

## Special Points

### of Interest:

- Broncos own best record in AFC at 9-1
- Freeman throws two TDs, and two picks
- Defense surrenders seven points, 179 total yards
- Bronco running game picks up 188 yards

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## BRONCOS STRUGGLE PAST BEARS, 17-7

### Denver Now 9-1 on Season

October 30th, 2011: Although the Broncos had a 410 - 179 yardage advantage, they couldn't convert the yardage into points, putting up only two second quarter touchdowns and a third quarter field goal as they downed the Bears in a low-scoring defensive struggle, 17-7. Denver raised their record to 9 -1 and if the playoffs started today, would be the first seed in the AFC playoffs. The Bears fell to 1-9 and are in last in the AFC Central Division.

The Broncos first two drives ended in disaster as punter Jon Ryan bobbled the snap and was tackled for no gain to end the Broncos first possession, and Josh Freeman was picked off by Lance Briggs to end the Broncos second possession, an eleven-play drive that had reached the Bears 33 yard line.

Meanwhile, the Bears were equally ineffective, punting once and getting a field goal blocked from the Bronco four yard line that could have given them an early 3-0 lead.

That left the game scoreless until the second quarter when the Broncos took over at their own 18 after the second Bears punt. Moving the ball on the ground on seven of the first eight plays, the Broncos picked up three rushing first downs to move the ball to the Bear 48, from where Josh Freeman, atoning for his earlier pick, led Dwayne Bowe perfectly across the middle on a short slant and Bowe caught the ball in stride and raced the rest of the way to complete the 48-yard scoring play.

After forcing another Bear punt that resulted in a touchback, the Broncos took over at their own

20. After a 19-yard completion to Nate Washington, Ryan Torain ran four straight times for 35 yards, with a long of 20, to move the ball to the Chicago 26. Josh Freeman then connected for 19 to Brandon Pettigrew, before connecting with Nate Washington for a second time on the possession from seven yards out for the touchdown that made it 14-0 in the final minute of the first half.

Denver extended their lead to 17-0 in the third quarter on a 13-play march that picked up 76 yards and took nearly eight minutes off the clock, but was stopped when Ricky Williams failed to convert a third down and four run from the Chicago 12 yard line, and the Broncos settled for the Mason Crosby 30 yard field goal with

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## Young Players Key to Bronco Improvement

The Broncos offense, after being one of the worst in the ISFL the last few years, has turned it around with a vengeance this season, and are near or at the top of a number of key categories.

Most of that is due to the development of a number of young players on offense, starting with quarterback Josh Freeman.

Last year at this time, as a 21 -year-old rookie first round

quarterback, Freeman had thrown only 127 passes and only two touchdown passes compared to six interceptions, with a passer rating of just 66.0.

Since then, in his last 16 games, Freeman has been almost other-worldly, completing 258 of 374 for 3111, 28 touchdown passes and only nine picks (109.2). Freeman is just one of the youngsters on offense who have really

stepped up their game this season.

Second-year tight end Brandon Pettigrew has already caught more passes this year for more yardage and more touchdowns than he caught all of his rookie year. As a rookie, Pettigrew caught 32 for 326 and no touchdowns. This year he already has 44 for 452 yards and five touchdowns through

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...”Denver lost the shutout in the fourth quarter ... on a 29-yard TD pass on fourth and 14....”



#### Bronco Report Card

Overall Grade: B-

## Struggle Past Bears (continued from page one)

three minutes left in the quarter. On the march, the Broncos picked up 38 yards passing as Josh Freeman went five for five, and had 38 on the ground on seven rushing attempts, with Ryan Torain getting 36 of those yards on just five carries.

Denver lost the shutout in the fourth quarter when Chicago's Kyle Orton collaborated with Percy Harvin on a 29-yard TD

pass on fourth-and-14 to end the Bears best drive of the game (15 plays, 82 yards, over nine minutes of possession). The Bear drive started late in the third quarter and ended in the fourth, with the big plays (in addition to the 29-yard touchdown) Orton completions of ten and twelve yards to Lee Evans and Heath Miller, respectively. The Bears converted the first three third

downs on that possession, but facing a third-and-eight from the Broncos 23, the Broncos thought they had stopped the Bears when linebacker Will Witherspoon sacked Orton for a six-yard loss. But without the services of their regular kicker, Nate Kaeding, and with Shane Andrus already having one kick blocked on the day, the Bears went for it on 4th down and got their lone TD of the day.

## Bronco Report Card

**QB: C** Freeman threw two picks for the second time this season, with both two-pick games coming in the past four weeks. With all the success the Broncos and Freeman have enjoyed this year, it is easy to forget Freeman is just 22 years old, so let's not be too hard on the kid. He did engineer another win.

**RB: B+** Running backs gained 159 yards rushing on 34 carries and (4.7) and caught six for 55 yards (all by Ryan Torain and Delanie Walker). Deji Karim had one fumble, but it was recovered by Walker to erase that mistake.

**REC: B-** Bowe and Washington followed up their big games last

week by each catching a touchdown pass. Washington had five for 54 and Bowe finished with 51 yards on two receptions. Louis Murphy finally got out of the tub and caught three passes, but gained only 19 yards.

**OL: A** The Broncos offensive line was dominant once again as the Broncos picked up 410 yards from scrimmage and allowed no sacks. The Broncos had six runs of ten yards or more.

**DL: A+** Held the Bears to just 47 yards on the ground on 21 rushes (just a 2.2 yards per carry average) and sacked Orton once. Raji, Michael Johnson, and Roy Miller each contributed a stuff to the

stellar run defense.

**LB: B** Witherspoon led the unit once again, Sims finally showed up with four tackles and a stuff, while Jonathan Goff contributed three tackles and a hurry.

**DB: B-** Playing without two key safeties in Nate Allen and Malcolm Jenkins, the defensive backfield didn't have any embarrassing breakdowns, but they did get burned for one long fourth quarter touchdown once again.

**Special Teams: D** Second botched punt attempt in two games didn't lead to any Bear points, but that needs to get fixed now. Return game did nothing and Crosby missed a 41-yarder.

## Game and Season Notes

Denver had only eight possessions in the game, and five ended with no points as Josh Freeman threw two interceptions, and the Broncos punter Jon Ryan was tackled for no gain on the Broncos first possession when he bobbled the ball and was then forced to run. A fourth Bronco possession ended in a missed field goal, and the game ended with the Broncos backup quarterback Rex Grossman taking a knee from the Bears six yard line for their fifth scoreless possession against the Bears.

The Broncos had almost perfect balance as they rushed for 188 yards and passed for another 222. Ryan Torain was the Broncos leading rusher with 14-78 (5.6), including three runs of ten yards or more, and four other Broncos

contributed 20 or more yards on the ground. Maurice Jones-Drew had only 50 yards for the Bears on 19 carries, and Kyle Orton could not get anything started for most of the contest as he finished with a very good stat line of 15 of 24 for 142 yards and one touchdown (92.7).

The Broncos lost the turnover battle (minus two) for one of their few times this season. With the Bronco defense holding the Bears to less than 200 yards from scrimmage (179) while the Broncos piled up 410 yards of offense, the turnovers (both of which came on interceptions of Freeman) did not prove as damaging as they might have, as neither Freeman interception led to Bear points.

Denver's staunch defense was led by Witherspoon, who contrib-

uted six tackles along with that one sack of Orton. Terrell Thomas also had six tackles. Bronco rookie second-round pick Jason Pierre-Paul got his second sack in two weeks, and his third overall on the season. He was also credited with a forced fumble on the sack, but Orton got the ball back.

The Broncos won most of the stats as they piled up a 25-10 first down edge, as well as a nine-minute-plus edge in time of possession, 34:41 to 25:19. The Bronco defense had their best game against the run since week four when they allowed Houston only 44 yards on the ground. They have not allowed a player to rush for 100 yards this season, although two teams have broken the century mark against their defense this year.



Denver's win now gives them a 9-1 record and turns around their record from last year at this time, when they were 1-9

## Injuries, Transactions And a Look Ahead

### Injury Report

The Broncos get back two safeties in Malcolm Jenkins and rookie Nate Allen for their game next week.

Starting cornerback Tracy Porter, however, tweaked a knee in the game, and continued to play on it. After the game it swelled up on him, and the Broncos determined it was a mild ACL sprain and should not require surgery.

The Bears expect to get kicker Nate Kaeding back next week, as well as three other key players, all of whom missed the Bronco game, in Santonio Holmes, Kelvin Hayden, and Kavell Conner.

### A Look Ahead

The 9-1 Broncos go on the road to face the tough 7-3 Philadelphia Eagles in a non-conference matchup. The Eagles were upset in Tampa Bay by the 1-8 Buccaneers yesterday, 16-7, so the Broncos will no doubt have their hands full against a Eagle contingent that wants to get on the winning track at home.

The Bears travel to Indianapolis to face the hot Colts, who have won six in a row since an 0-3 start. The Colts will try to make that a seven game winning streak this weekend in New Orleans against the 5-4 Saints.

### Player Transactions

The Broncos lost Anthony Smith for the next two weeks but with Nate Allen returning to active duty, Smith was re-leased.

With the injury to starting cornerback Tracy Porter that will keep him out of action for at least the next few weeks, expect the Broncos to sign someone to replace Porter for the short term and do some shuffling in their defensive backfield.

With Malcolm Jenkins and nickel back Nate Allen back, expect Allen to start in Jenkins spot, and Jenkins to get move to CB to start for Porter.



**Both Nate Allen (above) and Malcolm Jenkins will return against Philly but starting cornerback Tracy Porter will miss the next few weeks.**

### Offense (from page one)

the Broncos first ten games this year. In addition, last year Pettigrew's longest gain was just 20 yards, but he already has 28, 33, and 38 yard gains this season.

Another player who has made marked improvement worthy of note is third-year guard Josh Sitton. Sitton has played at a Pro Bowl level this year. Since moving in as a starting guard late in the 2009 season, only getting an opportunity because of a career-ending injury to Mike Wahle, the former eighth round pick in 2009 has started 31 straight games and counting. Sitton has improved every year thus far, and the Broncos believe he has not yet reached his ceiling.

Another player who has a high ceiling has missed the past six games with a potential season ending knee injury, but third-year tight end Jermichael Finley, who is only 23 years old, had caught 13 passes for 241 yards and one touchdown before he tore his ACL in week four. He was averaging a remarkable 18.5 yards per recep-

tion this year, more than double his average in 2010, when he averaged only 8.6 per catch on 53 catches.

Another key contributor who has been healthy all this year is wide receiver Dwayne Bowe. Bowe missed five games last season, and had an off-year with only 45 catches for 535 yards and three touchdowns. Because of his inordinate number of drops (ten last year, 12 the year before), there was talk within the organization of him being moved to the third wide receiver role, with Nate Washington and Louis Murphy being elevated past him, but that talk is now just a distant memory, as Bowe has performed at an exception level this year. After ten games, Bowe has caught 50 for 781 yards and ten touchdowns, with only three drops. He has improved his play greatly over last year, when it appeared he was coasting by on raw talent, and has spent much more time this year looking at game film and working on the field to develop a great relationship with Freeman. Bowe is starting to pay dividends on the Broncos first round choice they exercised in 2008 to obtain

him.

Another player, a rookie, has stepped right in and played alongside Josh Sitton to solidify the offensive line and make it one of the best in the league. Maurkice Pouncey has been everything the Broncos could have hoped for — and more — as he has stepped off the campus of the University of Florida and right into the starting center position of the Denver Broncos. The 21-year-old Pouncey, who skipped his senior year of collegiate eligibility to enter the ISFL draft, has played at a high level all year and has received some All-Pro mention, nearly unheard of for a rookie center. While in truth he isn't the best center in the league, he is already regarded as one of the best and barring injury, has a bright and long future ahead of him as the Broncos pivot man.

Second-year starting guard Eric Wood showed everyone just how tough he was as a rookie last year, when he broke his leg in week five last year but worked hard to rehabilitate himself and came back strong and has started since returning in week 12 last year.

**Denver Bronco  
Fast Fact:  
The Broncos  
have now won  
11 of their last 12  
games extending  
back to last  
season**

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## PIERRE-PAUL COMING UP BIG

Jason Pierre-Paul hasn't played a lot of football, only playing one year of major college football at Southern Florida after two years of junior college.

But the Broncos liked what they saw in the young 6-5, 278-pound defensive end and drafted him with the eighth pick in the second round this year, a relatively high pick for a player with such a limited body of work. One of the things they liked most about him was his tremendous athleticism, which often led to highlight-reel type plays as a collegian. With that athleticism, they felt he could learn the rest.

And so they threw him to the wolves right away after he looked good in preseason, naming him as the starter over more experienced players like Michael Johnson, Robert Ayers, and last year's starter, Phillip Merling.

Pierre-Paul was a disappointment early, getting no sacks and only three tackles in his first four games, but head coach Hank Sienzant tried to put that into perspective. "We never thought of benching him. We knew it was only a matter of gaining experience. Remember Jason had not played a lot at the college level, so pro ball was a major jump for him, even more so than with most rookies. He hadn't had a great deal of experience, so the speed of the game and the language, it's all new to him this year."

But Jason Pierre-Paul is learning, and learning fast.

In the past six games, Pierre-Paul has had three sacks off the edge, including a sack each of the past two weeks. In that last game, he also added a forced fumble to his resume as he keeps improving week-by-week. "I'm just coming on," he said when asked for comment. "That's all I can do. I can't stop now. I've just got to keep going."

The Broncos, however, have noticed that Pierre-Paul has been wearing down over the season, so they plan to not keep him going as much the rest of the year in an attempt to keep him fresher in games over the rest of the season. After all, as a starter as a pro for the Broncos first ten games, he's already played more as a rookie than he did any year as a collegian, and he's now going up against players that mostly outweigh him, sometimes by 50 to 75 pounds or more.