

Broncos win five games in a row

DAVE GIBSON
DENVER

Since the Denver Broncos Super Bowl victory after their 2015 season and Peyton Manning's retirement, except for 2016's 9-7 campaign led by Coach Gary Kubiak, the team spent the following years lost, wandering aimlessly through the desert without an inkling on how to get back to the promised land. Thirteen different starting quarterbacks and three rookie head coaches during that time span couldn't take them there as they mostly spun their collective wheels in the sand with only losing records to show for their misguided efforts. Although there was a fair amount of talent on those squads, it now appears that all the Broncos really needed was a



PHOTOS BY DAVE GIBSON

faithful that they were in for more of the same. Naysayers were calling for Payton's head and the firing of Defensive Coordinator Vance Joseph after the team surrendered 70 points to the Miami Dolphins in week three. Since then, the defense has stiffened (registering 15 takeaways in the last four games) and the Broncos have reeled off five straight victories which hasn't happened in Broncos Country since 2015. The Packers were the first to fall followed by the Chiefs, Bills, Vikings, and Browns. Four of those five teams are playoff contenders.

With a record of 6-5 at the moment, because of their slow start it is unlikely that the Broncos will win their division, but playing with newfound confidence they are strong contenders for a wildcard spot. If the Bills and the Browns (two other wildcard hopefuls) finish the season with identical records as the Broncos, the Broncos hold the tiebreaker by virtue of their victories over those teams.

Before the Broncos are named as postseason participants, there is the small matter of six games remaining in the regular season to be played. Cautiously optimistic, they face the Texans, Chargers, and Lions on the road. They return home for games against the Patriots and Chargers then finish the season in Las Vegas versus the Raiders. Excluding the Lions, the teams they'll face in those contests have a combined 21-35 record. Stay tuned.

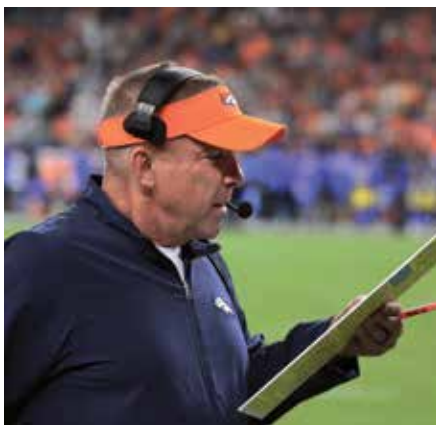
leader – or Moses if you will – to guide them from obscurity back to the land of milk and honey.

In 2023 the Broncos new ownership made hiring a quality veteran head coach their number one priority. Enter Sean Payton. With nearly two decades of experience and a Super Bowl win under his belt, achieved during his time as head coach of the New Orleans Saints, his résumé is impeccable and play-calling unpredictable. The obligatory hard work by the athletes and coaches that is an essential component in becoming an elite football team is the cornerstone of his philosophy. Commanding the respect from his players that comes with his impressive credentials and take-charge yet likable personality, when Payton speaks, his words might as well be coming straight

from the burning bush.

The nucleus of the 2023 team was already in place when Payton came aboard (see The Mountain-Ear's August 31 preseason preview, "Denver Broncos defeat Rams 41-0"). In his infinite wisdom, shoring up the offensive line with a couple of new players was probably the coach's most impactful personnel move of the offseason. Without the horses up front to open holes for running backs and protect your quarterback, it is impossible for any team to achieve success. After a miserable showing last year spent running for his life, a rejuvenated Russell Wilson has regained his effectiveness and is among the top players at his position in the league.

Starting this season with one win and five losses, it seemed to the Broncos



They're back

Head Coach Sean Payton is the main reason behind the Broncos' sudden turnaround from obscurity to vying for a playoff berth.

LOCAL.



Every week.



We touch hearts.



Community is core.



Together we build.



Strength in towns.



And mountain love.

It's all for you. Community is at the center of our business. And to celebrate our commitment of bringing relevant news and local happenings to your living room every week, we are offering incredible savings on a yearly subscription to The Mountain-Ear, your favorite read. Time to treat yourself, or a friend, to a year of news at altitude!

Subscribe and save!



Get a whole year of local—news, history, and happenings. Make your purchase using above QR code or at themtnear.com.
One year in state \$75 now \$50.
One year online \$50 now \$40.
Offer good thru December 31, 2023.

THE MOUNTAIN EAR