

SCOUTING REPORT

Saints at Broncos » 2:05 p.m. today » KDVR-31

By Lindsay H. Jones, The Denver Post

GamePlan

When the Broncos run

The Denver running game has been overshadowed by the air attack through two weeks, but this could be the game when all that changes against a New Orleans defense that is giving up nearly 150 rushing yards per game. **Edge: Denver**

When the Saints run

The Saints will get a boost by the return of Deuce McAllister, but the Denver run defense has proved itself to be improved. The challenge for the Broncos will be how well they can contain Reggie Bush when he finds space. **Edge: Denver**

When the Broncos pass

The Broncos currently have the league's best passing game, and playing against a slightly hobbled New Orleans secondary should only help Jay Cutler pad his passing stats. The Saints have given up an average of 256 passing yards per game, while the Broncos are averaging 320 yards. **Edge: Denver**

When the Saints pass

Drew Brees is established as one of the league's best passers. The question for the Saints is to whom will he throw. Top receiver Marques Colston and reserve Terrance Copper are out with injuries, and the Saints' top receivers are a running back (Bush) and a tight end (Jeremy Shockey). Still, the Denver pass defense hasn't been sharp, allowing an average of 242 passing yards in two games. **Edge: New Orleans**

Special teams



Broncos kicker Matt Prater

With all things equal in the kicking game (New Orleans' Martin Gramatica and Denver's Matt Prater are perfect through two games), this could come down to coverage of kicks and punts. Denver has allowed several big returns, including a 103-yard kickoff return for a score last week. And Bush took a punt back 55 yards for a score last week. **Edge: New Orleans**

InjuryReport

Saints

Out: WR Marques Colston (thumb), WR Terrance Copper (hamstring), LB Scott Fujita (knee), CB Aaron Glenn (ankle), DT Antwan Lake (groin). **Questionable:** RB Aaron Stecker (hamstring). **Probable:** S Josh Bullocks (heel), CB Randall Gay (hamstring), S Roman Harper (hamstring), LB Scott Shanle (hand), DT Brian Young (knee).

Broncos

Out: WR Darrell Jackson (calf), C Tom Nalen (knee), RB Ryan Torain (elbow). **Questionable:** LB Louis Green (hamstring), DT Josh Shaw (calf). **Probable:** LB Boss Bailey (ankle), DE Elvis Dumervil (finger), S Marquand Manuel (thumb), QB Patrick Ramsey (right elbow), DT Dewayne Robertson (knee).

ByTheNumbers

8-of-10

The Broncos have scored eight touchdowns in 10 trips into the red zone this season.

6-2

Broncos' all-time record against the Saints. The teams most recently played in 2004, a 34-13 Denver win at the Superdome in New Orleans.

2-5

New Orleans quarterback Drew Brees' career record as a starter against Denver. All of those games were when Brees played for San Diego. He has thrown two touchdown passes and five interceptions in those games.

5 things to watch

1 Prolific passers

Today's game features two of the NFL's most potent passing games. Denver quarterback Jay Cutler has thrown for an NFL-best 650 yards, while New Orleans' Drew Brees leads a Saints passing game that is ranked No. 7 in the league. What does this all mean? It's a big challenge for two defenses that have been able to do little so far to stop opposing quarterbacks. The Saints' pass defense ranks No. 28, one spot better than Denver's.

2 Avoid a letdown

Remember the 2007 Broncos? They started the season 2-0, too. But by the first week of October, the team was 2-3 and on its way to a losing season. With the Broncos coming off one of their most dramatic and controversial wins in years, it will be key for the team to be able to leave San Diego in the past and refocus on facing its first nondivisional foe. Denver has not won more than two consecutive games since a five-game winning streak early in the 2006 season.

3 Contain the kickoffs

Kickoff coverage has proved to be one of Denver's most vulnerable areas through two weeks. The unit broke down in giving up a 103-yard touchdown return last week against San Diego and has needed Champ Bailey to twice make touchdown-saving tackles. Through two weeks, Denver has allowed its opponents to start at nearly the 30-yard line after kickoffs, worse than all but six other teams.

4 Terrific tight ends

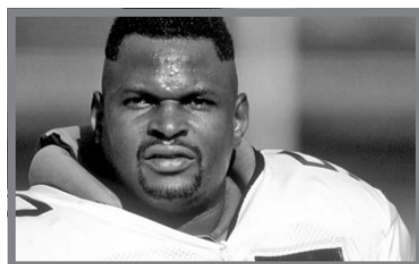
It's no afterthought position for these two teams. For New Orleans, Jeremy Shockey ranks second on the team with eight catches, and with the Saints missing several receivers, including Marques Colston, Shockey is a big, reliable target for Brees. In Denver, the Tony Scheffler-Daniel Graham-Nate Jackson trifecta has combined for 12 catches and two touchdowns (both by Scheffler).

Reggie Bush
Nick Laham,
Getty Images

5 Reggie the receiver and returner

So maybe he isn't a traditional running back, but New Orleans' Reggie Bush remains one of the most explosive — and feared — offensive players in the league. In 2008, he has been most effective as a receiver, catching a team-high 15 passes for 175 yards and one TD. Denver struggled against the Chargers' Darren Sproles, a player with similar skills. "You give him one step, and he's a little bit faster and a little bit quicker than the defenders," coach Mike Shanahan said of Bush. "All of a sudden, what looks like a 10-yard play is a touchdown."

The Picks



WEEKLY GUEST PICKER (1-1)

Rickey Jackson, former Saints linebacker Jackson, 50, was a six-time Pro Bowler in 13 seasons (1981-1993) with the Saints. He spent the final two years in San Francisco, winning a Super Bowl there in the 1994 season, when Mike Shanahan was the 49ers' offensive coordinator. After retiring, Jackson returned to his hometown of Pahokee, Fla., and spends every Friday night calling high school football games for a local radio station.

Saints 34, Broncos 30
"I pick the Saints to win because I'm an NFC man," Jackson said. "Denver scores a lot of points and has a good young quarterback. But I like the Saints' offense. I like what Reggie Bush is doing. I like the points they're putting up."



Jim Armstrong (1-1)

Broncos 30, Saints 27
It won't be a Brees for Broncos.



Lindsay H. Jones (2-0)

Broncos 34, Saints 27
Cutler and Co. too much for depleted Saints.



Mark Kiszla (2-0)

Broncos 31, Saints 28
Drew Brees + Denver secondary = Game tougher than it looks.



Mike Klis (1-1)

Broncos 28, Saints 24
More Young-Hall than Marshall-Royal this week? Nah.



Woody Paige (2-0)

Broncos 35, Saints 17
No inadvertent whistles, no replay malfunctions, no two-point conversions, no problem.

BRONCOS STARTERS

OFFENSE

No.	Player	Pos.
15	Brandon Marshall	WR
78	Ryan Clady	LT
50	Ben Hamilton	LG
62	Casey Wiegmann	C
73	Chris Kuper	RG
74	Ryan Harris	RT
89	Daniel Graham	TE
19	Eddie Royal	WR
6	Jay Cutler	QB
35	Selvin Young	RB
48	Peyton Hillis	FB
5	Matt Prater	K

DEFENSE

No.	Player	Pos.
60	John Engelberger	LE
63	Dewayne Robertson	LT
79	Marcus Thomas	RT
92	Elvis Dumervil	RE
55	D.J. Williams	WLB
58	Nate Webster	MLB
97	Boss Bailey	SLB
24	Champ Bailey	LCB
32	Dré Bly	RCB
33	Marquand Manuel	SS
20	Marlon McCree	FS
1	Brett Kern	P

SAINTS STARTERS

OFFENSE

No.	Player	Pos.
81	David Patten	WR
70	Jammal Brown	LT
67	Jamar Nesbit	LG
76	Jonathan Goodwin	C
73	Jahri Evans	RG
78	Jon Stinchcomb	RT
88	Jeremy Shockey	TE
19	Devery Henderson	WR
9	Drew Brees	QB
25	Reggie Bush	RB
44	Mike Karney	FB
1	Martin Gramatica	K

DEFENSE

No.	Player	Pos.
94	Charles Grant	LE
71	Kendrick Clancy	NT
98	Sedrick Ellis	DT
91	Will Smith	RE
55	Scott Fujita	SLB
51	Jonathan Vilma	MLB
58	Scott Shanle	WLB
20	Randall Gay	LCB
22	Tracy Porter	RCB
41	Roman Harper	FS
43	Kevin Kaesviharn	SS
7	Steve Weatherford	P

BRONCOS LEADERS

	PASSING						
	Att	Com	Pct	Yds	TD	Int	LG
Cutler	74	52	70.3	650	6	1	72
Denver	75	52	69.3	650	6	1	72
Opponents	59	38	64.4	557	5	1	67
	RUSHING						
	Att	Yds	Avg	LG	TD		
Young	15	114	7.6	49	1		
Hall	17	92	5.4	16	0		
Denver	58	286	4.9	49	4		
Opponents	48	230	4.8	42	0		
	RECEIVING						
	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD		
Marshall	18	166	9.2	34	1		
Royal	14	183	13.1	29	2		
Scheffler	7	136	19.4	72	2		
Denver	52	650	12.5	72	6		
Opponents	38	557	14.7	67	5		
	SCORING						
	1	2	3	4	OT	TOT	
Denver	14	34	10	22	0	80	
Opponents	3	14	10	25	0	52	
	Touchdowns Kicking						
	Tot	Ru	Rc	Rt	XP	Att	FG
Pittman	3	3	0	0	0	0	0
Denver	10	4	6	0	10	3	3
Opponents	6	0	5	1	6	3	3
	FIELD GOALS						
	1-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+		
Prater	0/0	0/0	1/1	0/0	1/1	1/1	
Denver	0/0	0/0	1/1	0/0	1/1	1/1	
Opponents	0/0	0/0	2/2	1/1	0/0	0/0	

SAINTS LEADERS

	PASSING						
	Att	Com	Pct	Yds	TD	Int	LG
Brees	65	45	69.2	559	4	3	84
New Orleans	65	45	69.2	559	4	3	84
Opponents	77	48	62.3	542	2	1	67
	RUSHING						
	Att	Yds	Avg	LG	TD		
Bush	24	79	3.3	26	0		
P. Thomas	16	60	3.8	18	1		
New Orleans	46	156	3.4	26	1		
Opponents	51	295	5.8	46	2		
	RECEIVING						
	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD		
Bush	15	175	11.7	42	1		
Shockey	8	76	9.5	26	0		
Patten	6	94	15.7	39	1		
New Orleans	45	559	12.4	84	4		
Opponents	48	542	11.3	67	2		
	SCORING						
	1	2	3	4	OT	TOT	
New Orleans	7	10	24	7	0	48	
Opponents	10	9	9	21	0	49	
	Touchdowns Kicking						
	Tot	Ru	Rc	Rt	XP	Att	FG
Bush	2	0	1	0	0	0	0
New Orleans	6	1	4	1	6	2	2
Opponents	5	2	2	1	4	5	3
	FIELD GOALS						
	1-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+		
Gramatica	0/0	0/0	1/1	1/1	0/0	0/0	
New Orleans	0/0	0/0	1/1	1/1	0/0	0/0	
Opponents	0/0	0/0	1/1	4/5	0/1	0/0	

TEAM STATS

	Broncos	Saints
Total offense	463.5 (1)	344.0 (10)
Rush offense	143.0 (10)	78.0 (25)
Pass offense	320.5 (2)	266.0 (7)
Total defense	381.5 (27)	403.5 (29)
Rush defense	115.0 (21)	147.5 (26)
Pass defense	266.5 (29)	256.0 (28)
Turnover margin	+1 (7)	-2 (25)
Points/game	40.0 (1)	24.0 (9)
Opp. points/game	26.0 (26)	24.5 (23)
Punting (gross)	48.2 (6)	44.4 (19)
Punting (net)	44.6 (6)	39.2 (19)

dp Stats Complete rosters, team leaders. denverpost.com/broncos