

Special Points

of Interest:

- Broncos start 5-0 for first time since 2001
- Josh Freeman throws three touchdown passes, no picks
- Defense forces four turnovers, scores once
- Broncos threw 12 passes before first running play

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BRONCOS STUN JETS, 31-20

Four Turnovers Key to Victory

September 25th, 2011:

"Denver is for real!"

That was the assessment of the New York Jets head coach, Roberto Tosco, after the Broncos downed the Jets 31-20 on the strength of four takeaways by the Broncos defense. The Jets won most of the stats, but the four turnovers led directly to 21 Bronco points and helped decide the contest in the Broncos favor.

With the win, the Broncos moved to 5-0 on the season, remain undefeated and now have a two-game lead over their closest challengers in the AFC East.

"Those turnovers absolutely decided the game," was Hank Sienzant view from the opposing sideline. "The Jets clearly won most of the other stats, but losing the turnover battle four to nothing was tough for them - or anybody - to overcome.

"They are a very good team that should be in the battle until the end of the season. This game

decides nothing at this point, although it gives us a leg up in the standings. We fully expect the Jets game in Denver late in the year to be just as big, if not bigger than this one."

Speaking of big, the biggest turnover came early in the fourth quarter with the score tied at 17. Veteran quarterback Jon Kitna, throwing on a second-and-15 from his own 18 was picked off by Denver second-year defender Malcolm Jenkins and the pass returned 26 yards for a touchdown to give the Broncos a 24-17 lead.

While the Jets bounced back with a fine drive to march 46 yards in eight plays, the key play this time was by rookie defensive end Jason Pierre-Paul, who sacked Kitna on a 3rd and one from the Bronco 23, forcing the Jets to settle for the field goal that cut the Broncos lead to 24-20.

That was as close as the Jets got. After running for one first down on a fine five yard trap

run by Anthony Dixon on third-and-three, the Broncos Josh Freeman took advantage of a Jets defense geared to stop the run, and hit Dwayne Bowe twice, for 17 and 44 yards, with the second completion good for the score and a 31-20 Bronco lead with 4:24 remaining in the contest.

Kitna engineered a fine drive in retaliation, but this time rookie dime back Jerome Murphy came up with the big play, picking off Kitna with just over two minutes remaining in the game to help seal the contest. Although the Broncos were unable to close out the game on offense and the Jets got the ball back one last time, the Broncos Ziggy Hood sacked Kitna for a big nine yard loss that did seal the deal.

The Broncos first two takeaways were almost as big as the Jenkins pick-six.

With the Jets playing in New Meadowlands Stadium for the first time this year, the Jets were pumped to take down the up-

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A Look Back

At the beginning of the season, we said if the Broncos could win two or three of their first five against the murderers' row of five consecutive games against playoff teams from last year, they would be doing well. The upstart Broncos surprised the world by winning them all, and now have as many wins as they won in the 2009 and 2010 seasons combined. They have now won seven in a row, and nine of the last twelve.

The seven in a row over the past seven regular season games is the longest current streak (including playoff games) in the ISFL (Dallas has a longer regular season streak, but it is interrupted by a loss in the playoffs last season.

The schedule makers do the Broncos a favor in weeks five and six, as 2-2 Houston and 2-2 Buffalo face off in week five, giving one of them a third loss, and the Bills and Jets face off in week

six, which will hand one of them another loss.

If the Broncos beat the 1-4 Browns in week six (they lost to them twice in both 2009 and 2010), they could be three games up on most or all of the division.

Whether they win or lose in week six, however, one thing is certain: for the rest of this year, the Broncos won't be sneaking up on anyone, as they are one of only four teams still undefeated in the ISFL this year.

...the thought running through some observers heads was, "Here is where the Jets expose these kids as pretenders, and the Broncos fold."



Bronco Report Card

Overall Grade: **B**



Denver starts the 2011 season 5-0 and now has a seven-game winning streak

STUN JETS (continued from page one)

start 4-0 Broncos and take back the lead in the division. They took the opening kickoff and sliced and diced the young Bronco defense like the veteran team they were, driving for a touchdown that came on a Kitna to Vernon Davis short slant good for the final five yards. The Jets opening salvo went twelve plays, gained 74 yards, and took nearly seven minutes off the clock and the young Bronco defenders looked overmatched against the veteran Jets squad.

When the Broncos picked up one first down and were forced to punt, the thought running through some observers heads was, "Here is where the Jets expose these kids as pretenders, and the Broncos fold."

And it looked like it would happen too, as Michael Turner ran for 15 yards for one first down, followed quickly by a Kitna to Davis connection for another first down. And when Donald Driver took off for the races on a short slant, it looked like the

premonition was about to come true. But third-year defender Tracy Porter ran Driver down and forced a fumble, recovering it himself, to help the Broncos staunch the tide.

When the Broncos bounced right back with an sharp 77-yard drive of their own, that took six plays and nearly four minutes, ending with a Freeman-to-Bowe 26 yard completion for the score to notch it up at 7-all, both teams

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Bronco Report Card

QB: A+ Josh Freeman keeps looking better and better. 21 of 31, 244, 3 TDs, 127.6 rating.

RB: C- Running backs had a poor game with just 3.1 average on 22 rushes.

REC: B+ Dwayne Bowe stood out with 8 catches for 144 yards and two TDs.

OL: B Allowed no sacks and gave Freeman plenty of time to

throw, but couldn't open holes for long for the running backs against the Jets tough veteran defense.

DL: C+ Run defense gashed for 111 yards on just 22 carries, but good pressure on Kitna all day, with the defensive line getting credited with two sacks.

LB: B- Welcome to the 2011 season, Ernie Sims. Sims con-

tributed his first big play of 2011 with a 3rd down sack of Kitna forcing a Jets punt.

DB: A Two picks (one for a score), one forced fumble, one fumble recovery, and 35 tackles by the DBs adds up to a pretty good day in out book.

Sp.Teams C Kept the dangerous Brad Smith bottled up,

Game and Season Notes

The Broncos win over the Jets gives the Broncos a two-game lead in the loss column over the Jets, Bills and Texans. They've already downed the Texans twice and the Jets once, so thus teams are further down in the standings than the Bills, who still have to play the Broncos twice this year.

The Jets were the first team to score in the second quarter against the Broncos this year, kicking a Connor Barth field goal that gave the Jets a 10-7 lead. The Broncos running game all but vanished against the Jets - partly by design - against the Jets, as they rushed 24 times for only 69 yards (2.9 per carry). Ricky Williams was the biggest ground gainer for Denver as he carried the load 15 times for 53 yards (3.5). The Jets gained 111 yards on the ground on 22 carries, a 5.0 average. Michael Turner gained 69 on 16 carries (4.3), and slash/wildcat quarterback Brad Smith had a big 25 yard gain on the Jets first touch-

down drive, finishing second on the team with 24 yards on two carries.

It was in the passing game that the key differences that helped decide the contest in the Broncos favor were encountered. Josh Freeman started slowly, completing just three of his first six for 26 yards, but over the rest of the half hit 9 of ten for 95 yards and two scores. He finished with 21 of 30 for 244 yards and three touchdowns, with no picks and no sacks - a passer rating of 127.6. By contrast, Jon Kitna was picked off twice in the fourth quarter as the Jets had to pass on every down once they fell behind 31-20, and finished with a good but not great stat line of 26 of 39 for 273, with two touchdowns and two picks and three sacks, good for a rating of 82.5. While Kitna played well for the most part, ultimately it was the two picks and the two lost fumbles that decided the contest.

Freeman was awarded the

MVP again, the fifth time in five games that he's been so honored, perhaps proving the adage that quarterbacks get too much credit when they win, and too much blame when they lose. Opposing coach Tosco weighed in at the post game interview by saying that "Freeman is shaping as a really good guy, [it was] because of Freeman's efficiency they had a lot of successful checkdowns," and Hank Sienzant didn't disagree, saying only that "I am happy with his development."

For our money, however, it was the defense that deserved the award, and if we had to pick an individual, it would be Malcolm Jenkins for his pick six that gave the Broncos a lead they did not relinquish. Jenkins added seven tackles, while Tracy Porter had ten tackles to lead the team, along with a forced fumble, a fumble recovery, and a pass defensed.

Charles Woodson had nine tackles to lead the Jets.

Injuries And Acquisitions

Injury Report

Neither team suffered an injury of note, so the Broncos remain without the services of three starters on offense in Ryan Torain, Jermichael Finley, both of whom are definitely out for the Cleveland contest, and probably will also be without Delanie Walker, who is questionable for the next game. On defense, the Broncos are minus rookie defensive end Jared Odrick, but are otherwise healthy for the Browns game.

Player Acquisitions

The Broncos signed three players prior to the Jets game in H-back Kory Sperry, offensive lineman Jordan Black, and defensive end Antwan Odom. Only Sperry saw action, and he caught one pass for eight yards on the Broncos first touchdown drive when lined up as a fullback.

A Look Ahead

The Broncos travel to Cleveland to face the Browns

in week six, with Cleveland now 1-4 after a loss to the AFC West leading (and undefeated at 5-0) Dallas Cowboys. The Jets take on the Bills in Buffalo, and the loser of that game cannot gain ground on the Broncos next week and will suffer their third defeat in six games.

In another division contest of note, the Texans and Bills face off in week five, so one of those teams will fall three games off the pace after week five.



Newcomer Cory Sperry played in place of Delanie Walker and caught one pass for eight yards

STUN JETS (continued from page two)

slugfest the rest of the way, with big plays and turnovers deciding the contest. But the Broncos also knew they would have to get a running game established, as to that point they had passed twelve time and run none.

And thus when the Jets started at their own twenty midway through the second quarter with a Turner 20 yard run followed by a completion to Vernon Davis for another first down, the Broncos didn't panic, and the Jets drive eventually petered out with the Broncos stuffing Turner for no gain on a key third-and-one.

While the Jets made the field goal to take the 10-7 lead, the Broncos finally got a running game, running four consecutive times for 17 yards before being forced to punt with less than two minutes remaining in the half.

The next play gave the Broncos their first lead of the game, as Ziggy Hood hit Michael Turner in the backfield and the ball was recovered by Will Witherspoon at the Jets 14 yards line. Staying on the ground, the Broncos nursed out one first down, before Josh Freeman found Nate

Washington just inside the goal line for the Broncos second touchdown off of a turnover, hitting Washington for the four-yard score to give the Broncos a 14-10 lead at the half.

Rookie defensive end Jason Pierre-Paul got his first sack of his career today, as veteran outside linebacker Will Witherspoon shed some light on the behind-the-scenes activity that perhaps motivated JPP. "Some of the guys - not me, of course," he said with a smile, "started to call Jason 'Vernon'" (a reference to Bronco draft bust Vernon Gholston, who like JPP was a second round pick and did not have a sack in his two-year Denver career). "He didn't like it. It was good to see him get off the schneid," Witherspoon said.

The 14-10 Denver halftime lead lasted against the veteran New York squad only until the Jets got the ball back in the second half. With Kitna hitting four of four on the drive, the Jets quickly drove from their own 27 for the touchdown to take the lead back at 17-14, with Kitna to Gaffney for twelve yards the final play of the march. The

Jets came out throwing, with Kitna hitting Jabar Gaffney for 32 yards on their opening play from scrimmage of the second half.

But the young Broncos were not cowed, and took off an excellent drive of their own, albeit the only scoring drive for Denver that did not end in a touchdown.

Mixing runs and passes, Josh Freeman marched the Bronco platoon across enemy terrain, taking eight minutes off the clock on a 15-play march that saw the Broncos fall into a first and twenty hole and convert it, but failed to convert the second and goal from the five and the third and goal from the seven that followed. The Broncos settled for the Mason Crosby 25 yard field goal that left the score tied at 17-all after three quarters. The Jets would not see the lead in the fourth quarter.

After an exchange of punts, the Jets took over at their own 23 with just over twelve minutes remaining in the contest. A five-yard motion penalty set the Jets back, and the fate - and Malcolm Jenkins - stepped into the fray, with Jenkins' pick six turning the contest around.

**Denver Bronco
Fast Fact:
The Broncos
have now won
nine of their last
twelve games
extending back
to last season.**

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Denver
Broncos

OFFENSIVE LINE THE KEY TO BRONCOS OFFENSE

September 22nd, 2011: The Broncos running game leads the ISFL after four weeks, putting up 652 yards on the ground, an average of 163 yards per game. But the running backs deflect all credit, and to a man say it's the offensive line that's the key to the new-found ground game the Broncos have lacked in the recent past.

"The blocking up front has been excellent," gushes rookie Anthony Dixon, who has 166 yards and a 3.8 average. "Some of the holes have been huge," says Ricky Williams, the Broncos leading rusher with 243 yards and a 5.5 average. "I haven't seen holes that big since college." Dimitri Nance, another rookie running back, attributes his 4.2 average to the offensive line, saying that the line getting a good push off the ball has been a major factor in the running backs getting room to run.

The Broncos have thrown plenty of draft picks at the offensive line over the past few drafts, and the early picks invested in the O-line are certainly paying back the Broncos with interest. "This is more like it, and more-or-less what we envisioned with the past few drafts," says head coach Hank Sienzant. "it's taken longer than we initially thought it would, but the line has finally jelled into a solid unit."

That's despite the loss of starting guard Eric Wood in week two, and the loss of backup Nick Cole in week one. Both are back now, and the line is back to full strength.

Eric Wood was a third round selection in 2010, and earned a starting job right away. Three other players were first round selections, and in each case, those three were the first offensive lineman selected in their draft class. Joe Thomas is the starting left tackle, and has been a star since being selected with the fourth overall selection in 2008, a year before the current regime arrived. The Broncos followed that up in 2009 with the selection of Ryan Clady with the second overall pick, and in this just-passed 2011 draft, rookie Maurkice Pouncey arrived, falling to the seventh pick overall. The unheralded fifth member is eighth round selection Josh Sitton.

Separately, they are each a solid player in their own right. Together, they are the strongest unit on the Broncos, and quite possibly, the best offensive line in the ISFL. They are truly the foundation of the Broncos offense.