

# Spurs shoot for playoffs despite record

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Despite an 11-28 record more than halfway into the season, the San Antonio Spurs can still make the NBA playoffs, first-year Coach Bob Weiss said Tuesday.

"I think we got a good shot at the last playoff spot," Weiss said. "We're six games behind Denver and we have a favorable schedule. I think if we play ball and they slip, we'll have a shot."

"I think we can make a run with what we got now, but we need people playing at the top of their games," Weiss said.

The Spurs, who have 33 games remaining on their schedule, host the Houston Rockets tonight.

Weiss, former assistant coach with the Dallas Mavericks, had high expectations for his rookie year. He had hoped that veteran guard



Johnny Moore, who was recuperating from a rare illness, would be playing at 90 percent of his peak. Weiss also had plans for guard Johnny Dawkins, the team's first-round draft choice.

Moore remains on the injured reserve list as he recuperates from a form of meningitis that sidelined him for most of last season.

Dawkins, meanwhile, has not produced effectively, Weiss said.

"Those are the biggest things that we didn't have that I thought we would have," Weiss said. "The big-

gest frustrations have been playing well in games and losing by two. We spent a lot of good efforts ending up on the short end of the stick."

Weiss said he has taken some of the pressure off of Dawkins and hopes to activate Moore soon.

"I think we're making progress," Weiss said. "But I'm still disappointed with our record. I would have liked to have won more games by now."

Weiss said a poor training camp was part of the reason for the slow start.

"Coming out of training camp, we were definitely not where I wanted to be. I thought they would learn quickly. We had people out of shape that were holding us back," Weiss said.

Weiss said he may have pushed the players too hard.

"One of my faults early on was trying to teach too much too soon, not breaking it down in simpler terms," Weiss said. "I knew that would be one of my tendencies going in."

Weiss said team management is pleased with the Spurs' performance despite the poor record.

"The fans, press, management pretty much had the same perspective where this team was, in terms of age, what the draft picks might contribute, what Johnny Moore's condition was like," Weiss said.

"If management expected this team to be five games over .500 by now, then you might have problems," he said. "I think we all pretty much saw the same picture. They expected young talent to develop and they see improvements there."

# Simms and Elway overcame tough times in early careers

PASADENA, Calif. (AP) — When Phil Simms was chosen by the Giants on the first round of the 1979 NFL draft, the New York fans booed loudly. Some didn't stop booing until this season.

When the Denver Broncos traded for John Elway three days after he was the first pick in the 1983 draft, the state of Colorado cheered en masse. Some didn't cheer again until this season.

Simms, who had a day off from practice Tuesday along with the rest of the Giants, has taken eight years of dismal teams, injuries and — whenever the Giants were home — booing from 76,000 participants in a game of Pin The Tail on the Quarterback.

Elway, who took just four years to reach the Super Bowl, has also heard the boos — in part because his advance notices were almost impossible to live up to.

"People in Denver were expecting me to walk on water. They expected a Super Bowl right away. Denver is so hungry for a world champion, the patience wasn't there."

Elway came out of Stanford heralded as the best quarterback prospect to enter the NFL in a decade. He was drafted by Baltimore with the first pick in the 1983 draft, then was traded to Denver when he said he would opt for professional baseball rather than sign with the Colts.

He was an immediate starter, but

went just one for 8 for 14 yards in his first regular-season start before leaving with an injured elbow. After five games, he was benched in favor of Steve DeBerg, then returned as a starter after four games on the bench.

He played in 11 of Denver's 14 games his rookie season, but completed just 47 percent of his passes and threw just seven touchdowns and 14 interceptions as the Broncos finished 9-7.

In 1986, Elway was good one game and bad the next, until that dramatic 98-yard march in Cleveland.

"People in Denver were expecting me to walk on water. They expected a Super Bowl right away. Denver is so hungry for a world champion, the patience wasn't there."

— John Elway

land. But Elway's adherents say that was nothing more than a nationally televised version of what he had been doing all along. Denver is 40-19 in games he started.

It took even more time for Simms. Little known outside Kentucky, where he played at Morehead State, he was the seventh choice in the

1979 draft and the second quarterback chosen — the first, Jackie Thompson, is now out of football. New York fans who had never heard of Simms viewed the move as another in a long line of wasted draft picks.

He became a starter in the sixth game of his rookie year and quarterbacked the Giants to four straight wins in what was to end as a 6-10 season. In his second year, the Giants went 4-12 and in his third they made the playoffs for the first time in 18 years, although Simms sat out the last five games with a shoulder injury.

He missed the whole 1982 season with a knee injury and when he returned in 1983, he had lost his job to journeyman Scott Brunner. When he finally played, his season lasted 13 passes before he broke his thumb on the helmet of Dennis Harrison of the Eagles.

But even after leading New York to the playoffs in 1984 and 1985, Simms still heard boos this year. The fans didn't care that he was playing with most of his receivers either out with injuries or playing hurt.

Where Elway is known for his mobility and his ability to improvise, Simms' forte is hanging in the pocket and throwing even while getting hit. Two of his four touchdown passes in the 49-3 playoff win over San Francisco were thrown just as he was getting hit.

# Giants offensive linemen share odd occupations off the field

COSTA MESA, Calif. (AP) — One's a stockbroker. Another is an engineer. A third is studying to become an attorney. There also is the banker and the auto dealer.

An odd collection for the Super Bowl. An even odder group to form the New York Giants' offensive line.

"I've got a bunch of guys blocking for me named Bradley (Benson), William (Ard) and Christopher (Godfrey)," Giants Coach Bill Parcells said. "They come from schools like Wake Forest and Brigham Young. They're the stockbroker types who, after practice, head to their suburban homes."

That's very true. And it's also true that this group of suburbanites can be the key Sunday when the Giants meet the Denver Broncos in Pasadena, Calif. for the NFL title.

And the Broncos know it. "They are a pretty good group," Broncos linebacker Tom Jackson said. "They also know their role. The Giants have a great, great defense and the role of the New York offense is to make the big play when it can and not turn the ball over."

Most of the Giants big plays come on either Joe Morris runs or passing plays set up by Morris' rushing.

"The key to their offense is the

run," Jackson said. "You stop the running game and you can control the offense."

Broncos defensive end Rulon Jones said stopping the Giants' running game is difficult because the offensive line rarely lets itself be isolated.

The left side of Benson and Ard are power blockers, while the right side of Karl Nelson and Godfrey play a more finesse-type game.

"As a whole, the Giants' line isn't overly physical, even though they are big," Broncos' linebacker Jim Ryan said. "I think their technique is very good. They get in the way of you all the time and cut off your pursuit angles."

# Broncos' Kay faces tough blocking task

COSTA MESA, Calif. (AP) — In the view of many Super Bowl observers, the Road to Pasadena narrows at the feet of Denver Broncos tight end Clarence Kay.

Kay will be blocking against two of the most feared outside linebackers in the game — Lawrence Taylor and Carl Banks of the New York Giants. If Kay can neutralize them at the point of attack, Denver quarterback John Elway will be able to work his magic. If not, Elway and the Broncos figure to be in for a long afternoon in Sunday's Super Bowl.

During interviews at Orange Coast College on Tuesday, Kay was asked repeatedly about his thoughts on going against Taylor, the NFL player of the year whose 20½ sacks led the league and whose blitzing style gives quarterbacks nightmares.

The fact is, Kay will more often be blocking Banks, who generally lines up on the strong side, across from the tight end, while Taylor is on the weak side. But that doesn't mean Kay's job any easier.

"Those are two great linebackers," Kay said. "Taylor may be a little quicker, and Banks may be a little more overpowering. They both make big plays."

Denver Coach Dan Reeves is a fan of Banks. "If there's such a thing as an underrated player on their defense, Banks is it," Reeves said. "All you hear about is Taylor, but Banks makes dominating plays, too. I think he's playing as well as Taylor right now."

In a regular-season game won by the Giants 19-16, Kay went against Banks almost exclusively. He recalls facing Taylor on only two or three plays. "I cut him once (with a cut block) on a screen pass," Kay recalls.

Kay has gone up against other outstanding linebackers, such as New England's Andre Tippett, and fared well.

"Clarence stacks up well against anybody as far as blocking is concerned," said Reeves, who has gone so far as to call Kay the "best blocking tight end in the NFL."

That was before his bout with drugs, which caused him to miss four games while undergoing drug rehabilitation. Kay returned for the AFC championship game against Cleveland, and although he admits his skills are still somewhat rusty, he expects to be close to 100 percent.

"How about 88 percent?" he says. "That's my number."

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