

Special Points

of Interest:

- Broncos start 7-0 for first time since 2001
- Josh Freeman leads comeback in final two minutes
- Denver defense stifles Bills running attack
- Ricky Williams gains 93 yards rushing

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BRONCOS RALLY TO BEAT BILLS, 24-20

One of Two Remaining Undefeated Teams

October 9th, 2011: The Broncos scored on a 40-yard touchdown pass from Josh Freeman to Dwayne Bowe with 57 seconds left on the clock, then withstood a Bills assault that included a timing snafu when the Denver home-town officials failed to give the Bills a much-needed time-out with about 40 seconds left in the game. Instead, the clock kept running and the Bills could only get off a screen pass and, after their first recognized timeout, a desperation heave into the end zone by Tom Brady that fell incomplete.

The timing foul-up marred what was otherwise a great game, with the Broncos going ahead 17-3 in the second quarter before the Bills rallied back to take the lead at 20-17 late in the third quarter. The fourth was filled with a variety of big plays before the Broncos made the biggest of all, with Josh Freeman hitting Dwayne Bowe on a short crossing route from the Bills 40, and Bowe turning upfield and out-racing the Bills defenders to the

end zone.

Buffalo started the game off with an excellent drive (at least at the beginning), moving from their own 20 to their 48 in seven plays, picking up two first downs in the process. But two penalties from the hurry-up and B. J. Raji's first sack of the year pushed the Bills back to their own 31, and the drive wound up netting only 11 yards in nine plays.

The Broncos wasted no time in putting the first points on the board, marching 67 yards to a touchdown in 14 plays, taking nearly eight minutes off the clock before Freeman hit Bowe on a short out route on third-and-goal from the one, thwarting the Bills goal line stand attempt (the Bills would get another chance and be successful in the second quarter). The biggest play in the possession was a fourth-and-one from the Bills 35, with Freeman hitting Delanie Walker for 15 on a short pass in the flat.

The Bills tried to answer back with a touchdown of their own, but after moving from their own

19 to the Bronco 16 in twelve plays, the drive stalled when an end-around went nowhere and two Brady passes fell incomplete, forcing the Bills to settle for a Robbie Gould field goal of 34 yards and a 7-3 score in favor of Denver. The big play in the possession had to be the Johnny Knox catch of 24 yards on 3rd and 11.

Denver came right back to score, but a penalty call kept the drive alive when the Broncos should have been forced to settle for a field goal. Denver had moved from their own 26 to the Bills 13, mostly on the strength of three Ricky Williams runs, including a 36-yarder to the Bills 13, but a big sack of Freeman by Abrayo Franklin pushed the Broncos back to the Bills 25. After a seven-yard gain by Anthony Dixon on a draw, Josh Freeman's pass for Brandon Pettigrew from the Bills 18 on 3rd and 15 fell incomplete - but there was a big flag for interference. Unfortunately for the Broncos,

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Broncos Sport Massive Turn Around

You have to understand where the Broncos have come from to understand where they are going.

This is a team that, when the reins were taken over by Hank Sienzant, had been mis-managed into the ground.

Under Sienzant, the losing continued as the Broncos rebuilt through the draft. The Broncos were losing nearly every week-end. In 2009, Sienzant's first year, the Broncos lost their first seven

before finally beating the 0-7 San Diego Chargers who were likewise in rebuilding mode. The Broncos did not win again until week ten of 2010—a span of 17 more losses in a row. As each loss mounted, the fans became more and more irate, questioning Sienzant's moves and whether the Broncos could ever be winners under him. Even Sienzant himself admitted to doubts at times. At its nadir, Sienzant's record with the Broncos was

one win and 24 losses—including those 17 in a row.

But then a funny thing happened. The Broncos stole a game in overtime on a pick six from New England and then upset the Texans the following week. Although three losses followed, the Broncos closed out the 2010 in style, winning their final two games. The winning continued in 2011, and hasn't yet stopped, as the Broncos now sport a nine-game winning streak.

BRONCOS RALLY (continued from page one)

The Bills goal line stand after the big turnover seemed to turn the momentum around.

or maybe fortunately, as it turned out, it was offensive interference, and it was Pettigrew who was flagged for pushing off. The Bills accepted the penalty, giving the Broncos one more shot at a touchdown from the Bills 28 on third and 25 - and the Broncos made it count. This time there was no flag, as Freeman hit Pettigrew in stride down the seam and the big man took the play the rest of the way for the 28-yard touchdown to make it 14-3. That penalty and touchdown would prove to be the difference in the game that ended with the Broncos winning by four.

The Broncos made it 17-3 a few minutes later, when the Broncos Jonathan Goff forced a Tim Hightower fumble and Tracy

Porter recovered it for the Broncos at the Bills 21. Dimitri Nance was brought down at the three by hustling cornerback Jabari Greer when it looked certain Nance would score, and then Nance powered it to the one yard line on first and goal from the three. With Nance running well, the Broncos tried to cross up the Bills by throwing for the score from the one, but the Freeman pass to Washington fell incomplete before Ricky Williams was stuffed for a one-yard loss on a run off-tackle on third down. The Bills goal line stand after the big turnover seemed to turn the momentum around. Over the next 17:30, the Bills would outscore the Broncos 17-0. Although the Broncos would

settle for the Mason Crosby field goal from 20 yards out to make it 17-3, they would not score again until their final possession of the game.

Indeed, it took the Bills only two big plays to put their first touchdown on the board and silence the Bronco crowd. First rookie wideout Jacoby Ford, who had been bottled up to that point on kickoff returns, broke a big kickoff return for 57 yards to the Denver 38, with only a tackle by kicker Graham Gano staving off the eventual touchdown. After an incomplete, Brady went deep to his tight end Zach Miller and connected for the 38-yard score, cutting the Broncos lead to 17-10

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Bronco Report Card

Overall Grade: **C+**

QB: C+ Freeman led the comeback, but his play prior to that was spotty.

RB: A Running backs had an excellent game with 173 yards on 31 rushes.

REC: B Brandon Pettigrew had his best game with 7 catches and one TD, while Dwayne Bowe caught five and scored twice.

Bronco Report Card

OL: B+ The Broncos linemen generally dominated the line of scrimmage, allowed just one sack (and now six in seven games).

DL: B Run defense allowed just 78 yards in the game, Got very good pressure on Brady, with Raji registering a sack and five pressures from the D-Line

LB: B Will Witherspoon ended

up with 5 tackles, 2 hurries and 2 stuffs. Jonathan Goff had a forced fumble that led to three points.

DB: C- Brady could make any secondary look ordinary, and he did that today to the Broncos.

Sp.Teams F Allow big return by Jacoby Ford to set up first Bills touchdown and let them back in game.

Game and Season Notes

The win against the Bills breaks a Denver six-game losing streak against the Bills. The last Denver win was back in 2007, when they defeated the Bills 27-20 in week ten for their first win in a 2-14 losing season.

The Broncos Josh Freeman lead the comeback, and although he failed to break 100 in passer rating for the first time this season (18 of 29 for 198 yards, 3 touchdowns but two picks for an 88.0 rating). In some ways it was Freeman's best game. For the first time this year, he faced a situation where he was required to bring the Broncos from behind in the final minutes, and despite throwing two interceptions earlier in the half, he came up big, connecting with Bowe for the winning score. Still, it was his worst statistical game, throwing

two picks for the first time this season and the 88.0 is his lowest rating this season, one week after his career best of 143.4.

Tom Brady was excellent as usual ('He scares the heck out me,' Bronco head coach Hank Sienzant said afterward). Brady was 22 of 32 for 240 yards and two touchdowns, with no interceptions, for a 111.5 passer rating.

Brady got little help from his running game, however, as the Bronco run defense held the Bills to 78 yards on 24 rushes, an average of just under 3.3 per carry. Benson was the Bills leading rusher with 43 yards on 13 carries (3.3). By contrast, the Broncos gained 174 yards on 32 rushes, an average of 5.4 per carry as the Bronco offensive and defensive lines contributed might-

ily to the Broncos win. Ricky Williams was the big ground gainer and outgained the entire Bills team on the ground, with his best game in a Bronco uniform, picking up 93 yards on 16 rushes (5.8). Denver got key contributions from their rookie trio of Dixon (7-39, 5.6), Nance (5-29, 5.8), and Karim (1-11, and a big third and five conversion in the fourth quarter).

Brandon Pettigrew led both teams in receiving and the second-year tight end had his best game in both receptions and yardage, with seven catches for 72 yards and one score, his fourth scoring reception of the year. Bills tight end Zach Miller led the Bills with six catches and 84 yards, scoring twice, with the yardage figure being his best of the season thus far.



Denver starts the 2011 season 7-0 and now has a nine-game winning streak

Injury Report

The Broncos lost a key member of their secondary in rookie Nate Allen, who had won the nickel back role. Allen had appeared on 63% of the Broncos defensive downs. Allen had 24 tackles, two picks, and three passes defended before the injury. Allen, a third round pick in 2011 who had impressed this season, will likely be replaced by fellow rookie Kareem Jackson, a second rounder who has 23 tackles and one interception. He has played on nearly 50% of Denver's defensive plays this year.

A Look Ahead

The Broncos get back running back Ryan Torain, but there may not be a role for him with the ground game rolling along with Williams and the other backs. The Broncos would only say that Torain will be in the mix for some carries in their next game (home vs 5-1 Jacksonville), but Ricky Williams would be the starter next week. The 3-4 Bills play at 1-5 Cleveland next week and hope to get back on the winning track and back to .500 at the midway point of the season.



Rookie safety Nate Allen will miss the next two or three games

BRONCOS RALLY (continued from page two)

before halftime. You could almost feel the excitement being drained from the Denver crowd after the Bills easy score.

The Broncos could do nothing with the ball to start the second half, being held to their first three- and-out, and the Bills came right back to score a field goal and then a touchdown on their two third-quarter possessions, with the touchdown coming when Brady hooked up with Miller for their second touchdown connection of the game from four yards out to give Buffalo the first lead of the game at 20-17 with 15 seconds left in the third stanza. The field goal by Gould on the earlier third-quarter possession ended a 5:24 march of 11 plays for 52 yards that ended at the Bronco 16 when a Brady check-down to Miller fell harmlessly incomplete.

To that point in the third quarter, Josh Freeman had thrown three passes in the quarter, with two incompletes and one pass picked off by Bills CB Chris Carr, as the Broncos were unable to get anything going offensively. And after another three and out to span the end of the third quarter and the beginning of the fourth, the Broncos knew they had to find something that worked offensively or risk their first loss.

After forcing a Buffalo punt when Malcolm Jenkins tackled Davone Bess two yards short of a first down, the Broncos looked like they were about to take the lead back, but after moving 71 yards from their own nine to the Buffalo 20, Chris Carr victimized Josh Freeman for the second time in the game to thwart the drive with just

3:48 remaining in the contest.

If the Bills could get a first down or two, they could seal the deal right here. But the Bronco defense came up big when it counted, forcing the lone Bills three-and-out of the game, helped by a illegal motion call against the Bills to start them out and forced them back to their own four. The tackle of receiver Johnny Knox by Dawan Landry three yards short of the first down on third down was huge, as it forced the Lechler punt which was returned by Blackmon to the Denver 46, with the Broncos needing 54 for the lead, and about 24 or so for the tying field goal.

After a Williams run went nowhere, Freeman hit Bowe for 14 across the middle and then went right back to Bowe for the eventual winning score.

PETTIGREW (continued from back page)

A rookie last year, Pettigrew had mostly sat on the bench for the Rams behind Gonzalez, but quickly became a much-needed receiving threat for the Broncos. Pettigrew, who caught only one pass for 11 yards in four games for the Rams, was injured when he was acquired by Denver, but once he was healthy starting in week eight, he quickly became a big target for Josh Freeman in the passing game. Pettigrew caught 31 for 315 yards in his

final nine games, with 16 of those catches good for first downs. He did not score last year, but in sharing the tight end position with Finley, the 6-5, 263-pound Pettigrew showed why he was so highly sought-after by the Broncos last year.

This year has been more of the same, only more so. Pettigrew's caught 31 for 299 yards and three scores, with almost half his catches good for first downs in just seven games. He's

on a pace for 71receptions and 683 receiving yards, with nine touchdowns. And in his last four games, since becoming the full-time starter at tight end, Pettigrew has been on a 88-reception, twelve touchdown pace. Only 25 in the current season, it is clear the Broncos have a second solid tight end in Pettigrew, and it will be interesting to see how the competition for the starting role shapes up down the road.

Denver Bronco

Fast Fact:

The Broncos have now won eleven of their last fourteen games extending back to last season.

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Denver
Broncos

BRANDON PETTIGREW COMING UP BIG

With the loss of Jermichael Finley in week four, fans expected the Broncos passing game to take a big hit. Finley was leading the Broncos with an average of 18.5 per reception and was second on the team in receptions when he went down. But Brandon Pettigrew has stepped up his game in a big way, and is showing the ISFL he can be a dominant tight end as well.

Just not in the same way. Pettigrew does not have the sheer athleticism that Finley offers and will probably never average over 15 yards a catch from the tight end spot. But he is a good receiver with solid hands. And Pettigrew offers one solid tight end attribute that Finley is currently weak at - Brandon Pettigrew is a very good blocker in the run game.

"He helps make the running game go," says head coach Hank Sienzant. Ricky Williams says he almost always sees daylight to the outside when the play is going to Brandon's side. "Nothing against Jermichael," Williams says, "But Brandon is a beast in the running game and knows how to set the edge."

Everyone knew that Brandon was going to be a good player coming out of Oklahoma State in 2010. Many draft experts projected him as a mid-first round pick. But that was before he mysteriously started dropping in the draft. When it got close to the end of the first round, the Broncos were all set to draft Pettigrew with the first pick in the second round, but the Saint Louis Rams, who already had a future Hall-of-Famer at tight end in Tony Gonzalez, upset the Broncos apple cart when they surprised many - including the Broncos - and selected Pettigrew one pick from the end of the first round.

It worked out okay for the Broncos however, as they eventually drafted defensive tackle B. J. Raji with the pick they had Pettigrew penciled in at, and Raji's quick development as a rookie allowed Denver to trade veteran defensive tackle Tony Brown to the Rams after four games into the 2010 season for, surprise, Brandon Pettigrew. There were some other pieces to the puzzle, but with the exception of Louis Murphy, the Broncos third wideout this year who is currently injured and missed the Bills game, none of them have amounted to much. (continued page 3)