority Field, sending 76,909 fans home happy after safety Justin Simmons made a game-clinching interception at the Denver 8-yard-line with 1:46 remaining. And while the newest member of the No Fly Zone may have finished things, it was the No Room To Run crew which once again set the tone against suddenly struggling Oakland (2-2).

"We're gonna shut down everybody we play, I promise you," said inside linebacker Brandon Marshall, who had six tackles on Sunday. "We just have a different tenacity about us this year, a different mindset. A lot of guys came back stronger and more focused. We're just more aggressive, more confident."

Marshall and his fellow defenders' collective self esteem surely got a massive boost on Sunday, after Denver limited the Raiders to 24 rushing yards on 15 carries. It was the stylistic opposite of the two teams' first meeting last season: In an early November Sunday night game in Oakland, the Broncos allowed 218 yards on the ground in a 30-20 defeat.

Coming off a Super Bowl 50 victory keyed by its dominant defense, Denver sputtered to a 9-7 record in 2016, missing the playoffs. The Broncos finished the season with the NFL's fourth-ranked defense -- first against the pass, and 28th against the run.

"We talked about it all offseason," Marshall said. "We could've been the No. 1 defense again last year, like in 2015, if we weren't 28th against the run -- and we probably could've made the playoffs, too. There were a couple of games, like the one against the Raiders, where we got annihilated, and that's probably the reason we didn't make the playoffs. We don't want to be the reason we don't make the playoffs this year."

A quarter of the way through 2017, the Broncos have the league's top-ranked defense. They're also No. 1 against the run, surrendering a mere 50.8 yards per game. After limiting Gordon to 54 yards on 18 carries in a season-opening victory over the Los Angeles Chargers, Denver absolutely suffocated reigning league rushing champion Ezekiel Elliott, allowing only nine yards on eight carries in a 42-17 thrashing of the Dallas Cowboys. McCoy (14 carries, 21 yards) was not a factor in the Broncos' 26-16 road defeat to the Buffalo Bills, who improved to 3-1 with a road upset of the Atlanta Falcons Sunday.

If the Cowboys are almost universally believed to possess the NFL's most potent offensive line, the Raiders are a consensus second -- at least, they were until very recently. Yet after a promising performance in his Silver and Black debut, a 26-16 victory over the Titans, Lynch has become increasingly less productive.

On Sunday, Lynch's longest gain was four yards, as the Raiders struggled to move the ball even before star quarterback Derek Carr was knocked out of the game on a third quarter sack on which he took a knee to the kidney area, causing numbness in his legs.

It was the second consecutive game in which the Raiders' offensive line has been eviscerated by an opponent, as Washington had done the same in a 27-10 victory the previous Sunday night.

"I don't know, man," left tackle Donald Penn said as he walked off the field following the defeat to the Broncos. "I don't know what the f--- is going on with us right now."

The Broncos know they've got a good thing going: they've managed to hold Gordon, Elliott, McCoy and Lynch without a rushing touchdown and under 100 yards -- combined. That's not a misprint: Those four decorated backs have collectively gained 95 yards on 50 carries. Respect.

On Sunday, the Denver run defense's signature play came with nine minutes remaining in the second quarter when Raiders coach Jack Del Rio, with his team trailing 10-0, decided to go for it on fourth-and-1 from the Denver 31 -- and Lynch was stuffed for no gain, with safety Will Parks leading the charge. (That wasn't Oakland's most inglorious fourth-down moment, however; that distinction belonged to the fake punt call late in the third quarter on fourth-and-11 from the Raiders' 33, with punter Marquette King getting pummeled at the 30 and then throwing the ball in frustration at the Broncos' Andy Janovich, incurring a 15-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty. Good times.)

"It's tremendous when you have a front seven like ours that can stop the run and make them one dimensional," said Simmons, who took over the starting job held by T.J. Ward after the three-time Pro Bowler was released shortly before the start of the season. "It makes our job so much easier."

In this case, the term front seven is a bit of an understatement. Rookie coach Vance Joseph and first-year defensive coordinator Joe Woods have proven to be even more aggressive than Woods' predecessor, Wade Phillips, when it comes to stacking the box with safeties. With a pair of Pro Bowl corners in Aqib Talib and Chris Harris and a third standout cover man in Bradley Roby, Woods has the luxury of daring teams to throw, and he hasn't been shy about doing so.

"We just load the box and play, man," Harris said after the game. "Joe's putting all the onus on me, Aqib and Roby, and he's willing to take a risk with us outside. We're trying to make them throw. We aren't gonna let a running back beat us. If someone's gonna beat us, they've gotta let it fly."

And when the Broncos know the other team has to throw? Well, that means All-Pro linebacker Von Miller coming off the edge, and big-play potential from Talib, Harris and the other No Fly Zone members.

"That's the formula," Miller said. "That's how we want it. All we've gotta do is stop the run."

So far, so good -- with strong contributions from holdovers like standout defensive end Derek Wolfe and emerging second-year end Adam Gostis, and from offseason signees like ex-Bengals nose tackle Domata Peko and former Colts end Zach Kerr.

"Stopping the run is definitely a mindset," Wolfe said. "I think we took it for granted last year. To stop the run against a good running team takes a ton of effort, and it takes all 11 guys buying in."

And yet, even after the Broncos' collective excellence against the run Sunday, it took a timely takeaway to subdue the Raiders for good. With backup E.J. Manuel (11 for 17, 106 yards) providing a spark in Carr's absence -- this, also, is not a misprint -- Oakland cut the Denver lead to six points, then drove to the Broncos' 36 with two minutes remaining. After a false start and an incomplection, Manuel took a shot, lofting a high pass to struggling wideout Amari Cooper (two catches, nine yards) down the left sideline.

Cooper got by Roby, who was playing press coverage, leaving the Broncos' fate in Simmons' hands.

"We were in Cover Two, and I told Justin before the play, 'Watch the hole shot,'" Roby said. "When (Cooper) went past me, I thought, 'I hope J gets there in time.' It was such a huge play. Justin is a safety and went up against one of the top receivers in the league. I had a front row seat -- and he just took it from him."

That's business as usual for the No Fly Zone. And now that the Broncos can take away the run -- seemingly against anyone -- they're eyeballing higher ground, and looking very serious about seizing it.

Broncos defense stifles Derek Carr-less Raiders

By Conor Orr

NFL.com

October 2, 2017

The Denver Broncos' defense put on another stellar performance in a 16-10 win over division-rival Oakland. Here's what we learned...

1. The Derek Carr injury will obviously set the tone for this week in Oakland. The Raiders made a slight upgrade at backup quarterback this offseason, swapping Matt McGloin with former Bills first-round pick E.J. Manuel, but will be crossing their fingers for good news from any follow-up testing Carr will undergo this week. Jack Del Rio did quell some concerns, telling reporters Carr suffered back spasms and doesn't believe it will be a long-term issue. After watching Carr go down with a broken leg on Christmas Eve last year, the sight of him getting up gingerly and walking to the sidelines had to be nerve-racking. Back injuries are fickle, but the Raiders were obviously interested in playing this one safe with 75 percent of the season ahead of them.

2. Del Rio went wild on Sunday, and he'll certainly get beat up for it. But ... not here. Was faking a punt with 2:32 to go in the third quarter at your own 33-yard line crazy? Was allowing your offensive coordinator to run a play against the Denver Broncos defense in an empty set on your own 1-yard line ill-advised? Was burning your last timeout with more than five minutes to go in the fourth quarter probably not what you'd want? Yes would be the answer to all of these questions, but Del Rio somehow has the presence to pull it off. When the referee came to him on the sidelines to let him know he was out of timeouts, Del Rio made a "zero" gesture with his hands, smirked and nodded. Oakland was in a funk heading into this game after last week's blowout loss to the Redskins. Del Rio lost his quarterback, watched his offensive line get shoved around and tried to do something about it.

3. It's a shame we're still about a month from DEN-KC, Part One. One could argue that the Raiders would be a first-place team in a few other divisions, but are instead buried beneath one of the league's best defenses and one of the league's best all-around teams. The Broncos held Marshawn Lynch to 12 yards on nine carries (1.3) in the type of tight, low-scoring game that is supposed to be Lynch's battlefield of choice. They logged three sacks and five total quarterback hits and, in moments like Oakland's fourth-and-1 attempt in the second quarter, showed why their defensive scheme can be so unforgiving. What will they be able to do against Andy Reid and his offense?

4. Broncos running back C.J. Anderson ripped off his longest run of the season (40 yards) and finished close to 100 total yards on Sunday (95), but the focus for at least a few moments in the game turned to Jamaal Charles. Charles averaged 6.6 yards on five carries Sunday, displaying the kind of burst and ruggedness that could wind up being significant down the stretch. Teams have tried and failed to preserve veterans for big-time roles late in the season, but Charles could be the exception if his change-of-pace role continues to provide the occasional dagger in big spots.

5. For a moment, pretend you're neither a Broncos or Raiders fan. Just re-watch Johnny Holton's 64-yard touchdown catch. It was beautiful on all fronts -- from the recognition and play-calling to the throw to Holton's Willie Mays-style catch. The play sent temporary shockwaves through an Oakland team that'd logged just seven first downs the week before and took their time logging their initial first down on Sunday. That was Holton's third career catch, and undoubtedly his most memorable.

NFL Week 4 brings more protests, a jab at President Trump, big injuries and stunning upsets

By Cindy Boren
Washington Post
October 2, 2017

NFL players took to the field Sunday, less than 24 hours after President Trump's latest tweets urged them to stand for the national anthem and while many chose to make a statement of some sort — kneeling, raising a fist, locking arms — for the most part the league began to return to a semblance of normalcy through the conclusion of its 1 p.m. EDT games . . . with “normal” defined as a collection of stunning results and surprising upsets.

Somehow, after the 1 p.m. games, the New England Patriots trailed the Buffalo Bills in the AFC East Division, falling to 1-2 at home and 2-2 overall. At least the Pats had company at 2-2; the New York Jets — a team many believed was trying to tank this season — beat Jacksonville 23-20.

The Dallas Cowboys ran into a buzz saw in the form of, yes, the Los Angeles Rams. They're 3-1 now and the Cowboys, on the shortlist of Super Bowl contenders at the start of the season, sit at 2-2 even with the services of running back Ezekiel Elliott.

The Houston Texans won a game with offense, ringing up 57 points against Tennessee, including five touchdowns from Deshaun Watson, tying an NFL rookie record.

The Atlanta Falcons lost for the first time this season, leaving the Kansas City Chiefs as the NFL's only undefeated team. And the New Orleans Saints took their much maligned defense all the way to London to shut out the Miami Dolphins.

There were some major injuries during the 1 p.m. games: Julio Jones left the Falcons' loss to Buffalo with a hip injury and did not return, Vikings rookie running back Dalvin Cook left the team's loss to Detroit with what is feared to be an anterior cruciate ligament injury, and Titans quarterback Marcus Mariota left the team's loss to Houston with a hamstring injury.

During the 4 p.m. games, Oakland quarterback Derek Carr left the team's matchup against the Broncos in the second half with an injury. Carr was clutching his back after being sacked, and did not return.

In Tampa Bay, Giants wide receiver Odell Beckham Jr. left with a dislocated finger before returning, and then left again with an ankle injury before returning later in the team's loss to the Bucs. The defeat dropped the Giants' record to 0-4.

As far as the protests that marked last weekend went, the strongest message of the day came when Marshawn Lynch of the Oakland Raiders arrived for the 4:25 p.m. game in Denver wearing a T-shirt that proclaimed: “Everybody vs. Trump.” Cam Newton of the Panthers raised a fist after he scored a rushing touchdown against New England.

About 30 members of the San Francisco 49ers — who had not played since Sept. 21, before Trump's comments about the league and kneeling players during a speech in Alabama — took a knee for the

anthem. Their teammates stood behind them with hands on kneeling players' shoulders and the other over their hearts.

In a statement, the team said in part: "It is important that we continue to emphasize that despite our different backgrounds and beliefs, we still love each other and are truly a brotherhood. Our gesture today was an intentional effort to demonstrate that. Make no mistake, we love this great country and have tremendous respect for our military and veterans who have sacrificed so much for our right to express ourselves freely. We passionately want what is best for this country and all its citizens."

Otherwise, the early games were marked by players who, for the most part, remained standing. The Los Angeles Rams linked arms and Robert Quinn raised a fist in protest. Members of the New England Patriots and Dallas Cowboys stood, as did members of the Baltimore Ravens and Pittsburgh Steelers. Several members of the Buffalo Bills took a knee.

Several members of the Cleveland Browns stood, with fists raised.

The Miami Dolphins and New Orleans Saints started things Sunday morning, with the Saints collectively taking a knee before their game in London, before rising and linking arms for the singing of the national anthem. Meanwhile, three members of the Dolphins, tight end Julius Thomas, safety Michael Thomas and wide receiver Kenny Stills, continued to kneel during the anthem, performed by Darius Rucker.

The anthem for the 1 p.m. games was shown by CBS, but not by Fox, which reverted to the usual practice of selling that time to advertisers on the regional broadcasts. The anthem is typically only shown on telecasts on the Thursday night kickoff game and before the Super Bowl.

"As is standard procedure, regionalized coverage of NFL games airing on Fox this Sunday will not show the national anthem live; however, our cameras are always rolling and we will document the response of players and coaches on the field," Fox said in a statement.

President Trump had tweeted at NFL players about the anthem, writing Saturday night: "Very important that NFL players STAND tomorrow, and always, for the playing of our National Anthem. Respect our Flag and our Country!"

On Thursday night, Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers called for the message to be redirected because many were interpreting it as directed at the military.

"It's never been about the national anthem. It's never been about the military," he said. "We're all patriotic in the locker room. We love our troops. This is about something bigger than that — an invitation to show unity in the face of some divisiveness from the top in this country. And I'm proud of our guys. This has been a galvanizing situation for us. . . . [A]s much as some people want us to just shut up and play football and keep the politics to the politics, sports and politics have always intersected. And if we can help continue a conversation through demonstration of unity . . . I think that's a good thing.

"We could hear some USA chants as it started, which is fantastic. Could also hear some negativity being yelled during the anthem. Semantics there, right? What's disrespectful to the anthem? Yelling things during it or standing at attention with arms locked, facing the flag? That's for you to decide."

On Friday, the Seattle Seahawks announced that they would channel their protest into the Seahawks Players Equality and Justice for All Action Fund, which players said would support education and leadership programs addressing equality and justice.

Here's What Every N.F.L. Team Did During the National Anthem on Sunday

By Benjamin Hoffman and Ken Belson
New York Times
October 2, 2017

Many stood, some knelt and some heard boos.

The Seattle Seahawks were on the field for the national anthem before their game on Sunday night against the Indianapolis Colts, but a group of six players, led by Michael Bennett and Cliff Avril, sat on the bench for the duration of the song. The rest of the Seahawks were standing, scattered on the sidelines in a far more disorganized grouping than most teams have chosen, while the Colts were on the sidelines with locked arms. Andrew Luck, the injured Colts quarterback, was shown during the NBC broadcast singing along to the song.

Rather than wait in the locker room, like they did during last week's anthem, the Seahawks decided instead to create a fund with the goal of building a more compassionate and inclusive society, calling it the Players Equality & Justice for All Action Fund.

Here is a quick look at what each team did during the playing of the national anthem on Sunday:

- A group of about 30 San Francisco 49ers players knelt during the anthem, and the rest of the team stood behind them. They were joined on the field by the team's general manager, John Lynch, and all of the players — kneeling and standing — had their hands on their hearts. It was the first game the 49ers have played since President Trump's incendiary comments, which were inspired by the actions of the former 49er Colin Kaepernick, and the team made one of the more dramatic statements of either week. A smattering of boos could be heard as the 49ers took a knee. All of the Cardinals players were standing for the song.

- In a statement far stronger than anything offered in the game's earlier in the day, Marshawn Lynch entered Sports Authority Field wearing an "Everybody vs Trump" t-shirt before the Oakland Raiders' game against the Denver Broncos. Lynch followed up his noteworthy arrival by resuming his standard practice of sitting during the anthem. His Raiders teammates, who mostly knelt or sat last week, were all standing. The Broncos, as the team had previously announced, all stood for the anthem, with Brandon Marshall, who joined Colin Kaepernick in kneeling last season, raising a fist.

- All of the players for the Eagles and Chargers stood during the playing of the national anthem, but the Eagles' Malcolm Jenkins and Rodney McLeod raised their fists in a sign of protest. Several Philadelphia players had locked arms during the song. Commissioner Roger Goodell was in the crowd for the game, and he was also standing for the anthem.

- Giants defensive end Olivier Vernon knelt during the anthem for the second straight week, but the rest of his teammates stood with arms linked. A few raised their fists during the playing of the song while on the other sideline, all of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers stood.

■ The Baltimore Ravens and Pittsburgh Steelers, in a coordinated effort, briefly took a knee before the national anthem, but stood during the song. As both teams knelt, loud boos could be heard by the crowd in Baltimore.

■ The New England Patriots and Carolina Panthers all stood during the anthem in Foxborough. The Patriots stood with their right hands over their hearts, and their left hands on their teammate's shoulder. Panthers quarterback Cam Newton raised his fist after scoring a touchdown.

■ Last week all of the Tennessee Titans stayed in the locker room for the anthem, but this week just one player did: Rishard Matthews. As the song was finishing, Jurrell Casey, Wesley Woodyard, Brian Orakpo and DaQuan Jones raised their fists. The Houston Texans stood as a team, with some players locking arms.

■ Six members of the Buffalo Bills knelt during the playing of the anthem before the team's game against the Falcons in Atlanta: Kaelin Clay, Cedric Thornton, Mike Tolbert, Shareece Wright, Taiwan Jones, and Jerel Worthy. Atlanta's players all stood, with some linking arms.

■ In London, the New Orleans Saints took a knee in solidarity before the anthem was played at their game against the Miami Dolphins. Three members of the Dolphins — Kenny Stills, Michael Thomas and Julius Thomas — were visibly kneeling at the end of the sideline, though they were not mentioned by the broadcast crew.

■ As planned, the Jacksonville Jaguars knelt as a team before the anthem started, drawing some boos from the crowd in MetLife Stadium, but then stood as a team for the singing of the national anthem. Some of the Jacksonville players locked arms and others hand their hands over their hearts while the Jets mostly locked arms as a team.

■ Two members of the Detroit Lions — Jalen Reeves-Maybin and Steve Longa — knelt during the national anthem before Detroit's game against the Minnesota Vikings in Minneapolis. The Vikings stood with linked arms, except for kick returner Jerick McKinnon, who stood behind the sideline for a second straight week and did not participate in the demonstration.

■ The Cleveland Browns, who had a large group of kneeling players last week, stood together as a team before their game against the Cincinnati Bengals, but at least nine players raised their fists during the playing of the song. The players with raised fists were Christian Kirksey, Jason McCourty, Randall Telfer, Isaiah Crowell, Brieon Boddy-Calhoun, Larry Ogunjobi, Kenny Britt, Dominique Alexander and Ibraheim Campbell. The Bengals all appeared to be standing.

■ All of the players for the Los Angeles Rams and Dallas Cowboys stood throughout the anthem, with a few Rams players, including Robert Quinn, raising their fists. Last week, the Cowboys and owner Jerry Jones knelt before the anthem, but stood during the song this week.

Raiders lose Derek Carr to injury, and the game to the Broncos.

The Oakland Raiders lost to the Denver Broncos, 16-10, but the result seemed decidedly secondary compared to the health of Derek Carr, the team's star quarterback, who left the game with a back injury in the third quarter.

At the time of his injury, Carr had completed 15 of 24 passes for 174 yards and a touchdown, but he left thanks to an injury which occurred when he appeared to get kneed in the back by Shelby Harris. Carr spent some time in the team's medical tent and then walked to the locker room under his own power. Considering how poorly the team performed when he broke his leg last season, his status going forward will dominate everything for the Raiders.

With or without Carr, it simply was not the Raiders' day in Denver. The team's potent offense managed just 254 yards, with Marshawn Lynch rushing for 12 yards a week after he ran for 18 in a loss to Washington. In the closing minutes, as E.J. Manuel tried to rally the team to victory in Carr's absence, Lynch was on the sideline as a spectator. Manuel had the team moving down the field, but an interception by Justin Simmons on a deep attempt to Amari Cooper sealed Oakland's fate.

The Raiders dropped to 2-2 after an 0-2 start and the Broncos improved to 3-1, which could give them a share of the A.F.C. West lead depending on how things go for the 3-0 Kansas City Chiefs on Monday.

Rams stage second-half comeback to beat Cowboys.

Jared Goff threw two touchdown passes, Greg Zuerlein kicked seven field goals, and Wade Phillips's defense led the Los Angeles Rams to a surprising 35-30 victory over the Dallas Cowboys.

It was a second half to remember for the Rams, who were trailing 24-16 at halftime but rode a huge effort in the second half from their offense and defense to victory.

Dak Prescott and Ezekiel Elliott had looked nearly unstoppable in the first half, reeling off three consecutive touchdown drives, but the Rams stayed in the game thanks to Zuerlein's leg, and eventually Goff found enough opportunity to get the big scoring plays the team needed.

Goff ended up completing 21 of 36 passes for 255 yards and the two touchdowns, including a 53-yarder to Todd Gurley that showed a new dimension to the team's offense. Gurley, who the team is trying to feature more, had 121 rushing yards and 94 receiving yards, repeatedly beating the Dallas defense regardless of how he got the ball.

Dallas had several chances to get back into the game, including a 2-point conversion that appeared to tie the game at 32-32 before a penalty took the points away. Phillips, the legendary defensive coordinator, got tremendous efforts all over the field from his emerging defense in the second half, with them making Dallas look like an entirely different team than they had in the first half.

Jameis Winston sends Giants to their fourth-straight loss.

Jameis Winston of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers threw for 332 yards and three touchdowns. More important, he led his team to a last-second field goal that secured a 25-23 victory over the Giants.

Winston spread out the offense, with three difference receivers catching a touchdown pass, and Jacquizz Rodgers rushing for 83 yards. That was enough for the Buccaneers to overcome a fairly clean performance by Eli Manning and the Giants, with the veteran quarterback throwing for 288 yards and two touchdowns.

There were no turnovers for either team, and in the end, a missed 43-yard field goal attempt by Aldrick Rosas of the Giants early in the fourth quarter proved to be the difference in the game.

The Giants looked better than they had during the season's first three weeks, but they dropped to 0-4 just the same.

Panthers finally find their offense and upset Patriots in Foxborough.

The Carolina Panthers' offense had been almost invisible in the first three weeks of the season, but they came alive with some help from New England's defense, and they walked away from Foxborough with a 33-30 victory over the Patriots.

The game had a slow start, with the teams trading field goals, before Tom Brady was able to take advantage of a Cam Newton interception to reel off a 74-yard drive that ended in a 2-yard touchdown pass to Chris Hogan.

Considering how much Carolina's offense has struggled this season, the misstep could have been quite a blow to the Panthers, but Newton got his team back into things quickly with a lightning-fast drive that featured a short run, a few short passes, a 12-yard reverse by Damiere Byrd and a 28-yard touchdown pass from Newton to Fozzy Whitaker. It was just Carolina's second touchdown of the season.

From that point forward, the Panthers looked great against a Patriots' secondary that could not keep up. Newton, who had struggled with nagging injuries, was dominant, completing 22 of 29 passes for 316 yards and three touchdowns while running for 44 yards and a touchdown. Newton became the first quarterback in N.F.L. history to rush for 50 career touchdowns.

The Patriots made things interesting, tying the game with 3:14 left thanks to a 1-yard touchdown pass from Brady to Danny Amendola, but the Panthers put Graham Gano in a position to win the game, and the place-kicker delivered with a 48-yard field goal as time expired.

Le'Veon Bell returns to form in Steelers' big win over the Ravens.

Le'Veon Bell had his first big game of the season and the Baltimore Ravens paid for it as the Pittsburgh Steelers running back ran for 144 yards and two touchdowns in a 26-9 victory.

Bell, who also had 42 yards as a receiver, had gotten off to a horrible start to the season, but he had no trouble finding room to run against the Ravens. With Ben Roethlisberger still struggling, the team leaned heavily on Bell, giving him 35 carries to go with his four receptions, and Juju Smith-Schuster, the N.F.L.'s youngest player, contributed a receiving touchdown.

Beyond their struggles containing Bell, the Ravens created plenty of their own problems with three turnovers, including two interceptions by Joe Flacco, and they dropped to 2-2 after a 2-0 start to the season.

Vikings lose another key player, and a game to the Lions.

Already playing with a backup quarterback, the Minnesota Vikings lost Dalvin Cook, the team's rookie running back, to a knee injury. Hobbled and playing against a team that seemed inspired defensively, the Vikings lost to the Detroit Lions, 14-7.

The Lions did not get much offense from Matthew Stafford, who threw for 209 yards without a touchdown, but a pair of field goals, a 3-yard rushing touchdown by Ameer Abdullah, and a 2-point conversion were enough scoring on a day in which Anthony Zettel and the Lions defense simply dominated.

The Jets knock off the Jaguars in overtime.

Chandler Catanzaro kicked a 41-yard field goal with 28 seconds left in overtime, lifting the New York Jets to a wacky 23-20 win over the Jacksonville Jaguars on Sunday.

After Catanzaro split the uprights, he and his teammates celebrated wildly in the middle of the field — but then had to wait a moment because there was a penalty flag on the field. The officials ruled there actually was no penalty on the play — giving the Jets the victory.

Bilal Powell rushed for a career-high 163 yards, including a 75-yard touchdown, and rookie Elijah McGuire had a 69-yard score and finished with 93 yards rushing as the Jets (2-2) ran all over the Jaguars (2-2).

But New York blew a 10-point, fourth-quarter lead because of some big mistakes — and then had to hold on in the extra period. — Associated Press

The Bills shock the Falcons with defensive stand.

Stephen Hauschka kicked a tiebreaking, 56-yard field goal with less than 5 minutes remaining and the Buffalo Bills made a last-minute defensive stand to beat Atlanta 23-17 on Sunday after the Falcons lost wide receiver Julio Jones to a hip injury.

Hauschka padded the lead with a 55-yarder with about 3 minutes remaining.

Buffalo's defense stopped the Falcons at the Bills 10 with less than a minute remaining when Matt Ryan couldn't complete a fourth-down pass to Taylor Gabriel, and Atlanta became the last NFC team to lose this season. — Associated Press

Deshaun Watson scores 5 touchdowns as Texans roll over Titans.

Rookie Deshaun Watson shined, throwing for four touchdowns and running for another as the Houston Texans scored the most points in franchise history in 57-14 walloping of the Tennessee Titans on Sunday.

Watson, the 12th pick in this year's draft, became the first rookie to throw four touchdowns and run for another one since Fran Tarkenton in 1961 and tied an NFL record for most TDs by a rookie quarterback. — Associated Press

The Seahawks took their cue from Civil Rights protests of the 1960s.

The practice of locking arms on the sideline during the national anthem began with the Seattle Seahawks last season. They sought a unified way to respond to Colin Kaepernick's decision to kneel to raise awareness of police brutality and racism.

The Seahawks' decision to lock arms, a powerful symbol from the civil rights protests of the 1960s, was informed by the sociologist and social activist Harry Edwards, who spoke to the team last summer. Some players wanted to kneel as a team, but other players objected. One player mentioned seeing the movie "Selma," which portrayed the march in Alabama in 1965 when civil rights leaders locked arms as they walked. The idea of evoking the civil rights struggles inspired the team.

"We did think locking arms would show that," Seahawks wide receiver Doug Baldwin said this week. "I can't say that was solely the reason we did it, but I can definitely say it had an impact."

The Seahawks' method of protest was given approval last week by President Trump, who had blasted players for kneeling during the anthem. Trump suggested that the players choosing to lock arms were showing support of the anthem, rather than protesting his remarks.

Other teams have since copied the Seahawks' approach, but locking arms at sporting events is not new. Years ago, South African fans marched arm-in-arm to sporting events, a homage to Nelson Mandela and anti-apartheid activists.

Trump doubles down on his expectations.

Teams have been in discussions of how they would approach the national anthem this week — the New Orleans Saints will kick things off by kneeling in solidarity before the anthem is played at their game against the Miami Dolphins in London, but then will stand for the anthem — but Mr. Trump may have inspired more dramatic displays from some teams with a tweet on Saturday night.

Just 11 minutes after tweeting about an upcoming trip to Puerto Rico to work on disaster relief, the president was back to discussing the N.F.L.:

While the debate was initially about players who knelt, sat, or raised a fist in protest of the anthem, most teams have avoided making such a strong statement, choosing instead to do a more generic demonstration of locking arms while standing, with many issuing statements insisting that they are in no way protesting the anthem. It was a compromise that the teams seemed happy with, but Mr. Trump was quick to claim it as progress and a victory for himself.

Networks, breaking from tradition, are showing national anthems.

N.F.L. fans watching television rarely see the national anthem played in football stadiums, and for good reason: The networks that show the games usually go to commercial break then.

But after President Trump last week attacked the N.F.L. and its owners for letting players kneel or sit during the playing of The Star-Spangled Banner, the networks chose to show the anthem before their games in Week 3. Now that we have entered Week 4 and the interest in the anthem has crested, some networks are starting to revert to their regular practice of not showing the anthem.

Part of the reason is logistics. When networks show games back-to-back, the first game often runs long, which makes it difficult if not impossible to cut away to the anthem being played before the second game.

As a result, Fox showed part of the anthem during the Miami Dolphins and New Orleans Saints in London but plans to skip the anthem before its second game that begins at 1 p.m. on the East Coast.

CBS, too, will show the anthem before its first game, which begins at 1 p.m. on the East Coast, and not show the anthem before its second game starting at 4:25 p.m. Networks showing just one game have a less complicated decision. CBS showed the anthem before Thursday night's game between the Chicago Bears and Green Bay Packers, and NBC will show the anthem before Sunday night's game between the Indianapolis Colts and Seattle Seahawks.

Joe Lockhart, an N.F.L. spokesman, said the league is aware of when the networks show the anthem because they sometimes coordinate event coverage, like during Salute to Service Month, which is part of the pregame presentation, or before the Super Bowl.

But the N.F.L. does not ask the networks to show or not show the anthem before others games. "We don't tell them they have to cover it," Lockhart said. "They do what they do."

NFL's top running backs going nowhere against Broncos

By Charean Williams

Pro Football Talk

October 2, 2017

Good luck, Wayne Gallman, Paul Perkins, Orleans Darkwa and Shane Vereen.

The Giants are next on the Broncos' schedule, on Oct. 15 after a Denver bye, and the Giants' running backs should dread the thought already.

The Broncos held Marshawn Lynch to 12 yards on nine carries Sunday. His longest run was 4 yards.

Lynch followed Melvin Gordon (18 carries, 54 yards), Ezekiel Elliott (nine carries, 8 yards) and LeSean McCoy (14 carries, 21 yards) in spending a frustrating afternoon against the Broncos run defense. Together, that's 50 carries for 95 yards and no touchdowns for Gordon, Elliott, McCoy and Lynch.

"That's really four special backs and really four special offensive lines," Broncos coach Vance Joseph said, via quotes distributed by the team. "Our run defense has been really stout. Again, adding [nose tackle Domata] Peko [Sr.] and [defensive end Zach] Kerr and [defensive end] Ahtyba Rubin now and obviously coaching it differently than it was coached in the past."

The Broncos entered Sunday ranked first in the league against the run, allowing only 59.7 yards per game, and Oakland had 15 carries for 24 yards in Denver's 16-10 victory.

"It's extremely hard, especially if you're a run-first offense like the Raiders are," Joseph said. "Again, our run defense has been stout the entire year. So, I have been very proud of how those guys have played the run. With a back like that and an offensive line like that, that's really special [to hold them to] 24 yards."

Broncos hold on to beat Raiders 16-10

By Charean Williams

Pro Football Talk

October 2, 2017

First, the Raiders lost their quarterback. Then, they lost the game.

Raiders Nation will hold its breath, awaiting word on the extent of the back injury to Derek Carr. The quarterback left the game late in the third quarter.

E.J. Manuel completed 11 of 17 passes for 106 yards in Carr's absence, rallying the Raiders. But his last pass was intercepted by safety Justin Simmons at the Denver 8 with 1:46 remaining, ending the Raiders' comeback attempt.

The Broncos jumped out to a 10-0 lead in the first quarter and held on.

Trevor Siemian completed 16 of 26 passes for 179 yards and a touchdown, while C.J. Anderson rushed for 95 yards on 20 carries. The Broncos gained 205 yards in the first half but only 93 in the second half.

The Raiders rushed for only 24 yards as Marshawn Lynch had nine carries for 12 yards.

Oakland gained 254 yards, with 99 coming on one drive.

Khalil Mack had two sacks and Von Miller one in a matchup of two of the league's premiere pass-rushers.

Raiders have 99-yard drive to draw within 10-7 at halftime

By Charean Williams
Pro Football Talk
October 2, 2017

It took only one play for the Raiders to get back into their game against Denver. Dominated for most of the first half, the Raiders scored on a 64-yard touchdown pass to complete an improbable 99-yard drive.

Johnny Holton, who entered the game with only two career catches, caught Derek Carr's pass and took it to the end zone with 3:36 remaining in the second quarter. It cut the Broncos' halftime lead to 10-7.

The 99-yard drive was the first by the Raiders since Oct. 2, 2011, against New England, which was the last game before owner Al Davis died, per Josh Dubow of the Associated Press. The only other 99-yard drive the Raiders have had since 1999 came Dec. 16, 2007 against Indianapolis.

Carr went 9-for-16 for 142 yards and the touchdown in the first half, with Marshawn Lynch gaining only 10 yards on five carries.

Broncos quarterback Trevor Siemian completed 10 of 17 passes for 148 yards, including a 22-yard touchdown pass to A.J. Derby, who made a one-handed catch.

Raiders continue to sputter, behind 10-0 after first quarter

By Charean Williams

Pro Football Talk

October 2, 2017

The Raiders offensive struggles continued in the first quarter Sunday. Oakland, which had only seven first downs, 128 total yards and went 0-for-11 on third down in a Week 3 loss to Washington, had no first downs, 22 total yards and went 0-for-3 on third down in the first 15 minutes against the Broncos.

Denver held a 10-0 lead.

The Broncos scored on a 22-yard pass from Trevor Siemian to A.J. Derby, who caught the ball with one hand and tip-toed down the sideline and into the end zone. They added a 28-yard Brandon McManus field goal set up by a 30-yard defensive pass interference penalty on Reggie Nelson.

Siemian has started 7-of-9 for 115 yards and a touchdown.

Derek Carr has completed 3-of-6 passes for 14 yards, and Marshawn Lynch has two carries for 6 yards.