

# Denver's maligned rushing enough for 2nd Super Bowl

LA JOLLA, Calif. (AP) — For the second straight year, the Denver Broncos have made it to the Super Bowl supposedly without one of the required vehicles for making it — a running game.

You could write off one trip as a fluke. But two? Maybe there's more to the Broncos' ground game than meets the eye.

During the regular season, the Denver running attack, although unheralded and often maligned, ranked a respectable 12th in the 28-team NFL, averaging 131.3 yards per game.

Sammy Winder, who regained his starting spot after Gerald Willhite broke his leg in the sixth game, finished the year with 741 yards on 196 carries, leaving him as the fifth most

productive back in the AFC.

Those were hard-earned yards, too. Winder never had any breakaways to inflate his average; his longest run from scrimmage was 19 yards.

With Winder, what you see is what you get, much like the other Denver backs — Gene Lang, Steve Sewell, Ken Bell and Tony Boddie.

They are versatile and dependable. They rarely miss a block, fumble or drop a pass. In many ways, they're carbon copies of their head coach, a do-it-all, self-made runner with the Dallas Cowboys named Dan Reeves.

"Sammy has been to two Pro Bowls, which gives you an idea of the type of regard he's held in by his peers," Reeves said.

"He's just not a big-name back. He doesn't have great explosiveness or put up impressive numbers. All he does is do his job, and he's very unselfish."

The Washington Redskins, Denver's Super Bowl opponent on Sunday, have taken notice of the Bronco backs.

"They're criticized for not having a running game, but they run it good enough," Redskins' linebacker Monte Coleman said. "Their passing game is their strong suit, so that's what they emphasize, naturally."

"There's no way we've underrated their backs. They're good, and they play a key role in their success. Those guys just don't have the reputation, that's all. They get the job done."

# Skins backs get offensive job done without hoopla, fancy nicknames

SAN DIEGO (AP) — They don't have a nifty nickname like Denver's "Three Amigos," but the Washington Redskins' trio of running backs figure to be just as important in the Super Bowl.

The last time Washington got into the Super Bowl, the running game was left entirely to John Riggins. The Redskins still use the one-back offense, but now it's a different back for every occasion — the epitome of specialization.

Riggins, who has criticized the Redskins' running game this season, should feel honored. He was replaced by not one but three runners: George Rogers, Kelvin Bryant and rookie Timmy Smith.

Rogers, a former Heisman Trophy winner, is the starter. He is the power runner, the type of guy who runs straight ahead with his head down and his muscular legs churning.

Smith is a bit quicker to the outside. He often replaces Rogers after two or three series. He is the Redskins' leading rusher in the playoffs with 138 yards.

Then there's Bryant, easily the fastest of the three and the man Coach Joe Gibbs uses in passing situations.

Together, the threesome totaled 258 yards and two touchdowns in Washington's two playoff victories.

Riggins could hardly have done better.

In fact, Riggins gained 1,347 yards in 1983, leading the Redskins to their last Super Bowl appearance. This season, Rogers, Smith and Bryant gained 1,145 — just 202 fewer in three fewer games.

"Their running attack is what got them here," Denver linebacker Ricky Hunley said. "Rogers is a bruiser who can guarantee three or four yards when you need them."

Smith is a little faster and just as strong, and Bryant is versatile, probably one of the best athletes on the field.

When Bryant joined the Redskins, Rogers knew he would be sharing playing time with the former United States Football League star. Now that Smith has emerged as a standout, Rogers is playing even less.

But he has no complaints. Rogers admits he has had a sub-par season because of injuries — he has sprained his toe, shoulder and ankle in addition to pulling a groin muscle — so he sees no harm in letting Smith help carry the load.

On occasion, after being replaced by Smith, Rogers even asked Gibbs to keep the rookie in the game because he was playing so well.

The backs also are friends off the field, like Amigos Vance Johnson, Mark Jackson and Ricky Nattiel.

# Elway remains biggest topic at Super Bowl

SAN DIEGO (AP) — As the Super Bowl buildup began in earnest Tuesday, the man with one number, Denver Bronco No. 7, John Elway, was the overriding topic of conversation.

Could the blond Superman in the orange cape lift the Broncos over the one obstacle to glory they failed to scale last season?

Elway and coaches Joe Gibbs of Washington and Dan Reeves of Denver were asked if the game will go as Elway goes. Both, of course, said no, although Gibbs qualified it by saying "we can't stop him, but we have to contain him."

Nonetheless, they noted that a contest between teams as closely matched as these could turn on a play in which Elway isn't involved, such as the one made by Jeremiah Castille. The Denver cornerback got the Broncos here by stripping Cleveland's Earnest Byner of the ball just as the Browns fullback was about to score the tying touchdown in the final minute of the AFC championship game.

Redskins' linebacker Monte Coleman noted that Elway, a throwback to the old triple threat, is really a quadruple threat. He can run, throw, even punt — but just making defenders think about it is danger in its own right.

# Aguirre's 24 leads Dallas to 128-111 win over Spurs

DALLAS (AP) — Mark Aguirre scored 24 points, including his 12,000th career NBA point, to lead the Dallas Mavericks to their fifth straight victory, 128-111, over the San Antonio Spurs Tuesday.

Two teammates also scored 20 or more points. Reserve Detlef Schrempf contributed a season-high 22 points and Roy Tarpley had 20, as Dallas enjoyed its biggest scoring night of the year.

The 26-11 Mavericks, off to their fastest start in franchise history, won their eighth game in the last nine starts. The Spurs, led by Alvin Robertson's 21 points, lost for the sixth time in their last eight games.

Aguirre surpassed the 12,000-point mark with his first basket of the game. Named a reserve to the NBA Western Division All-Star team

Tuesday, Aguirre ranks 85th in all-time NBA scoring in just his seventh season.

Dallas took a 10-point lead into the fourth quarter and used three 3-point plays — two by Schrempf and one by center James Donaldson — to push their lead to as many as 19.

The Mavericks boasted a third-quarter lead that stood in double figures for almost the entire period to 97-84 on Sam Perkins' three-point play with two seconds left in the quarter. But Jon Sundvold swished a 52-foot 3-pointer at the buzzer to narrow Dallas' advantage to 97-87 entering the final quarter.

Dallas shot 65 percent (15 of 23) from the floor in the second quarter and led at halftime, 65-56. Four Mavericks were in double figures at halftime, led by Aguirre's 11.

# Houston blasts L.A. Clippers behind Olajuwon's 22 points

HOUSTON (AP) — Houston's Akeem Olajuwon scored 22 points and grabbed 10 rebounds, pacing seven Rockets in double figures en route to a 124-104 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers Tuesday night.

Houston led from start to finish although the Clippers outscored the Rockets 23-9 over one stretch of the third quarter.

Quintin Daley scored eight of the Clippers' final 10 points to lead the visitors with 18 points. Mike Wood-

son scored 10 of his 17 points during the third quarter.

Houston outscored the Clippers 14-4 over the final 5:23 of the second quarter to take a 70-46 halftime lead, paced by Olajuwon, who had 16 points at intermission.

The Clippers, who have won only two road games this season, trailed the Rockets 39-33 with 9:39 to go in the first half before Houston started pulling away.

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