

## Key Stats

### From Week 12:

- Josh Freeman threw four touchdown passes
- Broncos held Brady to 4.8 yards per pass attempt
- Denver allowed Bills 158 yards on the ground
- Ryan Torain rushed for 115 on just 18 carries (6.4)

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## BRONCOS CLINCH POST-SEASON BERTH

### Freeman Throws Four TD Passes in Win

**November 13th, 2011:** The Broncos travelled to Buffalo and downed the Bills, 28-17, behind the hot right arm of second-year quarterback Josh Freeman, 28-17. Freeman connected on three of his touchdown passes with Dwayne Bowe, on completions of 10, 3, and 15 yards. Bowe caught six for 75 yards in the game, and his three touchdown receptions give him 14 on the season. The remaining Freeman touchdown pass was from 8 yards out to Louis Murphy, who finished with six for 47 receiving.

The Broncos clinched a playoff spot with the win over the Bills, as they cannot finish less than 11-5, and they already own the tie-breaker over both 7-5 Buffalo and 7-5 Indianapolis, having swept Buffalo and beating Indy in their lone matchup this year. At 11-1, the Broncos stand alone atop the league with the best record in the ISFL (no one else has fewer than two losses). The

Broncos win, combined with the Jets loss to 10-2 Dallas, gives the Broncos a huge two-game lead in the AFC East with just four games to go. The Bills fell to 7-5 and are third in the AFC East, but are still in position to garner a wild-card spot.

The game featured the best two passers in the league in terms of passer rating in Freeman and Tom Brady, but the two teams accounted for only 361 yards passing on the day. Freeman finished with an economical 18 of 26 for 165 yards, and four touchdown passes (125.8), while Tom Brady completed 25 of 42 for 203 yards and two touchdowns (87.7). Neither quarterback threw an interception.

With the score 21-17 in the Broncos favor with 10:16 remaining in the game, the Broncos took control of the game by running Ryan Torain six straight times. Torain picked up 46 yards on the six carries to move the

ball to the Bills 18. But a Freeman quarterback sneaked gained nothing, and left the Broncos staring at a 4th and inches with a four-point lead and Tom Brady on the other sideline. Flushing caution down the tubes, the Broncos gave the ball to Torain behind Joe Thomas, and Torain ran for three to pick up the big first down. Freeman threw to Bowe on a short crossing route on the next play, and the Bills defense, expecting the run to Torain, gave up Freeman's fourth touchdown pass of the game with 6:22 left, making it a 28-17 game in favor of the Broncos.

"That drive was big," Bronco head coach Hank Sienzant said afterward, "and we're pleased with the way our offensive line took control late in the game. We haven't been able to run the ball like that too often in the past when it counted."

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## Freeman And Orakpo: Joined At the Hip

When the Broncos and Cowboys agreed to a trade in the days leading up to the 2010 draft, both teams expected to come out ahead in the deal.

Both teams did.

The Cowboys wanted to trade up to acquire one of the best linebackers in that draft, and the Broncos wanted to trade down and pick up extra picks to help turn the team that had gone 1-15 the year before into a contender.

The Cowboys acquired the Broncos first round pick, the fourth overall, and selected Brian

Orakpo, a linebacker who has a penchant for pressuring the quarterback.

The Broncos got three picks in return, one in each of the first three rounds, and used them to acquire their quarterback of the future in Josh Freeman, their best defensive back in Malcolm Jenkins, and a solid DE/LB in Connor Barwin (now on IR).

Josh Freeman and Brian Orakpo were the big pieces in the deal, however, and both teams have achieved their goals with the trade.

And just this week, Brian Orakpo was named ISFL Defensive Player of the Week for his excellent game against the defending Super Bowl Champion Jets, as he had three sacks, one hurry, and seven tackles in the Cowboys 52-17 win, while Josh Freeman was named ISFL Offensive Player of the Week for his 18 of 26 passing, and four touchdowns passes with no picks in the Broncos win over Buffalo.

This trade was a solid win for both teams and a deal both teams can brag about.

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



#### Bronco Report Card

**Overall Grade: B**



**Denver starts the 2011 season 11-1 and now has a four-game winning streak**

## BRONCOS CLINCH (continued from page one)

The Bills tried to rally back, but a key offensive pass interference call against wideout Jacoby Ford put Buffalo in a second-and-20 hole, and they punted the ball away with just over two minutes remaining. The Broncos picked up two first downs (both through the air) but were forced to punt one final time, giving the ball back to the Bills with just five seconds to go. The Bills picked up 18 on a hook-and-ladder play, but the game ended at that point.

Trailing 21-10 late in the third quarter, the Bills took over at midfield after a Bronco punt, and converted the short field into a touchdown, but it took 16 plays and 7:33 to finally cross the Denver goal line, as the Denver defense gave ground grudgingly. The

Bills converted four of five third downs on the possession, and after they failed to convert a third-and-ten from the Bronco 44, they went for it on fourth down from the Bronco 40 and picked it on a defensive pass interference call against rookie Kareem Jackson. The Bills got the touchdown on third and goal from the Bronco five, with Brady finding secondary receiver Tim Hightower standing at the goal line just inside the pylon for the points that cut the Denver lead to 21-17.

The Bills took the opening kickoff of the game, and on the game's second play from scrimmage, running back Isaac Redman found a nice hole in the Denver front wall, and broke through for

a 15-yard gain, but the ball was stripped by middle linebacker Jonathan Goff, and recovered by Terrell Thomas at the Bills 48-yard line. The Broncos only four plays to navigate the 48 yards to a touchdown, with a 15-yard facemask penalty against defensive end the biggest play in the drive. Freeman connected with Bowe from ten yards out to give the Broncos a 7-0 lead.

After an exchange of punts, the Bills took the ball at their own 17 and marched the ball to the Bronco 19, with Redman gashing the Broncos for a big 19 yard run early, but two incomplete passes from Tom Brady forced the Robbie Gould field goal from 37-yards out to leave the Broncos

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## Bronco Report Card

**QB: A** Freeman threw four TDs on 18 of 26 with no picks (125.8) and was named ISFL offensive player of the week for his efforts.

**RB: A** Running backs had an excellent game with 147 yards on 25 runs (5.9). Torain & Williams averaged 6.5 on 22 rushes. Dixon had 3 for 5 in a mop-up role.

**REC: B+** Dwayne Bowe had another excellent game and is looking like an All-Pro this year (6-75, 3 TDs). Louis Murphy caught six and scored one.

**OL: B+** Freeman was sacked only once and the line helped the running backs to a good game. **DL: C** Run defense was lacking as the Bills gained 158 on the ground, but that was acceptable versus Brady and part of the game plan. No sacks and little pressure though.

**LB: B** Will Witherspoon ended up with 6 tackles, 1 stuff and one pass defended. Jonathan Goff had seven tackles, 2 passes defended and a forced fumble that led to

the Broncos first points.

**DB: A-** Brady burned the Broncos secondary the first time these teams played, but the Broncos did a great job scheme-wise this week to hold him to just 203 yards passing on 42 attempts.

**Sp.Teams B** Allowed Jacoby Ford a big 82-yard return but was otherwise solid, getting a great job from Jon Ryan punting (four inside the 20, no touchbacks). Karim (26.7) and Tate (11.0) did a good job on returns.

## Game and Season Notes

The Broncos defense surrendered 158 yards on the ground, their most since week 14 last year, but Hank Sienzant explained that was mostly a win for the Broncos. "Every run by the Bills takes the ball out of Brady's hands one time, and gives him one less opportunity to beat us. We wanted the Bills to run, just not as effectively as they did." As it turned out, the Bills averaged just 4.8 yards per pass attempt, and 6.6 per rushing play. The Broncos might have been better off trying to stop the run.

Ryan Torain rushed for over one hundred yards for the third time this season, and the second in a row, carrying 18 for 115

(6.4). Ricky Williams rushed only four times, but made them count, picking up 27 yards (6.8) in the game.

For the Bills, Tim Hightower was their leading rusher with 77 yards on just 9 carries (8.6) and had a nice 32-yard run in the third quarter drive that ended in the second Gould missed field goal. Redman rushed only six times but picked up 56 yards, averaging 9.3 per rush.

Both Mike Thomas and Zach Miller caught seven passes apiece for the Bills, but neither averaged over ten yards per reception. Brady's longest completion in the game was just 14 yards until the final pass of the game, which

picked up 18 on a hook-and-ladder. Future Hall of Famer Ray Lewis had 13 tackles and one pass defended for Buffalo, while on the opposite sideline, Malcolm Jenkins had 10 tackles and Terrell Thomas had nine.

The Broncos have now swept both the Houston Texans and Buffalo Bills this year in the AFC East. They last swept both in the same season in 2004. Denver is still undefeated in the AFC East with a 6-0 record, and get their remaining two AFC opponents at home in Denver (Cleveland in game 13, New York in game 15). With one road game remaining, the Broncos are 7-0 on the road this year.

## Injuries, Transactions And a Look Ahead

### Injury Report

The Broncos lost backup inside linebacker Kaluka Maiava for the remainder of the season and the playoffs with a ACL injury to his right leg. Maiava hobbled off the field after the last Bronco punt (with just five seconds remaining in the game) and said after the game that he suffered the knee injury on that play. He was placed on the Broncos injured reserve list and cannot return until next season.

The Broncos may get Tracy Porter back this week (questionable), but Porter says he will definitely be back for the big game against the Jets in week 15, the week after the bye.

### Transactions

The Broncos signed linebacker Brandon Chillar to their active roster for the remainder of the season (and however far they advance in the playoffs). Chillar is a veteran of the ISFL wars and played six years for the San Diego Chargers.

Chillar's best year in a Charger uniform was 2009, when he had 78 tackles and 4 pass deflections in 13 games.

Chillar is a bigger inside linebacker than Maiava (6-3, 237 to 6-0, 230) and is more of a run stuffer than Maiava. He replaces Maiava on the Broncos active roster for the duration of this season.

### A Look Ahead

The Broncos host the Cleveland Browns next week, while the Buffalo Bills try to resume their winning ways in Miami against the 1-11 Dolphins.

The Browns are 4-8, but have won their last three games and have been getting great offensive production over that span with 84 points, an average of 28 per game. Over that span, the Browns have outscored their opponents by 32 points, while the Broncos have outscored their opponents by just 31 (65-34).

The Broncos beat the Browns in week six in Cleveland, 28-6 with Freeman tossing 3 TDs.



**Kaluka Maiava will miss the remainder of the season**

## **BRONCOS CLINCH** (continued from page two)

a 7-0 lead.

After an exchange of punts, the Bills took the ball at their own 17 and marched the ball to the Bronco 19, with Redman gashing the Broncos for a big 19 yard run early, but two incomplete passes from Tom Brady forced the Robbie Gould field goal from 37-yards out to leave the Broncos ahead 7-3.

After another exchange of punts, the Broncos scored their second touchdown of the game to open a 14-3 lead. The Broncos led three times by 11 points, at 14-3, 21-10, and 28-17, and never trailed in the game. After a Golden Tate punt return of 18 yards started the Broncos off at their own 45, the Broncos drove 55 yards in eight plays to paydirt, with Freeman hitting Dwayne Bowe on a short out for the score. Freeman went four of five on the march, and Ryan Torain rain twice for 25 yards.

The Bills came right back with a touchdown of their own, with Jacoby Ford return Graham Gano's kick 82 yards to the Denver 22 yard line. After Kareem Jackson got called for defensive

pass interference on third and ten (one of two pass interference calls against Jackson on the day), Tom Brady hit Johnnie Know from twelve yards out for the Bills first touchdown to cut the Denver lead to 14-10 midway through the second quarter.

Both teams moved the ball into their opponents territory once more before the end of the half, but neither team came up with any points. Denver got as close as the Bills 33, but a Kamerion Wimbley sack of Freeman on third and seven pushed the Broncos out of field goal range, and the Broncos punted the ball to the Bills six with 3:05 remaining in the first half.

The Bills then took over at that point and patiently moved the ball to the Bronco 32, but on fourth and five with four seconds left in the half, Gould was wide right on a 50-yard field goal try to end to first half.

After Gould opened the second half by shanking the kickoff out of bounds, the Broncos drove 60 yards to score on a Freeman to Murphy 8-yard connection to open a 21-10 lead, their second 11-point lead of the contest. Ryan

Torain and Ricky Williams combined for 32 yards on the ground of the 60 yards on the possession, and Josh Freeman was three of three for 28 yards and the score.

The Bills retaliated with a sustained march starting at their own 11 yard line at got to the Bronco 12, but three Brady passes fell incomplete and the Gould 30-yard try for points was no good. The Bills took almost six minutes off the clock on the 13-play, 77-yard drive, but the second Gould miss hurt the Bills chances immeasurably.

After a Denver three-and-out, the Bills did get their third and final score on the board, but it took a 16-play drive that averaged just over three yards per play to finally get the touchdown on the board and cut the Bronco lead to four again, this time at 21-17.

When the Broncos answered by running six times for 42 yards to move the ball effectively on the ground, and then scored their final touchdown to move back in the lead by 11 with less than seven minutes remaining, the Broncos finally had a lead that even Tom Brady couldn't overcome.

### **Denver Bronco**

#### **Fast Fact:**

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

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## EIGHTH ROUND BONUS PICK

Not a lot was expected of Josh Sitton when he was drafted out of Central Florida in 2009. He was only a lowly eighth round pick, meaning most teams didn't see a lot of value in him. Even the Broncos weren't expecting much. Most guys who last until the eighth round do so for a reason (or several), and most of those guys don't pan out to be much.

Josh Sitton was to be an exception.

But then, it was always thus. He was undervalued at every level. He had no scholarship offer from a major Division I-A school after high school. Even after playing four years of football for Central Florida, starting 43 games and playing in 50, he still wasn't considered a draftable prospect by most ISFL teams.

But today, he is a starting guard and a vital cog in what some consider the best offensive line in the league.

For the draft, he had friends and family over, expecting his success at the collegiate level to translate into a mid-round draft selection. He knew he wasn't the highest rated guard on the board, far from it, but he expected to be picked in rounds three or four.

Those rounds came and went. When the fifth and sixth rounds, and then the seventh, came and went with Sitton still undrafted, he started to think he might not get a shot. A few thousand miles away, the Broncos draft team was huddling up in their war room and sorting through the names and discussing the potential of some of the prospective draftees they still on their list. Sitton's name came up, and a few of their scouts made a compelling case for selecting him. They liked his size, hustle and his toughness. They argued he could learn the rest. It was a done deal.

With a pick acquired in a trade earlier that year for a player now out of football, the Broncos took a flyer on Josh Sitton, a player now regarded as one of the best young guards in the game today.

But it wasn't easy getting there.

After an injury-riddled start to his rookie year, Sitton nabbed the starting spot at guard when veteran Mike Wahle went down with an injury in week 12 of the 2009 season and hasn't let go. He started all sixteen games last year, getting voted the most improved Bronco offensive player (sharing the award with Jermichael Finley), and has started all eleven to date this year. With the Broncos 11-1 start, his play is being noticed in a positive manner, and he is even receiving some serious pro-bowl talk.

"Josh wasn't the most talented player we had when he was thrown to the wolves in 2009," says one Bronco insider. "Far from it. He still isn't. But he plays hard to the echo of the whistle and he works his butt off. Now he's known for his excellent discipline and work ethic, which translates to the field into solid, mistake-free football. And he's being viewed as a prototypical guard, one that every team would love to have on their roster."

But only the Broncos do. And they aren't letting go.