

1. Denver Broncos

Week	Day	Date	Time (ET)		Opponent	Score	W/L/T	Stories
1	Monday	Sep. 12	8:15 PM		Raiders	20-23	L	Recap Box
2	Sunday	Sep. 18	2:15 PM		Bengals	24-22	W	Recap Box
3	Sunday	Sep. 25	12:00 PM	at	Titans	14-17	L	Recap Box
4	Sunday	Oct. 2	3:15 PM	at	Packers	23-49	L	Recap Box
5	Sunday	Oct. 9	2:15 PM		Chargers	24-29	L	Recap Box
6								Bye Week
7	Sunday	Oct. 23	1:00 PM	at	Dolphins	18-15	W	Recap Box
8	Sunday	Oct. 30	2:05 PM		Lions	10-45	L	Recap Box
9	Sunday	Nov. 6	1:05 PM	at	Raiders	38-24	W	Recap Box
10	Sunday	Nov. 13	12:00 PM	at	Chiefs	17-10	W	Recap Box
11	Thursday	Nov. 17	6:20 PM		Jets	17-13	W	Recap Box
12	Sunday	Nov. 27	1:15 PM	at	Chargers	16-13	W	Recap Box
13	Sunday	Dec. 4	12:00 PM	at	Vikings	35-32	W	Recap Box
14	Sunday	Dec. 11	2:05 PM		Bears	13-10	W	Recap Box
15	Sunday	Dec. 18	2:15 PM		Patriots	23-41	L	Recap Box
16	Saturday	Dec. 24	1:00 PM	at	Bills	14-40	L	Recap Box
17	Sunday	Jan. 1	2:15 PM		Chiefs	3-7	L	Recap Box
18	Sunday	Jan. 8	2:30 PM		Steelers	29-23	W	Recap Box
19	Saturday	Jan. 14	8:00 PM	at	Patriots	10-45	L	Recap Box

Janikowski ties FG mark, Raiders top Broncos 23-20 DENVER (AP) -- Sebastian Janikowski figures his celebration over his long field goal will be short-lived. After all, Matt Prater kicks at this altitude eight times a year to Janikowski's one. "He's the only guy I've got to worry about if he's going to break the record," Janikowski said after his record-tying 63-yarder helped the Oakland Raiders beat the Denver Broncos 23-20 Monday night. Janikowski said he dreamt of just such a historic field goal Saturday night and nailed a kick from 70 yards out during warmups. His 63-yard kick tumbled above the crossbar near the left upright as the first half expired, giving Oakland a 16-3 lead. "To be honest, I didn't hit it that good," said Janikowski, ever the perfectionist. "It barely got over the bar." Janikowski also was true from 37 and 21 yards. Prater made a 28- and a 30-yarder but was wide right on a 56-yard attempt in the first half, just his fourth miss from 50-plus yards in 13 career tries. That was the difference in a foul- and fist-filled night between the AFC West archrivals. The Raiders (1-0) won in Denver for the fourth straight season in coach Hue Jackson's NFL head coaching debut, and handed the Broncos (0-1) their first loss in a home opener since 2000. John Fox lost his debut as Denver's coach, and he lost at least two playmakers in the process. Pass-rusher Elvis Dumervil was relegated to situational duty for three quarters after irritating a left shoulder injury that he originally sustained during practice last week. And perennial Pro Bowl cornerback Champ Bailey injured his left hamstring making a touchdown-saving tackle of Darren McFadden, who ran 22 times for 150 yards. "It's very disappointing because we talk about having to stop Darren McFadden, and we don't do everything to stop him," said Bailey, who will go for an MRI Tuesday. Without a ground game themselves, the Broncos went to the air and cut the deficit to 23-20 with just under four minutes left on Kyle Orton's short TD toss to Lance Ball - with both his top target, Brandon Lloyd (groin), and top tailback, Knowshon Moreno (hamstring) on the sideline. The Raiders, who ran for 190 yards, salted away the win by controlling the clock and were able to line up in victory formation after Michael Bush's 12-yard run to midfield for the first down at the 2-minute warning. Other than his late TD throw, Orton had a tough night. He completed 24 of 46 passes for 304 yards with an interception. As he left the field, fans were chanting, "Tebow! Tebow!" for second-year quarterback Tim Tebow, who had an awful camp and is probably the No. 3 quarterback behind Brady Quinn. Janikowski's kick on the final play of the first half tied the NFL mark set by Tom Dempsey in 1970 and matched by Denver's Jason Elam in 1998 at the old Mile High Stadium. "I wanted to be 10 years in the league, break the record or tie the record and I want to win a Super Bowl," Janikowski said. "Those are my three goals. I've got two out of three." Janikowski's teammate, punter Shane Lechler, added a 77-yard punt in the fourth quarter, tying a team record set by Wayne Crow a half century ago. "It's phenomenal, both of them," Jackson said. "What Sebastian did was unheard of. I think we have two of the best kickers in the league. I trust those guys, believe in them. What a kick. Obviously, a lot of people think that was the difference in the game." Lechler's punt bounced into the end zone for a touchback, and that's just what Jackson wanted out of his punter after watching Eric Decker return his previous punt 90 yards for a touchdown. It was the eighth TD on a punt or kickoff return on opening weekend, the most in a single week in NFL history. --- Connect with AP Pro Football Writer Arnie Melendrez Stapleton at <http://twitter.com/arniestapleton> © 2011 STATS LLC

Broncos top Bengals 24-22 for Fox's 1st Denver win DENVER (AP) -- The Broncos had just enough healthy players to hold on for John Fox's first win in Denver. Even if their lineup was left looking like a preseason game, when fans wonder, "Who's that guy?" The Broncos staved off a last-minute drive by the Cincinnati Bengals to hold on for a 24-22 win Sunday despite losing two more key players to injuries. Kyle Orton threw two touchdown passes to Eric Decker, who atoned for a big fumble with nine receptions for 113 yards in his first career start. Willis McGahee ran for 101 yards and a touchdown on 28 carries in his heaviest workload in three seasons. "It didn't always look pretty - it couldn't look pretty with the way our personnel was," Orton said. "We had nine or 10 guys that are usually on the field that are out. ... It was tough sledding out there but we stuck together." The injury epidemic grew to 10 players, including a half dozen starters and two more who were expected to start before being sidelined in the offseason. "The next man up is the best man up," linebacker Joe Mays said, "and whenever your number is called you have to go out there and execute whatever the coach asks you to do. Every single player on the team deserves to be here and you never know when your number is called." Next man up? How about last man standing? Even Tim Tebow's No. 15 was called Sunday - not to replace Orton at quarterback as his fans have been harping about, but to line up as a slot receiver after Eddie Royal went down with a strained left groin shortly after rookie tight

end Julius Thomas went out with an injured right ankle. "I'm going to do whatever I can to help the team," said Tebow, who was never targeted in the passing game but did his best to block. "If they ask me to go out there and run some routes and block some people, I'll go do it." Orton said he wouldn't have hesitated throwing it Tebow's way. It just didn't come to that. "Oh, he's an athlete," Decker agreed. "He can catch some passes." The Broncos (1-1) beat the Bengals (1-1) with a heavy diet of the I-formation consisting of two wide receivers, two tight ends and two backs. Andy Dalton showed no ill effects from a bruised right wrist and forearm, throwing for 332 yards and hitting fellow rookie A.J. Green 10 times for 124 yards and Jerome Simpson four times for 136 yards. After scoring on four straight possessions, the Bengals looked as though they had caught a big break when Britton Colquitt's 82-yard punt was called back because Broncos gunner Chris Harris didn't get back inbounds quickly enough. On the re-kick, the Bengals got the ball at the Denver 45-yard line instead of their own 11 with 5 1/2 minutes left. Rather than try a 53-yard field goal, however, the Bengals went for it on fourth-and-1 at the Denver 36 even though they were 1-for-11 on third-down conversions. Green sneaked into the right flat, but Robert Ayers sniffed out the naked bootleg and drove Dalton into the ground as his pass fell incomplete. "It was the best decision I could make at that point" was all Bengals coach Marvin Lewis had to say about not sending out kicker Mike Nugent, who was good from 45, 37 and 23 yards in Denver's thin air where Sebastian Janikowski tied the NFL record last week with a 63-yarder. Denver couldn't run out the clock after Ryan Clady's second holding call, and Cincinnati got the ball back at its 5 with 2:25 left and no timeouts remaining. The Bengals reached midfield at the minute mark, but nickel back Jonathan Wilhite, playing for Champ Bailey, sacked Dalton. Then another backup - Wesley Woodyard, playing for D.J. Williams - made a diving deflection of a pass to tight end Jermaine Gresham. That brought up fourth-and-19 from the Bengals 43, and Dalton's desperation pass went out of bounds with 23 seconds left. The Broncos were missing five starters at kickoff in Bailey, Williams, wide receiver Brandon Lloyd, defensive end Elvis Dumervil and tailback Knowshon Moreno. They were quickly joined on the sideline by Thomas. Royal limped off the field in the second quarter. After Decker's second TD catch, a 52-yarder, gave Denver a 24-15 lead, Von Miller recorded his first sack as a pro on the game's next snap. With Mile High rocking, Dalton hit Simpson over the middle for an 84-yard gain that set up Green's tiptoe touchdown catch that made it 24-22 early in the fourth quarter. That was Denver's last slip-up. "This is one of the best wins that I've ever been a part of," Orton said. "This is a great win to battle the way we did, just to have a total team win." Notes: The Bengals lost for the ninth straight time in Denver, where Cincy hasn't won since 1975. ... McGahee, who hadn't carried the ball more than 20 times in a game since November 2008, rushed 28 times for 101 yards. ... The Bengals lost WR Jordan Shipley to a left knee injury. --- Connect with AP Pro Football Writer Arnie Stapleton at <http://twitter.com/arniestapleton>. © 2011 STATS LLC

Titans beat Broncos 17-14 but lose Kenny Britt NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) -- Kenny Britt's right knee buckled underneath him, and the Tennessee receiver dropped the ball in pain before being carted off the field. Without Britt, the Titans got sloppy and confused in the huddle. Matt Hasselbeck got them straightened out in time. Hasselbeck drove the Titans 95 yards and tossed the go-ahead touchdown to Daniel Graham with 4:24 left as the Titans rallied and beat the Denver Broncos 17-14 on Sunday for their second straight win. Hasselbeck finished with 311 yards and two touchdowns, the last a 4-yarder to the fifth different receiver on the drive. "Guys stepped up enough to make the plays to win the game," Hasselbeck said. "But it wasn't good enough. We need to improve if that ever happens again." Britt, who came in leading the AFC with 271 yards receiving, left the stadium wearing a brace on his right knee with tests to determine the severity of the damage expected by Monday. Britt only said that his status is "limping" as he walked by reporters. The Titans (2-1) intercepted Kyle Orton twice, sacked him once and stopped Willis McGahee on fourth-and-goal at the 1 early in the fourth quarter. They outgained Denver 333-231 with Hasselbeck again carrying the offense. He also threw a 14-yard TD pass to Nate Washington as the Titans scored 10 straight points in the second quarter for a 10-7 halftime lead. Titans coach Mike Munchak credited Hasselbeck with spreading the ball around. "We lost Kenny, and he's got a lot of young receivers out there having to change positions so there's a lot going on out there," Munchak said. "Not many quarterbacks could have handled that as well as he did and make plays the way he did. He's exactly what we hoped he'd be." Washington, who had a career-high eight catches, said he was very concerned about Britt. "We have to put some things together that are going to try to make up for things that he was able to do for us. But I think we are going to be all right. Hopefully, he will be able to sit down and kick his feet up, and we'll be able to hold on until he gets healthy," Washington said. Denver (1-2) had a last chance, driving to the Titans 38 before Will Witherspoon sacked Orton. Two plays later, Jason Jones batted Orton's pass into the air, and Witherspoon picked it off with 1:39 left to seal the victory. "There's not much you can do about it," Orton said. Denver coach John Fox got receiver Brandon Lloyd back from injury, but held out running back Knowshon Moreno and linebacker D.J. Williams. Fox said he'd go for fourth-and-goal again if he had inches to the end zone. He took a timeout and pulled Matt Prater off the field after he had lined up to attempt a 19-yard field goal for the Broncos. "At the end of the day on the road, fourth and not even a full yard, I'd do it again next week," Fox said. "We've got to be able to get that and get that in. Unfortunately, we didn't." Derrick Morgan, the Titans' top draft pick a year ago, stopped McGahee for no gain with his teammates pushing in from all sides. Witherspoon said they felt challenged when Denver decided to go for it after Tennessee had stopped the Broncos three straight times. "It was like in the movies pretty much," Witherspoon said. "It was one of those scenes that you're like, 'Hey, this only happens once in a while so let's make the best of it.' They were challenging us, and we were going to challenge them back." The game might not have been as close if not for the Titans hurting themselves with 11 penalties for 80 yards, including a personal foul on each of Denver's scoring drives. Orton was hit in the head by Jones on the drive that finished with a 5-yard TD pass to McGahee, and a face mask on Titans tackle Shaun Smith set up a third-quarter TD drive. "The bottom line is it's hard to win in this league," Munchak said. "Any win to me is a good win, and 2-1 is a lot better than the alternative." © 2011 STATS LLC

Woodson's big play helps Packers top Broncos 49-23 GREEN BAY, Wis. (AP) -- Charles Woodson plucked Kyle Orton's pass out of the air, managed not to bobble the ball, and took it straight to the end zone. Woodson's 30-yard interception for a touchdown set the tone early in the Green Bay Packers' 49-23 rout of the Denver Broncos at Lambeau Field on Sunday. It also moved Woodson one step away from a record. Sunday's score was Woodson's 11th interception return for a touchdown, tying him with Darren Sharper for second on the NFL career list - and putting him one behind the leader, Rod Woodson. "I'm almost there," Charles Woodson said. "I plan on getting it this year. We'll see." Woodson's big play was the worst part of an up-and-down day for Orton, one of three interceptions by the Packers. The Packers already were leading 7-3 when Woodson read Orton's attempted throw to Eric Decker. "I feel like I bobbled it a little bit briefly, and for a second thought I was going to drop it," Woodson said. "Once I got it and I looked back and (saw) the receiver kind of stumbling, I knew I could get in." The Broncos still had a rally in them, with Orton throwing a pair of touchdowns to Decker in the second quarter to cut the deficit to four. In the end, though, the Broncos just couldn't stop Aaron Rodgers. Rodgers threw for a career-high 408 yards and tied a career best with four touchdown passes, but perhaps was most pleased with his two rushing touchdowns. "I enjoy those times, to try to make it look semi-athletic," Rodgers said. Green Bay (4-0) and resurgent NFC North rival Detroit are the only undefeated teams left in the NFL. The Packers are rolling right now, but coach Mike McCarthy says there's always room for improvement. "Trust me, we don't have it all figured out as a football team," McCarthy said. "We're 4-0, but we're very in tune with what we need to improve as a team." Perhaps, but things are looking more dire in Denver. Backup Tim Tebow made a brief and uneventful appearance at quarterback for the

Broncos early, but coach John Fox chose not to give Tebow more work when the game got out of control in the fourth quarter. "I thought our offense was very impressive, other than the turnovers," Fox said. "It wasn't all the quarterback (Kyle Orton). It was all of us." Rodgers' 408 yards passing were a regular-season career high; he threw for 423 yards in the Packers' playoff loss to Arizona in January 2010. Rodgers was replaced by backup Matt Flynn late in the fourth quarter. " Aaron Rodgers obviously is playing extremely well," McCarthy said. "I can't say enough. He is a special player." Packers veteran wide receiver Donald Driver left in the second quarter because of an apparent left knee injury, but returned in the second half - then caught a touchdown from Rodgers in the fourth quarter. "I just wanted to play," Driver said. "I felt like if it wasn't something that was broken, I feel like I could still play. Doc decided he wanted to sit me down, but he knows I'm hardheaded. I told him that I was going to play, and he gave me the OK." When Driver went down, Greg Jennings feared the worst. "Let me tell you, he's the ultimate gladiator," Jennings said. "He almost had us in tears because you see a guy who pours in everything week in, week out, every practice, doesn't miss a practice, and then you see him take a hit like that and you see him grabbing his knee and it's like, 'Oh, my gosh, please God, let this not be it.' Fortunately for us and for him, he was able to bounce back." Notes: With new security measures in place, fans had trouble getting into Lambeau Field in time for kickoff. With 10 minutes left before the start, several lines of fans waiting to get in stretched deep into the parking lot. The lines had dissipated early in the first quarter. ... Von Miller had two sacks for the Broncos. ... Woodson's interception was the 50th of his career. © 2011 STATS LLC

Chargers hold off Tebow-inspired Broncos 29-24 DENVER (AP) -- Tebow Time might have only been a temporary switch. Or maybe it was the wobbly passing of the torch. Broncos coach John Fox isn't saying who his starting quarterback is following Denver's 29-24 loss to the San Diego Chargers on Sunday. Kyle Orton was benched at halftime and Tim Tebow nearly rallied the Broncos from a 16-point fourth-quarter deficit. Fox said he still has to watch the film, talk with his staff, think things over. The fans who chanted "Tebow! Tebow!" in appreciation after the Broncos (1-4) fell three games behind the Chargers (4-1) are eager for an answer. So are Broncos teammates. "Kyle's a great quarterback and I have all the faith in the world with him in the game. Tim came in and played great today," guard Chris Kuper said. "What do I say? It's hard to say what's going to happen. As much as we can, we have to tune out the (drama) and stay together in the locker room." No matter who their leader will be. "We're looking to have long-term success with somebody, and who that somebody is yet, I'm not sure," said Fox, who indicated he wasn't in any hurry to name his starter. Tebow ran for a TD and threw for another after replacing Orton to start the third quarter, and had one final shot for the win before his pass fell incomplete in the end zone on the final play. Maybe Orton returns to the field, uses this as a wake-up call and leads a turnaround. Maybe Tebow earned another shot with his inspiring play after he was buried on the depth chart following a terrible training camp. Ready or not, Tebow was thrust into the game, appeasing the fans who have been calling for him with the Broncos continuing their losing ways under Orton, who is 6-21 since winning his first six starts in Denver. "He makes plays, you can't deny that," Chargers linebacker Takeo Spikes said of Tebow. "People can talk about the way he throws the ball, people can talk about his release. But at the end of the day, this league is about what have you done for me lately? And if you can come in and make the plays that another guy can't, then you'll play a long time." After Orton went 6 for 13 for 34 yards and an interception in the first half, Tebow went 4 for 10 for 79 yards and a touchdown and ran six times for 38 yards and a score. "Tim did a good job," Orton said. "I thought the offense responded and gave us a chance to win." Orton wouldn't lobby for a return to the field but said he feels he should still be the starter: "That's how I approach it until he tells me differently," he said of Fox. Tebow also had no indication who will be under center in two weeks when the Broncos visit Miami. "Thankfully, I don't have to make those decisions," he said. It will be intriguing either way. Orton was pursued by the Dolphins in the offseason but trade talks crumbled presumably over his desire for a long-term contract that would have spread out his \$9 million salary for this year. And the Dolphins will be honoring the 2008 national champion Florida Gators - who were led by none other than Tebow, when the Broncos visit Sun Life Stadium on Oct. 23. Philip Rivers overcame two big turnovers to throw for 250 yards and a touchdown to go with a TD run, and the Chargers prevailed despite a banged-up backfield with Ryan Mathews (calf, wrist) and Mike Tolbert (concussion) getting hurt. Mathews managed a career-best 125 yards on 25 carries and Nick Novak , who is on the Chargers roster because Nate Kaeding is out for the year after injuring his left knee on the season's opening kickoff, made all five of his field goal attempts. Down 23-10, the Broncos punted on their first three possessions with Tebow under center before he scored on a 12-yard run. Willis McGahee 's 2-point conversion cut San Diego's lead to 26-18 with 6 1/2 minutes left. Robert Ayers sacked and stripped Rivers on the ensuing possession, and cornerback Andre' Goodman recovered at the San Diego 41 with 4:38 left. Knowshon Moreno turned a short screen pass from Tebow into a 28-yard touchdown. But Brandon Lloyd couldn't come down with the 2-point conversion pass. After Novak's fifth field goal made it 29-24 with 24 seconds remaining, Tebow hit Lloyd for 20 yards and tight end Daniel Fells for 31. He raced downfield and spiked the ball at the Chargers 29 with a second left. He took the final snap, spun and scrambled, but his desperation pass fell incomplete in the end zone. "It just shows the kid is a fighter; we always knew that," Broncos defensive end Elvis Dumervil said. "Some things just don't change from the collegiate level. Give him credit. He came in and gave us a spark, so we've just got to finish better." Notes: Cassius Vaughn 's 55-yard INT-TD was the first by a Denver defender since Champ Bailey in 2006. ... Broncos RT Orlando Franklin said he would travel to New Jersey to be with his family Monday as they grieve the death of his 20-year-old brother, who died last week. "Football helped me out this week because I used it to escape for a few hours each day," he said. © 2011 STATS LLC

Tebow rallies Denver to 18-15 OT win over Miami MIAMI (AP) -- Fans chanted Tim Tebow 's name in derision. They hooted as he missed open receivers, got buried under blitzes and kept falling short on third down. Then he led an improbable comeback that became the latest chapter in the legend of Tebow. In his first start this year, Tebow rallied the Denver Broncos with two touchdown passes in the final 2:44 of the fourth quarter to force overtime, and Matt Prater 's 52-yard field goal gave them an 18-15 win Sunday over the stunned Miami Dolphins . "It's tough to say, but man, Timmy did a great job," said Dolphins center Mike Pouncey , who played with Tebow at Florida. "Hopefully the critics will get off him about what he can't do and talk about the things that he can do, and that's figure out a way to win the game, no matter what." The Broncos appeared beaten when they trailed 15-0 with 5:23 left and took over at their 20. At that point Tebow was 4 for 14 for 40 yards, and Denver was 0 for 10 on third-down conversions. "It was my fault we were in that position," Tebow said. "Silly things kept happening. On the sidelines, we were still believing. We wanted it, and they believed in me for more than 60 minutes." In the frantic final minutes of the fourth quarter, Tebow led TD drives of 80 and 56 yards sandwiched around a successful onside kick. He scored a 2-point conversion standing up with 17 seconds left to tie the game. In overtime, Denver's D.J. Williams sacked Matt Moore to force a fumble and recovered it at the Miami 36. Three plays later Prater hit the game-winner. "It was never in doubt," coach John Fox jokingly said. His team became the first to rally from a deficit of at least 15 points in the final three minutes since at least 1983, according to STATS LLC. The Broncos (2-4) won for the first time in the eight games they've played on the Dolphins' field. Miami (0-6) extended the NFL's longest losing streak to nine games, leaving the status of embattled coach Tony Sparano even more tenuous. "Of course he's the head coach and he's going to take a lot of heat," receiver Brandon Marshall said. "But trust me, it's not him. Not just him. It's all of us." The Dolphins lost for the 12th time in their past 13 home games. "I'm just discouraged for the players in the locker room," Sparano said. "They work really hard, and we don't have anything to show for it right now." Tebow started for the benched Kyle Orton , and for much of the game the Broncos sputtered. Tebow was sacked seven times as he struggled to

identify blitzes, and several throws landed nowhere near a receiver. As he walked to the sideline after one series stalled, spectators jeered, and Dolphins players gestured to the crowd for more noise. "You can't lose confidence in yourself, or you've lost already," Tebow said. "When you get knocked down, you've got to keep getting back up." That's what Tebow did. With the Broncos on the verge of being shut out for the first time since 1992, he led an eight-play touchdown drive that got them back in the game. Matthew Willis' 42-yard reception was a pivotal play, and Tebow threw a 5-yard scoring pass to Demaryius Thomas with 2:44 left to make the score 15-7. Then came the onside kick. Miami receiver Marlon Moore leaped to catch the ball but bobbled it and the Broncos' Virgil Green recovered at their 44 with 2:31 left. "They made the play. I didn't," Moore said. "It was just a bang-bang play. I had it, the dude turned the corner, hit me, it came out, they got it." Tebow's strike to a diving Daniel Fells gained 28 yards to the 3. Two plays later, Tebow fooled the Dolphins by rolling left and throwing back to the right to Fells, who dived across the goal line for a 3-yard score. Denver still needed a 2-point conversion to stay alive, and Tebow kept up the middle to score standing up. Prater missed field-goal attempts of 49 and 43 yards in regulation, but his kick with 7:24 left in overtime gave Denver the victory. "I'm trying to search for answers," Miami running back Reggie Bush said. "I just keep coming back to embarrassing." While the Broncos were two time zones from home, lots of fans wore Tebow jerseys, and the popular quarterback drew a big roar trotting onto the field for his first series. Tebow won a 2005 high school state championship and the 2008 national title with the Florida Gators in the same stadium. Crowd loyalties were divided even at halftime, when the Dolphins paid tribute to the 2008 Gators. Seventeen former Gators and former coach Urban Meyer took part in the ceremony, drawing a mix of cheers and jeers. Despite the salute to the Gators and Tebow mania, the stadium was almost half empty at the start - a sign of growing fan discontent with the Dolphins. The crowd was booing the home team before Miami's first series ended, but Denver move the ball no better. Together the two teams failed to convert their first 16 third-down situations. Midway through the third period Denver had netted 2 yards on 10 pass plays, an average of 7 inches per play. But in the final 13 minutes Tebow went 9 for 13 for 121 yards, and he finished 13 for 27 for 161 yards. He ran for 65 yards in eight carries. "He's a young guy, a good player," Fox said. "He's going to get better. We saw him get better today." Notes: Broncos RB Willis McGahee left the game in the third quarter with a broken hand. It was wrapped afterward, but he said he would be fine. Denver DE Robert Ayers sprained his knee, and DE Elvis Dumervil sprained his ankle. ... LeBron James tweeted: "Congrats to (at)TimTebow for that comeback win today. Impressive! He's just a winner." ... DE Jared Odrick registered the first sack of the season by a Dolphins lineman. ... Denver rookie Von Miller had his sixth sack of the season. © 2011 STATS LLC

Lions batter Tebow, beat Broncos 45-10 DENVER (AP) -- Tim Tebow wasn't on one knee in prayer this time. He was on the ground in misery. The Detroit Lions (6-2) sacked Tebow seven times and turned his two turnovers into touchdowns as they snapped a two-game skid with a 45-10 victory over the Denver Broncos. Matthew Stafford hardly showed any ill effects from a sprained right ankle sustained a week earlier, throwing for three touchdowns before leaving with a clean jersey in the fourth quarter. "It's kind of a competition to see who's going to have a better day," Stafford said. "They're scoring points on defense, we're trying to light up the scoreboard. That's when we're at our best." The Broncos (2-5) were at their worst as Tebow followed his Miami miracle with a dud in Denver. Cornerback Chris Houston had the fourth 100-yard interception return in team history and defensive end Cliff Avril got a sack, strip and scoop, rumbling 24 yards into the end zone with the fumbled football as part of Detroit's 45-point run after the Broncos took a 3-0 lead on their first drive. "We did an excellent job getting to Tebow and speeding up his clock," Ndamukong Suh said. Lions linebacker Stephen Tulloch celebrated his sack of Tebow by joining the "Tebowing" craze, striking a prayerful pose near the prone second-year quarterback in the first half. "I figured I'd get to him a couple of times this game and had an opportunity to get it in," Tulloch said. "It was a little fun, man. No disrespect to Tebow. I was just doing a little 'Tebowing.' It's fun when you go out there and get after it like we did." Tebow started the phenomenon that went viral last week by dropping to a knee after his dazzling comeback, rallying the Broncos back from a 15-0 deficit in the final three minutes to pull out an 18-15 win. There was no let-up by the Lions, who relished in their taunts of Tebow, who has been sacked 13 times in his two starts since supplanting Kyle Orton after a 1-4 start. "We'll bounce back and have a great week of practice and get ready to go try and get a win next week," Tebow said. But will he still be under center? Broncos coach John Fox seemed to leave open the possibility of another quarterback change after this debacle. "It's too early to say. I haven't even taken a shower yet, let alone look at the tape," Fox said when asked who would be his quarterback next weekend. "But we'll look at it and make changes where we see are needed. We've definitely got to get better." Champ Bailey sounded the alarm in the locker room, saying "at the end of the day, you've got to win." "People are probably going to be more patient with him than any other quarterback," Bailey said, "but everybody in this locker room knows you've got to win games." Tebow knew nothing of his starting status Nov. 6 against Oakland. "I'm just going to get up early and go to work and try to get better tomorrow and consistently improve and be the best person-slash-quarterback for this organization," Tebow said. Tight end Tony Scheffler performed a scaled-down version of the Tebow impersonation after catching a 1-yard TD pass against his former team in the second quarter. Scheffler faked the spike, acted like he was going to kneel and put his right hand on his forehead a la Tebow, then spun around and exchanged the "Mile High Salute" with teammate Calvin Johnson instead. "It's one of those things where you're so amped up, especially being back kind of where it all started for me," Scheffler said. "I was amped up just doing whatever came into my head. It was fun." Bailey wasn't bothered a bit by the Lions' frivolities. "I hate when people cry about showing them up," Bailey said. "So what? Stop 'em. Plain and simple." Stafford completed 21 of 30 passes for 267 yards and three touchdowns, including a 56-yarder to Johnson, who joined Randy Moss as the only wide receivers since the 1970 AFL-NFL merger to catch 11 TD passes in his team's first eight games. Stafford also threw a 41-yard touchdown pass to Titus Young for Detroit's first score. After Eric Decker failed to get both feet down on a 21-yard toss into the end zone on Denver's first drive, the Broncos settled for a field goal. Denver gained just 32 yards on its next 22 snaps before trudging into the locker room down 24-3. Decker's 14-yard touchdown catch in the fourth quarter ended Detroit's 45-0 run. By then, even most of the fans decked out in No. 15 Tebow jerseys were streaming through the exits. Tebow finished 18 for 39 for 172 yards. "He's a young player, he's got a lot to learn," Tulloch said. "He's a winner. He finds a way to win." He couldn't find a way to pull this one out, though, not after the Lions scored their most points on the road since a 45-point outburst at San Francisco on Oct. 29, 1967. "He just needs to clean up some things in his pass game," Tulloch said. "That takes time. We had a good game plan. You've got to realize we've got a good front seven here. So, for his second start this season coming against us, it's kind of rough for him." Notes: Suh will meet with the NFL on Tuesday to talk about all the penalties he's been called for this season. ... Broncos S Quinton Carter (concussion), RT Orlando Franklin (groin) and DB Cassius Vaughn (hamstring) were hurt. --- Follow AP Pro Football Writer Arnie Melendrez Stapleton on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/arniestapleton> © 2011 STATS LLC

Broncos run past Raiders 38-24 OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) -- Tim Tebow took the snap, put the ball in Willis McGahee's belly and decided whether to hand it off or keep it for his own run. Those plays looked a lot like what he did so often in college - especially the results. Tebow threw two TD passes and ran for 117 yards, McGahee added 163 yards rushing and two more scores and the Denver Broncos beat the Oakland Raiders 38-24 Sunday. Even though he looked far from a prototypical NFL quarterback relying on his legs much more than his arm, Tebow still managed to win for the second time in three starts this season and put the Broncos (3-5) one game out of first place in the AFC West. "Honestly it doesn't necessarily matter too much how you drew it up as long as you get this feeling at

the end, because it was pretty special," he said. It's quite a turnaround from a week ago, when Denver was dismantled 45-10 by Detroit and some of the Lions were questioning Tebow's ability to succeed in the NFL. Broncos coach John Fox was only willing to commit to Tebow for this week's game. But after the coaches made a few tweaks to the offense, Tebow earned himself another start. He threw touchdown passes to Eric Decker and Eddie Royal early in the game and then expertly ran the option game that helped the Broncos gain 298 yards on the ground, their highest total since a 300-yard game against Seattle in 2000, and most ever against the Raiders (4-4). "As long as it worked, that's all I care about," McGahee said. "He did a great job as far as reading the ends on what he had to do as far as keeping it or giving it. When I got the ball it was my job just to get some yards." McGahee had a 60-yard touchdown run that tied the game on the first play after Carson Palmer threw his second interception for the Raiders, then added a 24-yarder to ice it in the closing minutes. Denver took the lead in between those big runs when Royal returned his first punt of the season 85 yards for a touchdown. Tebow finished 10 for 21 for 124 yards, but took only one sack after taking 13 in his first two starts. "I thought he improved throwing the ball," Fox said. "I think he's always run the ball pretty effectively. He's very competitive by nature. You see evidence of that. Now it's just learning how to be an NFL quarterback. In my opinion he's gotten better each time out." Palmer looked much better in his first start with the Raiders than in his debut two weeks ago in a relief effort against Kansas City. Then, he threw three second-half interceptions, including one returned for a touchdown in a 28-0 loss five days after he joined the team. With a bye week and this past week to get acclimated to his new team, Palmer showed why Oakland dealt a 2012 first-round draft pick and a conditional 2013 second-rounder to Cincinnati to acquire Palmer after starter Jason Campbell broke his collarbone. Palmer was 18 for 34 for 312 yards with three touchdowns. But he threw three more interceptions, including one that provided a sudden change of momentum in the closing seconds of the third quarter. "It's kind of a crash course the last couple weeks," Palmer said. "It's like you're jamming or cramming for a final or a test. But I just got to continue to work, continue to study, continue to have it down and learn from every opportunity I get." With the Raiders in Denver territory, Palmer threw high to Denarius Moore and Chris Harris intercepted the deflected ball. McGahee then ran through a big hole up the middle and outraced the Oakland defense for a 60-yard score. It tied the game on his longest run since a 77-yarder in Oakland in the 2009 season finale for Baltimore. Tebow did little in the first half besides two big plays on one drive. First he ran 32 yards on an option keeper when former teammate Jarvis Moss bit on a fake. "We knew exactly what they were going to do and we just didn't stop it," Raiders defensive tackle Richard Seymour said. "We knew exactly what was going to happen, and they ran exactly what we thought they were going to run and we didn't get the job done. That's the disappointing part." Tebow then hit Decker on a 27-yard touchdown pass to make it 7-3. Tebow missed his share of open receivers but didn't miss Decker, who badly beat Michael Huff on a post route. The Raiders capitalized on a botched punt to regain the lead. Britton Colquitt couldn't handle the low snap from Lonie Paxton and threw the ball away to avoid a sack in the end zone. That gave the Raiders a first down at the Denver 14 and Palmer found Michael Bush on an 11-yard score for his first TD with the Raiders. Palmer bounced back from an interception later in the second quarter with his best pass as a Raider, threading a 40-yard touchdown pass to fullback Marcel Reece. The Broncos missed a chance at three points at the end of the half when Fox too a field goal off the board to accept a roughing the kicker penalty on Taiwan Jones. Matt Prater then missed a 43-yarder at the end of the half. Notes: The only other Broncos QB to rush for at least 100 yards in a game was Norris Weese with 120 in 1976 against Chicago. ... Denver DE Elvis Dumervil had his first sack since Dec. 27, 2009. He missed all last season with an injury. ... Raiders MLB Rolando McClain dressed but did not play with a sprained left ankle. ... Broncos S Rahim Moore left with a concussion after the first play from scrimmage. © 2011 STATS LLC

Broncos 17, Chiefs 10 KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) -- Tim Tebow only completed two passes against the Chiefs on Sunday. It turned out one was all he really needed. The former Heisman Trophy winner connected with Eric Decker on a 56-yard touchdown pass in the fourth quarter, helping the Denver Broncos beat the Kansas City Chiefs 17-10 despite playing almost the entire game without their top two running backs. Willis McGahee went down with a hamstring injury on the Broncos' first offensive series, and Knowshon Moreno left later in the first quarter with a knee injury. That left journeyman Lance Ball to tote the ball 30 times for 96 yards, churning up a defense that had to know what was coming. Since taking over for Kyle Orton, Tebow has led the ground-based Broncos (4-5) to victory in three of their last four games. They moved into a tie with Kansas City and San Diego behind the AFC West-leading Oakland Raiders (5-4), who beat the Chargers on Thursday night. Denver coach John Fox scrapped a large chunk of his playbook when he made Tebow the starter, trying to cater to his deft ability to run the read-option. And despite losing his best two running backs, Fox stuck with the ground game, content to wear down the Kansas City defense. Tebow finished 2 of 8 for 69 yards, but added 44 yards and a score on the ground. Kansas City's offense made those meager numbers look good. Matt Cassel was 13 of 28 for 93 yards and a touchdown, and the Chiefs only managed 258 yards of total offense, a performance every bit as just as ugly as last week's 31-1 loss to Miami. The Chiefs' four wins have been by 40 points; their five losses are by 120. The Broncos made it clear that they weren't going to throw the ball a whole lot on their first possession, when Broncos offensive coordinator Mike McCoy called eight consecutive runs. Moreno had the highlight carry when he hurdled the Chiefs' Brandon Flowers on a 24-yard scamper, and Tebow finished off the drive when he went straight up the middle from 7 yards out, bouncing around like a pinball before plowing over the goal line to give Denver a 7-0 lead. McGahee was hurt on the seventh play of the drive when he ran up the legs of one of his offensive linemen. He remained down until trainers could help him off the field. He didn't return to the game, though it didn't matter the way Kansas City was executing. The Chiefs' offensive line was called for holding, a false start and gave up a sack to rookie Von Miller on their opening drive. Cassel was 4 of 9 for 29 yards and Kansas City had five first downs and 72 yards of total offense in the entire first half. Rookie wide receiver Jon Baldwin tried to give Kansas City a spark when he hauled in an acrobatic 58-yard pass in the second quarter, reaching around safety Brian Dawkins to make the grab. Baldwin held onto the ball, still behind Dawkins' back, as both players fell to the ground, but the play was called back because wide receiver Steve Breaston had lined up illegally. Matt Prater's 38-yard field goal gave Denver a 10-0 lead at halftime. Tebow wound up missing all four of his pass attempts in the half, making Denver the first team to lead at the break without a completion since the Green Bay Packers led the Chicago Bears 14-0 on Oct. 31, 1994, according to STATS LLC. Brett Favre was 0 for 6 at halftime of that game. Kansas City finally scored when Cassel hit LeRon McClain on a play-action pass from just outside the goal line midway through the third quarter. It was the first points scored by the Chiefs' offense since 12:01 left in the fourth quarter against San Diego two weeks ago. The Broncos snuffed out the comeback bid with 6:44 left in the game, when Decker ran past Flowers and safety Reshard Langford. Tebow hit him in stride for the touchdown. Ryan Succop kicked a field goal with 7 seconds left for Kansas City, but the Broncos recovered the onside kick to seal the win. © 2011 STATS LLC

Tebow, Broncos top Jets 17-13 on last-minute drive DENVER (AP) -- There's a new Comeback Kid in Denver, and John Elway's proudly looking on as this plucky quarterback wins with his legs, not his arm. Tim Tebow's 20-yard touchdown run with 58 seconds left capped a 95-yard drive and sent the Broncos to a 17-13 victory over the stunned New York Jets on Thursday night. "I like winning," Tebow said after his third comeback in a month, "but I wish it wasn't this stressful." The Broncos had punted on their eight previous possessions when they got the ball with less than 6 minutes and 95 yards to go. Tebow calmly drove Denver down the field, thwarting a Jets defense that had throttled him all night. "We played them well, through the whole game, until that last play," Jets star

cornerback Darrelle Revis said. "We played them well. Tim Tebow 's legs took them to victory, ran them to victory." On third-and-4 from the Jets 20 and under a minute left, the Broncos got an extra minute to think about things when a fan ran onto the field and was corralled by security. During the break, the Jets dialed up their first all-out blitz of the night. Tebow took the snap from the shotgun with 1:06 left, read the blitz and outflanked safety Eric Smith around the left edge, then cut back and bulled his way past other Jets into the end zone. "He shocked me," Revis said, "probably shocked a lot of people." Not Jets coach Rex Ryan. "You know he's going to keep it in that situation. That's what he does. You keep the ball in your playmaker's hand," Ryan said. "We thought he was going to carry the ball and he didn't disappoint us. But he ran for a touchdown. The kid's a competitor and makes big plays with the game on the line." The Jets (5-5) lost for the second time in four nights. The Broncos (5-5) are 4-1 since Tebow replaced Kyle Orton , and at .500, they're a-half game behind Oakland in the AFC West race. "He's a competitive dude," Broncos coach John Fox said. "He's super competitive. He never lays his sword down. He'll fight you to the death. That's just his nature. He's a great young man." Mark Sanchez 's desperation pass toward the end zone was batted down as time expired and the Jets trudged off the field with their playoff hopes dimmed just a week after they were brimming with optimism. Nick Folk 's 45-yard field goal had broken a 10-10 tie with 9:14 remaining, and the Broncos found themselves facing a daunting task when they got the ball back with 5:54 left at their own 5. New York safety Jim Leonhard could have quashed Denver's winning drive on the first play when he wrapped up Eddie Royal in the end zone on a throw to the right flat, but Royal wiggled free for 8 yards. Tebow ran just twice for 11 yards until the final drive, when he carried seven times for 58 yards in a performance reminiscent of his miracle in Miami, when he was ineffective for 55 minutes, then led the Broncos to two TDs in the final 5 minutes of a game Denver won in overtime. "I think it was just a bunch of guys that kept fighting, that had been knocked down a bunch of times and got back up," Tebow said. "I'm proud of these guys for their resiliency and determination." After completing just two passes in a win at Kansas City four days earlier, Tebow completed 9 of 20 passes for 104 yards Thursday night. "I said before, I trust him. I trust him with everything," teammate Von Miller said. "No matter how many interceptions he throws, no matter how many touchdowns he scores, that's Tim Tebow and I'm going to ride with him to the end. I hope he shut up a whole bunch of critics today." The debate across the NFL is whether the option is sustainable? After all, when Elway joined the team's front office this year, he said Tebow had to become a pocket passer to make it in this league. "I want to run whatever's going to work," Tebow said, disputing the notion advanced by Hall of Famer and TV broadcaster Steve Young that he must be mad that Fox isn't letting him throw the ball more like a conventional quarterback. Before Denver's unorthodox option offense prevailed again, it appeared the Jets were going to win this one thanks to an oddball touchdown. Left guard Matt Slauson recovered rookie running back Bilal Powell 's fumble at the 1 and dived across the goal line early in the third quarter to give New York a 10-3 lead. "It was awesome at the time," Slauson said. "Unfortunately, it doesn't mean anything now." Denver tied it at 10 when Andre' Goodman stepped in front of Plaxico Burress and picked off Sanchez's ill-advised pass and returned it 26 yards for a touchdown. "I shouldn't have thrown it," Sanchez lamented. "It's an embarrassing play on my part." It was the third pick-six Sanchez and thrown this year, and the Jets followed that with their fourth lost fumble on special teams when Joe McKnight coughed it up on the kickoff return at his 41. Cassius Vaughn recovered for Denver, but the Broncos couldn't capitalize this time, going three and out. McKnight and Powell shared snaps after New York's backfield took another hit when starting running back Shonn Greene took a knee to the ribs and didn't return. They were already without LaDainian Tomlinson (knee), so Powell was activated for the first time all season. With each game, the Broncos mold their offense more and more to fit Tebow's unique skill set that made him the most successful combination college quarterback in NCAA history, just as former Florida coach Urban Meyer once suggested an NFL team would have to do. And they keep watching him run roughshod over defenders who are bigger, faster and stronger than they were in the SEC. "He did it to us in college and he's doing it here," said teammate Robert Ayers , who went to Tennessee. "It doesn't have to be pretty, it doesn't have to be Aaron Rodgers -like. As long as we get it done, that's all that matters." Notes: Broncos WR Eric Decker 's girlfriend, country singer Jessie James, performed at halftime. ... Greene said X-rays were negative. ... No Jets offensive lineman had scored on a fumble recovery since guard Randy Rasmussen smothered running back Cliff McClain's fumble in the end zone against Miami in 1972. --- Follow AP Pro Football Writer Arnie Melendrez Stapleton on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/arniestapleton> © 2011 STATS LLC

Tebow leads Broncos to 16-13 OT win over Chargers SAN DIEGO (AP) -- Tim Tebow wasn't watching as San Diego's Nick Novak lined up to attempt a 53-yard field goal that would have given the Chargers an overtime victory over the Denver Broncos . He was praying, of course. Did Tebow ask for a miss? "I might have said that. Or maybe a block. Maybe all of it," the Denver quarterback said with a laugh. Whatever, it worked. Novak missed wide right. Tebow moved the Broncos down the field and Matt Prater kicked a 37-yard field goal with 29 seconds left in overtime to lift the Broncos to a 16-13 victory Sunday over the Chargers, who've lost six straight games for the first time in 10 years. The Broncos narrowly avoided the first NFL tie since Cincinnati and Philadelphia ended deadlocked at 13 on Nov. 16, 2008. Some people have a problem with Tebow wearing his religion on his sleeve. But he has been a savior for the Broncos, going 5-1 since coach John Fox elevated him to starter in the wake of his performance in a close loss to the Chargers on Oct. 9 in Denver. Still, Hall of Famer John Elway, the Broncos' executive vice president of football operations, won't commit to the unconventional Tebow for his passing numbers and poor third-down conversions. The Broncos (6-5) have won four straight to trail Oakland by one game in the AFC West. "This is a special team, a special team when you have a bunch of guys that when things aren't going good we get closer instead of pulling apart," Tebow said. "The No. 1 reason we are like that is because we believe in each other, we believe in the coaching staff." Coach John Fox believes in his quarterback. "Tim has outstanding ability," Fox said. "He proved it at a high level of college football in the SEC at Florida. It's (the option) something that he is comfortable with. I think our team has adapted to it. Right now it's working in the run portion of our offense. We still have some growth to do in the pass portion." Tebow led Denver from its 43 after Novak was wide right on a 53-yard field goal attempt with 2:31 left in overtime. Novak made a 53-yarder in the first quarter, a career-best, and was wide right on a 48-yard try early in the fourth quarter. Tebow had a 12-yard gain and Willis McGahee ran 24 yards up the middle to set up Prater's winning kick, which was right down the middle. Tebow, the talk of the NFL because he runs the read option and often struggles while passing, carried 22 times for 67 yards - the most carries by a quarterback in a game since at 1950, according to STATS LLC. He also threw for one touchdown and finished with a better rating than Philip Rivers , 95.4 to 77.1. Rivers was pressured all day by Elvis Dumervil , who had two sacks, and rookie Von Miller , who had one. Tebow's first start was also an overtime win, 18-15 at Miami on Oct. 23. Novak didn't have an explanation for his OT miss. "I had a good warmup and hit that ball pretty decent," he said of the 53-yarder he kicked in the first quarter. "When you make the first kick of the game from 53, it gives you a lot of confidence for the next kicks to come." The Chargers (4-7) are on their longest streak since ending 2001 with nine straight defeats and are last in the division, three games behind Oakland with five to play. "There's nothing I can say to make it sound good," Rivers said. "It's about as rough as it gets." Tebow got a final chance to try to win it in regulation after the Broncos forced the Chargers to punt. Starting on his own 26, Tebow kept the drive going with a 39-yard completion to Eric Decker - which the Chargers unsuccessfully challenged - and a 23-yarder to Dante Rosario . The Broncos had to settle for Prater's 24-yard field goal that tied it at 13 with 1:34 to go. Referee Jeff Triplette confused the crowd and TV viewers by saying each team would get a possession in OT. He then corrected himself, saying it would be sudden-death. The Broncos won it on their third possession in OT. Rivers was 19 of 36 for 188 yards. Tebow was 9 of 18 for 143 yards. The Chargers took a 10-0 lead midway through the second quarter when Rivers hit Antonio Gates

on a 6-yard scoring pass in the back of the end zone to cap a 15-play, 91-yard drive. Tebow threw an 18-yard TD pass to Eric Decker just before halftime to pull to 10-7. Novak kicked a 25-yard field goal early in the third quarter. Denver had a long drive later in the quarter before Prater kicked a 41-yard field goal to pull to 13-10. NOTES: McGahee ran 23 times for 117 yards. A week after having a critical fumble in a loss at Chicago, San Diego's Ryan Mathews ran 22 times for a career-high 137 yards. It was his third career 100-yard game, all against Denver. ... Broncos CB Cassius Vaughn injured an ankle in the first quarter and didn't return. ... Injured Chargers were LG Brandyn Dombrowski (foot), TE Kory Sperry (ribs), LB Na'il Diggs (chest) and Corey Liuget (tibia). © 2011 STATS LLC

Tebow, Broncos do it again, beat Vikings 35-32 MINNEAPOLIS (AP) -- Tim Tebow and the Denver Broncos came through again with a strong, determined finish after enduring another slow start. This time, Tebow was in a groove the entire second half -- not just in the waning minutes -- and his teammates on defense were getting gobbled up. But there they were in the end, emulating Tebow's late-game touch. Tebow passed for a season-best 202 yards and two third-quarter touchdowns to help the unflappable Broncos win their fifth straight game, 35-32 over the Minnesota Vikings Sunday on Matt Prater's 23-yard field goal as time expired. "I know that I had a lot of help. Offensive line did a great job, and receivers stepped up and made me look a lot better than I really am," said Tebow, who completed 10 of 15 passes, his best percentage as an NFL starter, and posted a career-high passer rating of 149.3. Prater kicked two field goals in the final 93 seconds for the Broncos (7-5), who forged a first-place tie in the AFC West with a loss by the Oakland Raiders. Christian Ponder set Minnesota's single-game rookie record with 381 yards passing, including a pair of long touchdowns to Percy Harvin, but his sideline throw with 1:33 remaining was intercepted by Andre Goodman and returned to the 15-yard line. Lance Ball's first-down run for 11 yards made it first-and-goal at the 4 with 1:12 remaining, but the Vikings decided against letting them score right away and took their chances with a shank or a block instead. But the Broncos drained the clock for Prater's winner and raised their record to 6-1 with Tebow as the starter. "Hard to argue. That guy wins games," Ponder said. Harvin had a career-high 156 yards for the Vikings (2-10), who lost their fourth in a row. "Too many times this year we've had leads and then had letdowns or missed assignments," Harvin said. "It's another game we feel we had control of, and to somehow let it slip away, that's disgusting." In seven games with Tebow, the Broncos offense has 30 first-half points. They were blanked in this one, on the board only because of Mario Haggan's 16-yard interception return for a first-quarter score. Tebow's third turnover of the season, a sack by Jared Allen that forced a fumble with 39 seconds left before halftime, gave the Vikings three free points. But they can't be counted out. Whether their unconventional quarterback is trying to complete a down-field pass or if they're flirting again with defeat, the Broncos haven't flinched. "There were a lot of questions on the outside. Sometimes it gets built up like they were on the inside, but the one thing I will say is the guy wins," coach John Fox said. "He does it with his feet. He does it with his arm. He's young. He's just going to get better." Harvin, a fellow former Florida star, said he was worried once Tebow got the ball late in the game. "I was sure enough hoping we were going to get him, but I've been on his teams," Harvin said, adding: "He's a winner. He's a leader. All of the things you hear about, you may think it's too much, but that's what he is." After serving as the backbone of Denver's resurgence, putting Tebow in position for all of those rallies, the Broncos gave up 489 yards. Toby Gerhart gained 91 yards on 21 carries. But they picked off Ponder twice, recovered his fumble and applied enough pressure to equalize the game. "It's been fun, a fun ride," Haggan said. "This team is close, believes, has a lot of character, but we're not done." Demaryius Thomas caught four passes for 144 yards and both touchdowns for the Broncos, who have won four games with Tebow by either four or three points. Thomas was wide open twice, with the coverage by Minnesota's depleted secondary breaking down often, but Tebow had to find him. Pushed out of the pocket with no one open, he ran left and delivered an on-target across-his-body throw to Thomas, who ran the rest of the way and dragged a couple of defenders into the end zone for a 41-yard score that cut the Minnesota lead to 22-21 late in the third. "We put in a lot of work," Thomas said. "It's paid off. It's about that time." During a dizzying display of back-and-forth touchdowns, with both Ponder and Tebow putting together their best games as pros. Ryan Longwell's third field goal, with 3:06 left, made it 32-29 Vikings, teeing another one up for Tebow. He threw a wobbler that still landed on target, when Thomas hauled in a 40-yard completion. Thomas couldn't bring in the third-down pass at the goal line, but Prater tied the game with a 46-yarder before Ponder's second glaring mistake. Harvin's second score, a 48-yard catch and run, was the first fourth-quarter touchdown given up by the Broncos in five games and made it 29-21 Minnesota. They averaged 15 points allowed over their previous four games. But there went the Broncos again. Tebow hit Thomas for 42 yards, and Willis McGahee rumbled into the end zone from 24 yards out. Then Tebow took the snap on the 2-point conversion and rolled to his right and over the goal line to tie the game at 29. Except for that play, he looked more like pocket passer on this afternoon, running only four times. "It's crazy. Just try to do whatever they ask of me," Tebow said. Notes: Haggan, a ninth-year veteran who started in place of injured LB Von Miller, came up with the first interception of his career. He also led the team with 12 tackles, three for losses. ... Tebow's NFL career high is 308 yards passing, against Houston on Dec. 26, 2010. ... Allen tied an NFL record with his fourth career safety, stopping McGahee in the end zone on the Broncos' first play. McGahee had 111 yards on 20 attempts. ... All three replay reviews, including a TD pass to Kyle Rudolph, went in favor of the Vikings. © 2011 STATS LLC

Tebow, Broncos beat Bears 13-10 in overtime DENVER (AP) -- Wild wins are becoming routine for Tim Tebow and the Denver Broncos, who flail away through most of four quarters before coming through in the clutch. Matt Prater's 51-yard field goal 6 1/2 minutes into overtime gave the Broncos a 13-10 victory over the stunned Chicago Bears on Sunday. Prater's 59-yarder with 3 seconds left in regulation tied the score after Tebow led another rally. "If you believe," Tebow said, "then unbelievable things can sometimes be possible." It was Denver's sixth straight win and seventh in eight games since Tebow, dubbed the "Mile High Messiah," was promoted to starter. The Broncos have trailed in the second half in six of those victories. This latest comeback put Denver in sole possession of first place in the AFC West after Oakland's 46-16 drubbing at Green Bay. "Never say never," wide receiver Eric Decker said. "That's a great characteristic of this team. ... Again it wasn't pretty. But again in the fourth quarter, we found a way to make some plays. Matt Prater, man, the kid can boom it." After failing to score on their first dozen possessions, the Broncos (8-5) erased a 10-0 deficit in the final 2:08 of regulation. "I think we're rewriting the book on 'keep fighting,'" coach John Fox said. "Our guys never blink. They remain positive. As bad as it looked today - we didn't play well; we had some drops. But the guy who dropped a couple of passes caught the ... touchdown. That's kind of the M.O. on this bunch." Tebow hit Demaryius Thomas with a 10-yard TD pass, then got the ball back with 53 seconds left after Marion Barber saved the Broncos precious time by going out of bounds when the Bears were trying to run out the clock. Denver was out of timeouts after Thomas' touchdown and had to try an onside kick, which the Broncos couldn't recover. But on second down after the two-minute warning, Barber cut outside and was pushed out, stopping the clock. The Bears would have to punt, and Tebow got the ball back at his 20 and went to work, not needing to go far with Prater's strong leg in the thin air. He drove the Broncos 39 yards for Prater's kick, which he rocketed through the uprights. "We missed the onside kick. Then, all of a sudden, Barber goes out of bounds and gives us a chance," Champ Bailey marveled. "We knew right then we still had a fighting chance. If you give our offense a chance in the end, good things might happen." The Bears (7-6) won the toss in overtime and quickly got into field goal range before Barber, who rushed for 108 yards but will be remembered for his two late mistakes, coughed up the football at the Broncos 34, and Elvis Dumervil recovered. Barber had already broken through the first line of defense for the first down when linebacker Wesley Woodyard reached out and grabbed his right arm, popping the ball

loose. "It's crazy," Bailey said. "He has a free lane to run. All of a sudden, somebody snatches the ball out. Wow! We made a play when we had to. We hadn't had a turnover all day." All of a sudden, it was Tebow Time. Again. "It's not Tebow Time," the quarterback retorted. "It's Broncos Time." While Tebow was leading the Broncos on their game-winning drive, Barber looked despondent, and quarterback Caleb Hanie comforted him. "He was making a tough run, trying to get extra yards," Hanie said. "It's unfortunate. You want to stay in right there but that didn't lose the game for us. We lost it by not generating more points." Barber, who hasn't talked to reporters since training camp, avoided the media after the game. "I hate to say it - we gave this one to them," Hanie said. Tebow took the Broncos from their 34 to the Chicago 33, and Prater sent the stadium into delirium. "I don't know if they just kind of wait until they think, 'Oh, man, we might lose this game,' and start playing," Fox said. "It's aging me quickly." Tebow, who also led the Broncos to wins in OT at Miami and San Diego, ran 12 times for 49 yards and completed 21 of 40 passes for a season-best 236 yards. Tebow was intercepted once, fumbled the ball away on another play and was sacked five times by Brian Urlacher & Co., who couldn't seal the win despite their stout defense. The Bears, whose playoff hopes are faltering, are 0-3 since Hanie replaced an injured Jay Cutler, the former Broncos QB who has a broken thumb on his throwing hand and is out indefinitely. Hanie completed 12 of 19 passes for 115 yards and was sacked four times. The Bears also were without star running back Matt Forte, who's out indefinitely with a knee injury. His replacement, Barber, broke a scoreless tie in the third quarter with a 9-yard touchdown run. With safeties Brian Dawkins (neck) and David Bruton (calf) sidelined, the Broncos were left with rookies Quinton Carter and Raheem Moore, and both of them missed the tackle on Barber's TD. Cornerback Andre' Goodman sustained a concussion three plays before Barber scored. Barber gained 16 yards on a screen pass from Hanie on third-and-27 on the final play of the third quarter, setting up Robbie Gould's team-record 57-yard field goal. He would be outdone by Prater, who's never had this many pressurized kicks. "I am definitely going to be bald at the end of the season," Prater said. "Bald or gray, one of the two." Notes: Bears GM Jerry Angelo said he was not considering retirement, disputing an NFL Network report that raised the possibility. ... The Broncos have recorded at least two sacks in 12 straight games, the longest active streak in the NFL. --- © 2011 STATS LLC

Brady, Pats slow down Tebow, Broncos 41-23 DENVER (AP) -- Not this time, Tim Tebow. Not with Tom Brady on hand. Brady threw for two touchdowns, ran for another and the New England Patriots shut down Tebow's late-game heroics and clinched a playoff berth with a 41-23 victory over the Denver Broncos on Sunday. "It was a really good day for us," Brady said. "Very emotional game. It was really rocking early. We showed some mental toughness." The Patriots (11-3) won their sixth straight game and another AFC East title by bouncing back from an early 17-6 deficit and an awful first quarter in which they were outgained on the ground 167 yards to 4. This time, there was no last-minute magic from Tebow, who had guided the Broncos (8-6) to four straight fourth-quarter comebacks and six straight wins. Instead of another slow start followed by a fantastic finish, the Broncos started fast and then fizzled. They scored on their first three possessions and then were done in by a trio of turnovers in the final 8 1/2 minutes of the second quarter. "We did have things going pretty well early, scored on the first three possessions and felt like we were moving the ball good and then we put it on the ground," Tebow said. "That's something you can't do against a great team and Tom Brady and Bill Belichick. "Besides that, we were right there with them." Champ Bailey had said the Broncos needed a big game against a big QB to prove to themselves and others that they were not just a curiosity but a contender. They didn't get it on this day. "We showed today that we're not ready to go to the playoffs and make a push," Bailey said. "We've got to get better and we only have two or three weeks to do it. If we don't, then we'll be sitting home." For a sixth straight season. With their first loss since Oct. 30, the AFC West-leading Broncos face a tougher path to the playoffs, with a trip to Buffalo next week followed by a season finale against Kansas City, which ended Green Bay's 19-game winning streak Sunday behind Kyle Orton, the player Tebow replaced in Denver. "I definitely feel like we're all right," said Tebow, now 7-2 as Denver's starter. He threw for 194 yards and ran for 93 yards and two scores but was sacked four times, including a 28-yard loss in the fourth quarter. "I thought he improved," coach John Fox said. "He'll continue to improve. This was a setback, no doubt about that. But sometimes setbacks are setups for bigger things to come." After all, the last time Tebow lost, to Detroit on Oct. 30, he was put on notice that his starting job was a week-to-week proposition, and Tebow won his next six starts. The one thing Tebow and the Broncos haven't been able to do is keep up with the league's elite passers. Denver has faced four QBs currently ranked in the top-10 in yards passing - Aaron Rodgers, Matthew Stafford, Philip Rivers (twice) and Brady. They're 1-4 in those games. Asked if Tebow & Co. can keep up with the league's top passers if they make it into the playoffs, Fox said: "I can't predict that. He's gotten better every week. Six or seven weeks ago, people said he couldn't hit the broad side of a barn. He does that. I think he can do that. I don't think that was why we lost the game tonight." Brady was. "He's still the best out there, in my opinion," Bailey said. "And you make mistakes against a guy like that, he's going to make you pay. That's pretty much what happened all day." Safety Brian Dawkins missed the game with a neck injury and the Broncos missed him as they had to rely on rookies Quinton Carter and Raheem Moore. "You can't expect to get the same results when you lose a guy like that," Bailey said. "But, at the same time, guys have to step up as professionals. You can't play like that and expect to get wins." Brady was 23 of 34, including his first scoring toss to Chad Ochocinco. His TD run was his first of the year. Brady made up for another bad day by the Patriots' defense to beat the Broncos for the second time in eight career starts - the only team with a winning record against the three-time Super Bowl champion. The Broncos' 167 yards rushing in the first quarter - 11 more than their league-leading per-game average - represented the biggest output in any quarter of the Belichick era in New England. But they would manage just 85 more. After the Patriots fell behind 16-7, they went to the no-huddle and Brady threw a 1-yard TD strike to Aaron Hernandez, who set career highs with nine catches for 129 yards. The Broncos' ball-control offense stumbled after that. Lance Ball, who earlier scored his first TD in the NFL on a beautiful 32-yard scamper, fumbled at his own 19 and linebacker Rob Ninkovich recovered, leading to Stephen Gostkowski's 21-yard field goal put the Patriots up for good at 17-16. Then, defensive end Mark Anderson, subbing for Andre Carter, who seriously injured his left knee earlier in the game, forced and recovered a fumble by Tebow at the Broncos 40. Six plays later, Brady took it in himself from a yard out to make it 24-16. Brady celebrated his eighth career TD with a masterful spike. "I don't get in the end zone very often," Brady said. "Maybe once a season. So, when I do I get pretty excited." The Broncos' bumbling ways - which included a bad snap on an extra point attempt - continued when punt returner Quan Cosby tried to field a punt on the run and muffed it with three seconds left. Dane Fletcher recovered for New England and Gostkowski trotted out for a 34-yard field goal to make it 27-16 at halftime. Tebow's 2-yard keeper with 8:41 left pulled the Broncos to 34-23 and had the crowd thinking comeback again, but Brady led the Patriots on another 80-yard scoring drive, this one culminating in BenJarvus Green-Ellis' 1-yard TD run. "The more we fight, the better this team gets," defensive tackle Vince Wilfork said. "We knew they were going to come out fighting. They were going to come out fast and explosive. Our main goal was to weather the storm." Notes: The Patriots qualified for the playoffs for the 13th time since Robert Kraft bought the team in 1994. ... The Broncos haven't won seven straight since 1998. ... New England hadn't won in Denver since 2003. ... Brady's last TD run was Nov. 14, 2010, at Pittsburgh. --- © 2011 STATS LLC

Bills pick off Tebow 4 times, beat Broncos 40-14 ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (AP) -- Tim Tebow picked a terrible time to run out of fourth-quarter comebacks. Rather than inspiring the Denver Broncos to another dramatic rally, the quarterback sealed the most dreadful performance of his two-year career by throwing four interceptions - all in the second half and two returned for touchdowns 18 seconds apart - in a 40-14 loss to the Buffalo Bills on Saturday. It happened as the

Broncos (8-7) had a chance to inch closer to clinching their first playoff berth in six years, and against a Bills team that was coming off seven straight losses and had little to play for. "My confidence is just fine," Tebow said. "I have to do a better job of not giving them opportunities. I tried to make something happen, and I tried to force it." Denver coach John Fox hasn't lost faith in Tebow. "I just think a couple of misreads," Fox said. And no, he gave no thought of pulling Tebow at any point during a second half in which four of the Broncos' final six possessions ended with interceptions. On the bright side, Denver's not done yet, despite falling into a tie with Oakland atop the AFC West. Denver closes its season by hosting the Kansas City Chiefs next week, and still holds the tiebreaker edge over the Raiders. "Everything is still on the table," Tebow said. "We have to go and execute and play a little better. Hopefully, we can get in the tournament." Tebow finished 13 of 30 for 185 yards with a 17-yard touchdown pass to Daniel Fells. He added 34 yards rushing, and scored on a 1-yard plunge. That wasn't nearly good enough for a player who entered the game best known for engineering five fourth-quarter comebacks this season. The Bills (6-9) made sure he never got in position for a sixth in coming away with a win in their home finale. Safety Jairus Byrd and linebacker Spencer Johnson scored on interception returns 18 seconds apart midway through the fourth quarter. C.J. Spiller rushed for a career-best 111 yards and a touchdown, and Leodis McKelvin scored on an 80-yard punt return. "It's special," Johnson said. "We had a monkey on our back for a long time." Added safety George Wilson: "It's a great reward for the resilience, commitment and dedication." The Bills' four interceptions were two more than they managed in their previous seven games. They have returned five interceptions for touchdowns to set a single-season franchise record. If the game wasn't over with 8:03 left when Byrd jumped in front of Tebow's pass intended for Eric Decker up the left hash mark and returned it 37 yards for a touchdown, then it certainly was decided on the Broncos' next play from scrimmage. Tebow was flushed from the pocket and was scrambling to his left when linebacker Chris Kelsay dived from behind and batted the ball out of the quarterback's hand. The ball flew into the air and landed in the hands of Johnson, who ran it in from 17 yards. Kelsay, the longest-serving member of the defense, had two sacks and led the team with nine tackles. "We've lost seven games in a row. It wears on you," Kelsay said. "We got rewarded. We came together and we executed." After weeks of assertive defense, the Broncos gave up 40 points for a second straight game - though Tebow's giveaways certainly didn't help. And yet Denver allowed 160 yards rushing and 351 yards in all to a banged-up Bills offense that was averaging 14.2 points and 314.7 yards during its seven-game skid. While Tebow was struggling, Bills quarterback Ryan Fitzpatrick enjoyed his most efficient game in two months by going 15 of 27 for 196 yards with no interceptions. Fitzpatrick entered the game taking plenty of heat during the seven-game skid, in which he threw eight touchdowns versus 12 interceptions. Dave Rayner shook off two missed field-goal attempts - and a booing crowd - to hit his final four, all from within 29 yards. "I'm glad that Coach stuck with me," Rayner said. "I'm glad that we got opportunities, because I never want to leave a game going oh-fer." Except for scoring touchdowns on their first possession of each half, nothing went right for the Broncos. They went nowhere in the first half after Tebow capped a 73-yard opening drive with a 1-yard run. Denver managed just 21 yards and no first downs on its final six possessions, including a kneelown in the final seconds. They finished converting just two of 13 third-down chances and Tebow had four of his final six drives end with interceptions. NOTES: After McKelvin scored, Denver's Eddie Royal returned the ensuing kickoff 94 yards for a touchdown, but it was negated by a block in the back penalty against Dante Rosario. ... Broncos RB Willis McGahee had 64 yards rushing to give him 1,054 this season. He became the second NFL player to reach 1,000 yards rushing with three teams. He previously did it with Buffalo and Baltimore. Ricky Watters rushed for 1,000 yards with San Francisco, Philadelphia and Seattle. ... The Bills finished 5-3 at home (including a win over Washington at Toronto), matching their best record since going 5-3 in 2004. © 2011 STATS LLC

Tebow, Broncos in playoffs despite 7-3 loss to KC DENVER (AP) -- Even in defeat, Tim Tebow came out a winner. Tebow fell short in his latest comeback bid, yet his Denver Broncos still made it the playoffs Sunday. As the AFC West champions, no less. Meaning more Tebowmania, at least for another week. Former Denver quarterback Kyle Orton got his revenge in leading the Kansas City Chiefs over the Broncos 7-3. But the Broncos wound up in the postseason anyway when San Diego knocked off Oakland minutes later. "It's obviously a little bittersweet right now," Tebow said. "We would have loved to have won that game to have a little momentum going into the playoffs. But I think it's still a special thing what we accomplished, to come back and win the AFC West is very special." Now, the Broncos (8-8) will host the wild-card Pittsburgh Steelers (12-4) in the first round next Sunday. "Well, we're AFC West champs," Broncos coach John Fox said. "It doesn't matter how you do it. Once you get into the dance, they can't kick you out." After begrudgingly congratulating Orton, the Broncos celebrated the end to their six-year playoff drought once the Chargers eliminated the Raiders 38-26. Denver finished 8-8, same as the Raiders and Chargers. They won their first division title since 2005 on a tiebreaker, going 6-6 against common opponents while the others went 5-7. So, everybody at Mile High got what they wanted even though Tebow couldn't beat the guy he failed to beat out in training camp. Orton, who also handed Green Bay its only loss, went 2-1 in Kansas City. His steady play likely raised his stock as he prepares to enter free agency. And he might have secured interim coach Romeo Crennel's future with the Chiefs (7-9). Best of all, he beat the team that benched him after he finally caved under the weight of Tebowmania and the Broncos stumbled to a 1-4 start. Orton had laid low all week but he finally fessed up after the game that this game had special meaning to him even though it was for pride and payback and not the playoffs. "I can't hide that," he said. "But I congratulate those guys. They're in. I congratulate them and I look forward to next year." The Broncos revamped their offense to fit Tebow's unconventional skill set and surged to the top of their division. They released Orton in the midst of a 7-1 run that included a series of fourth-quarter comebacks that captivated the football world. Never before in the four-plus decades since the AFL-NFL merger has a starting quarterback returned to start a game in the same season against his former team. Neither QB had a great day. The game's only touchdown came on Dexter McCcluster's 21-yard scamper in the first quarter, so this game was as much about the Punting Colquitt brothers, Dustin and Britton, as it was about Orton vs. Tebow. The Broncos got one last shot when they got the ball at their 16 with just under a minute left. Tebow time? Not this time. Because Fox had declined to go for a 57-yard field goal in the closing seconds of the first half - he was afraid a miss would set up the Chiefs for a double-digit halftime lead - the Broncos had to go 84 yards in 47 seconds instead of just needing to get into range for another game-winner by Matt Prater. Tebow, who had completed four passes all afternoon with the Broncos running 47 times for 216 yards, including 145 by Willis McGahee, suddenly had to chuck it. And he was intercepted by cornerback Brandon Carr with 8 seconds left. Tebow finished 6 of 22 for 60 yards and added 16 yards on six carries. The Broncos saved \$2.6 million by releasing Orton just before Thanksgiving but Orton nearly made them pay an even heftier price for that decision, completing 15 of 29 passes for 180 yards against his former team and connecting with Dwayne Bowe six times for 93 yards before losing him for the second half with a suspected concussion. "Dwayne was on fire in the first half, and then to lose him for the rest of the game, that really hurt our offense," Orton said. "I have the utmost respect for Champ Bailey, but Dwayne had him turning around in circles a couple times out there." The Broncos lost two offensive starters in the first half when right guard Chris Kuper, the stalwart on an otherwise young line, broke his left leg and fullback Spencer Larsen hurt a knee. Kuper's injury made Orton's day bittersweet, too. "Chris Kuper is a very good friend of mine and to see what happened to him really put a damper on things," Orton said. "He's a great teammate, a great leader on that team and I hope he's able to get back as soon as possible." Had Denver not backed into the playoffs, boss John Elway's dangerous decision to release Orton at midseason would have gone down as one of the biggest blunders in Broncos history. And Fox would have been second-guessed for passing up on a 57-yard field goal attempt in the first half even though his kicker is the best in the

business from long distance and points were at a premium. The Broncos finally scored on Prater's 38-yarder in the third quarter, which followed Javier Arenas' muffed punt at his own 20. Coming off the worst game of his career, a four-turnover blunder at Buffalo, Tebow killed Denver's only promising drive of the first half when he coughed up the football as he was trying to reach across the Chiefs 10-yard line for the first down and linebacker Justin Houston scooped up the loose ball. In a surreal scene, the Chiefs (7-9) hooted and hollered in their locker room while the playoff-bound Broncos were subdued. "When we look at our team, we can't say this is our strength. Everything is mediocre," Bailey said. "We've got to get better. If we want to make any kind of fuss in the playoffs, we've got to get better." And fast. "Not the way you want to go in," Bailey said as he glanced up at the Chargers-Raiders game on TV. "But, hey, we've got another shot." "Nobody said how you had to get in," teammate Mario Haggan added. "It's what you do with the opportunity once you get there." Notes: The Broncos have lost all nine times they've met the Chiefs and their predecessors, the Dallas Texans, in the regular season finale. ... Kuper's replacement, Russ Hochstein, left the game in the fourth quarter with an undisclosed injury and Chris Clark replaced him. ... Chiefs C Casey Wiegmann wouldn't say if this was his last game. "Football has been good to me," he said. "That's all I know." --- © 2011 STATS LLC

Tebow rules in OT, too: Broncos 29, Steelers 23 DENVER (AP) -- "Pull the trigger," John Elway told his Denver Broncos star, Tim Tebow, trying to shake the quarterback from a three-game funk. Tebow went one better - he pulled off an upset. A rejuvenated Tebow connected with Demaryius Thomas on an electrifying 80-yard touchdown pass on the first play of overtime and the Broncos defeated the stunned Pittsburgh Steelers 29-23 in the AFC wild-card game on Sunday. Wild doesn't begin to describe it. The play took 11 seconds and was the quickest ending to an overtime in NFL history. It was also the longest overtime touchdown in playoff history. Thomas hauled in a high play-action pass at the Denver 38, stiff-armed Ike Taylor and then outraced backup safety Ryan Mundy to the end zone. "I was just saying, 'Man trust your speed. Trust your speed. Don't cut back. Don't cut back.' And he kept it straight. He outran the guy," said Willis McGahee, whose fourth-quarter fumble helped Pittsburgh tie it. "I was like, 'Oh my God, is he still running?' Please just go. Please. Please." Tebow, who had done next to nothing in the second half after a 20-point explosion in the second quarter, looked as startled as everyone else. He chased down Thomas and knelt on one knee - Tebowing as it's known - in the end zone while the crowd was going crazy. Then he pounded a fist in triumph and took a victory lap. "When I saw him scoring, first of all, I just thought, 'Thank you, Lord,'" Tebow said. "Then, I was running pretty fast, chasing him - like I can catch up to D.T! Then I just jumped into the stands, first time I've done that. That was fun. Then, got on a knee and thanked the Lord again and tried to celebrate with my teammates and the fans." Behind Tebow's season-high 316 yards passing, the Broncos (9-8) are heading to New England for a second-round game against the top-seeded Patriots (13-3) on Saturday night. The Patriots walloped the Broncos 41-23 last month, sending Tebow into a funk that included seven turnovers and a 40 percent completion clip - and prompting Elway to implore him to "pull the trigger" in the playoffs. Did he ever. And unlike Elway, who lost his first postseason start - to the Steelers at home in 1984 - Tebow is 1-0 in the playoffs. "We're just a fighting team. A lot of resilience," cornerback Champ Bailey said. "In any adverse situation, we'll find a way to get out of it. Everybody says we backed into the playoffs, we're in. We did something right along the way. We're in it. We won a game. Now, we've got to go try to win another one." The Steelers (12-5) lost despite Ben Roethlisberger rallying injury-depleted Pittsburgh from a two-touchdown halftime deficit with 10 points in the final 10 minutes. Pittsburgh called tails for the overtime coin toss, and it came up heads. Tebow, who engineered five fourth-quarter comebacks and three OT wins in the regular season, wasted no time finding Thomas over the middle with just his second pass on first down all night - and his first completion. Thomas also had receptions of 51 and 58 yards to set up second-quarter touchdowns after Tebow lost his top target, Eric Decker, to a seriously injured left knee, in the first half. "They were the No. 1 defense and we are the No. 1 offense running the ball," Thomas said. "So, I feel like they wanted to make a statement and stop the run. I don't know if they forgot about the passing game. The last couple of games that we had, we were not passing the ball that great." Thus, Elway's admonition. "I feel like he came out and played confident," Eddie Royal said. "And I think that's what John was trying to tell him: Play the way you know how to play. And Tim did that. He was smart with the ball and really led this offense today." Tebow's passer rating of 125.6 was the highest in Broncos postseason history. "He showed he's a quarterback in the NFL, case closed," McGahee said. "They say he couldn't throw. They said we wouldn't be able to run the ball on them. We did that. I wonder what they're going to say next week." Mundy was playing in place of Ryan Clark, the Steelers' leading tackler who sat this one out because of a blood condition that's exacerbated at altitude. "We lost, and it's not because I didn't play; we had very capable guys that played well," said Clark, who was one of several Steelers sidelined or injured. Pro Bowl center Maurkice Pouncey was out, replaced by Doug Legursky, who had a bad snap right before halftime that moved Pittsburgh out of field goal range. On the first snap of overtime, Thomas pulled in Tebow's high pass and raced down the Broncos sideline, sending the crowd, including Elway, the Broncos executive vice president, into a frenzy at Sports Authority Field, which was rocking like the old Mile High Stadium back in the 1990s. McGahee sold the play-action well, drawing safety Troy Polamalu and others up to the line to defend the run and leaving Thomas with room on the crossing pattern to grab the pass and turn on the jets for the 80-yard score, Tebow's longest pass play as a pro. "It was a little surprising," Steelers linebacker James Farrior said. "But I guess he's been working hard. He's taken a lot of criticism over the past few weeks about his throwing motion, his passing game. Like I said earlier, he's a competitor. You keep trying to down a guy, and a guy like him who's a tough competitor, he's going to get you one time." Hines Ward called this defeat "just as disappointing" as last year's loss to Green Bay in the Super Bowl. "I've been on a lot of really good teams, thank God, and I felt this team was up there with them," Polamalu said. "We weren't able to stay healthy and keep a cohesiveness like we wanted to." Tebow completed 10 of 21 passes and Thomas hauled in four of them for 204 yards after Decker was injured on a hit by linebacker James Harrison. Thomas, who missed training camp while recovering from a torn Achilles and the start of the season while dealing with a fractured finger, has come on strong of late, averaging 109 yards over the last six games. But the Broncos' top pick in 2010 - taken three slots ahead of Tebow in the first round - hadn't had done anything like this. "It's amazing because I haven't played explosive like I did in college in a long time," Thomas said. Tebow threw two TD passes and also ran 10 times for 50 yards and a touchdown. "I think we executed a little bit better. We tried to step up," he said. "We knew it was win or go home. This team wanted to fight. We wanted to play another game." These two teams had played the first ever regular season overtime game on Sept. 22, 1974, in Denver. Now, they played the first non-sudden death playoff game in history. The new rules called for both teams to get the ball in the extra period providing there wasn't a touchdown by either the offense or defense. Tebow took care of that in a hurry. Making his first appearance in the playoffs after going 7-4 as Denver's starter, Tebow outplayed Roethlisberger, a two-time Super Bowl winner playing on a bad ankle, who fell to 10-4 in the playoffs. Roethlisberger was 22 for 40 for 289 yards with one TD, one interception and five sacks. Tebow wasn't taken down once by the league's top defense. The Broncos snapped a three-game losing streak that had many wondering if they were even worthy of their first playoff in six seasons, and it kept the Steelers from their 34th playoff win, which would have broken a tie with the Cowboys for the most ever. Tebow led Denver to 20 second-quarter points - they had scored just 13 in the quarter in his 11 starts - but a 20-6 halftime lead didn't last long. Receiver Mike Wallace had a 1-yard TD run, Shaun Suisham kicked a short field goal and Jericho Cotchery grabbed a 31-yard TD pass with 3:48 left in regulation to tie it. The Steelers were nearing field goal range in the final minute of regulation but the Broncos sacked Roethlisberger three times on that final drive, forcing a fumble that Roethlisberger recovered. "We were moving it and we had a shot," Roethlisberger said. "Someone got it, it felt like a finger, on the ball and knocked it out. After that, you're trying

to throw a 70-yard Hail Mary and that's hard." Roethlisberger never got the ball back as Tebow added to his growing list of impossible victories in the blink of an eye and a flick of the wrist. "He gets a lot of flak when things go wrong," Clark said, "but he played phenomenal today." Notes: This was the Broncos' second playoff win since Elway retired following his second straight Super Bowl triumph in 1999, and their first since Jan. 14, 2006, when they handed Tom Brady his first playoff loss. The Broncos lost to the Steelers the following week. ... This was the first OT playoff game since the Saints beat the Vikings 31-28 in the NFC championship on Jan. 24, 2010. --- © 2011 STATS LLC

Patriots rout Broncos 45-10 in AFC playoffs FOXBOROUGH, Mass. (AP) -- Tebowmania had no chance against Tom Brady's playoff pedigree. All the heroics, all the big plays and quite a few records belonged to Brady and the New England Patriots on Saturday night in a 45-10 rout of overmatched Tim Tebow and the Denver Broncos. Brady threw six touchdown passes, five in the first half, putting the Patriots into the AFC championship game and silencing the nationwide frenzy surrounding Tebow. The Patriots (14-3), winners of nine straight games, will host either Baltimore or Houston next Sunday for a spot in the Super Bowl. Saturday night's romp snapped a three-game postseason losing streak, two of those at Gillette Stadium, and lifted the Patriots to the verge of their fifth Super Bowl appearance in 11 seasons. They've won three of those, two with Brady as the game's MVP. "We came in and started fast and it was a big win for us," said Brady, who even got off a 48-yard punt on third down. "I have no idea about records and stuff like that. Anytime you score 45, obviously with the help of our defense, and special teams played great - hopefully we can go out next week and play even better." From the first snap in 24-degree temperature (wind chill of 12), this was a mismatch. The Patriots were not going to make the same mistakes the Steelers made against this team. "He's been around the block a few times," cornerback Champ Bailey said of Brady. "He knows how to win games. If you're not ready to punch him in the mouth he's going to eat you up all night." A nation transfixed by Tebow's play, if not his religious beliefs, tuned in Saturday to see if he had any more magic in store for Brady and company. He had nothing left as the Patriots made this must-see TV only for those who live in New England. "Any time you're getting beat like that, it doesn't change how you fight," Tebow said. "It didn't matter whether it was the first play or the last play or whether we're down by 42. ... I wanted to be the same player." With New England up 42-7, the fans began their derisive Teeee-bow chants. On the next play, the Broncos quarterback was sacked for an 11-yard loss - one of five sacks for New England's 31st-ranked defense. "We went out and played very hard and good things happened," defensive tackle Vince Wilfork said. "A great team win." And so ended one of the season's most exciting story lines - one that began when Denver was 1-4 and made Tebow a starter. The one-time third-stringer promptly won six in a row and seven of eight, with a string of stunning comebacks. "A lot of ups and downs," Tebow said of his second NFL season. "Overall, it's been a very special opportunity for me, something I'm really thankful for. There's a lot of things we're proud of. Obviously, it's hard to see them all right now." That winning surge ended with a 41-23 home loss to New England, and the Broncos dropped their next two, backing into the AFC West title. But they rebounded nicely in their first playoff game since the 2005 season with the longest overtime touchdown in playoff history, an 80-yard catch and run by Demaryius Thomas against the Pittsburgh Steelers. Like everyone else on the Broncos' offense, Thomas was invisible against the Patriots. Denver couldn't cover or tackle All-Pro tight end Rob Gronkowski, who tied a postseason mark with three touchdown catches, all in the opening half. Brady toyed with the Broncos (9-9), throwing more TD passes than Tebow had completions (three) in the first 30 minutes. "We were playing complementary football, and it was awesome," Gronkowski said. "Obviously, you can't start off the game any better than that." Brady's sixth TD was to his other tight end, Aaron Hernandez, as the quarterback tied Steve Young and Daryle Lamonia for the most in a postseason game. The two-time league MVP threw for 5,235 yards during the season, second in NFL history to Drew Brees' 5,476 in 2011. He looked ready to get that much against the Broncos as he moved to third place in career touchdown passes in the playoffs with 36, trailing Joe Montana (45) and Brett Favre (44). Brady was 26 for 34 for 363 yards and Gronkowski made 10 catches for 145 yards as the Patriots gained 509 yards in all. In stark contrast, Tebow was 9 for 26 for 136 yards. The Broncos won the coin toss and elected to defer. Bad idea: They never were in the game after that. Brady hit his first eight passes for 79 yards and two touchdowns. Offensive coordinator Bill O'Brien, who's leaving to become Penn State's coach once the Patriots are done, threw in a wrinkle by using Hernandez as a running back. On one of those plays, Hernandez broke free down the left sideline for a 43-yard gain, the team's longest run this season. But with the ball in his hands and a 14-0 lead, Brady momentarily stumbled. His throw over the middle for Julian Edelman sailed directly to safety Quinton Carter, whose weaving return set up Denver at the New England 24. Willis McGahee scored on a 5-yard run. Carter left the game moments later with a neck injury; Denver was already without strong safety Brian Dawkins with a neck problem. And its secondary had no chance without them. Yes, Brady had cooled off, but only for a while. Using the no-huddle, and aided by an effective running game, Brady hit three passes for 31 yards, with Gronkowski getting free over the middle this time for the 12-yard score. Several times, and not just on his romps into the end zone, Gronkowski simply shoved aside would-be tacklers to tack on yards after catches. Brady's TDs covered 10, 12 and 19 yards to Gronkowski, 7 to Wes Welker, 61 to Deion Branch and 17 yards to Hernandez early in the third quarter. Coach Bill Belichick wasn't about to back off at that point, but the Patriots stalled inside the Denver 5 early in the fourth period and Stephen Gostkowski made a 21-yard field goal to conclude New England's scoring. Hernandez left in the fourth quarter with a head injury. "He's feeling great," Gronkowski said. "Hernandez is a beast and I love playing with him and everything." On Brady's surprise punt, which Belichick said they had worked on for years without using, Broncos rookie linebacker Von Miller slammed into the back of New England's Dan Connolly, who wasn't looking. Matt Light then shoved Miller, Connolly turned around and got into a pushing match with Miller as several players joined in and shoved each other, spilling onto the Patriots' sideline. Miller drew an unnecessary roughness penalty. Notes: Brady holds team records for most playoff games with three or more TD passes (four); most yards passing in a playoff game (363); most postseason completions (450); most yards passing in postseason (4,770); most TD passes for a career (36); and most postseason victories for a quarterback (15). ... In addition to Carter's injury, S David Bruton left with a concussion in the third period. DT tackle Brodrick Bunkley also left in that quarter, with a concussion. © 2011 STATS LLC