



Jets Lose To Broncos, 34-17

BY DAN MILLER

The Jets lost to the Denver Broncos, 34-17 in a disaster at the Meadowlands on Sunday, November 30. The trouble started early in the first quarter, when the Broncos took advantage of a fumbled Jets exchange and scored the first points of the game, giving them a 7-0 lead with 8:41 to go.

During the Jets' first series of downs, Bret Favre handed off to Brad Smith, who reversed a flip to tight end Jerricho Cotchery, who fumbled the ball, sending it back 15 yards. As Cotchery gathered in the ball and lay on the ground, he was hit by a Denver player who knocked the ball loose. It was picked up by another defender, safety Vernon Fox, who ran it in for a 23-yard Bronco touchdown. The kick was good and Denver led 7-0.

On the Jets' very first play from scrimmage following the Bronco touchdown, Favre handed off to Thomas Jones, who ran off right tackle for a 59-yard touchdown, giving Jones 1,040 rushing yards of the season. It was the longest touchdown of Jones' career and the 14th time a Jet has hit the 1,000-yard mark.

At 6:44 Denver converted on a 59-yard touchdown pass play. Jets Coach Eric Mangini threw the challenge flag contesting the touchdown, saying that the receiver stepped out of bounds back at the 38-yard line. The officials reviewed the touchdown, the challenge was denied and the Jets were charged with a time-

out. It was all down hill from there for the Jets. Denver went eight plays for 52 yards and settled for a 25-yard field goal to extend their lead to 17-7.

The Jets came back. With 12:44 to go in the second quarter, a 49-yard Jones touchdown on a strange play was challenged by the Broncos. Jones ran off tackle and appeared to have been down, only to get up and continue running to the end zone. On close inspection, Jones was seen to roll over onto a defender and get back to his feet to run the ball in to bring the Jets back, 17-14 following the extra point kick by Jay Feely.

The Broncos increased their lead to 24-14 with 4:24 before intermission on a one-yard touchdown run by Peyton Hillis. The Broncos capped off the scoring in the first half with a 35-yard field goal to stretch their lead at half time to 27-14, gaining 316 total yards of offense—a number the Jets usually take an entire game to give up.

The Broncos led 27-17 with the Jets in possession as the fourth quarter began.

On the bright side, Jets running back Jones ran for 138 yards, extending his NFL leading rushing total to 1,088 yards with four games to play. Jones also ran for two touchdowns in the quarter. Unfortunately, he was not a factor in the second half, when the Jets had to play catch up. Jets triple threat superstar Leon Washington was no help, putting on a dismal performance,



Jet Thomas Jones takes the handoff from Bret Favre and runs untouched down the sidelines for 59 yards to pay dirt, tying the game at 7-7 in the first quarter.

Photo Dan Miller DMD Images

as had the entire Jets team. Nor was Favre a factor. Favre threw 23/43 for 247 yards. He had no touchdowns and one very costly interception.

In the post-game press conference, Mangini took the blame for a poor coaching performance in addition to his team's sub-par body of work. "I don't think we coached very well, and when you have that, this is what you get," he said. Mangini felt that the team prepared for the game but failed to execute in any phase of the contest. "What we need to do is to come back, work the way we have been working, perform the way we have been performing and the outcome will be extremely different. But if we don't, the outcome will be the same," he said. He added that the Broncos had played well

under difficult weather and field conditions. "I think they had a good plan but our performance obviously must be much, much better than it was today," he concluded.

Favre said, "We have four games left. We got outplayed. We had plenty of opportunities. Denver played outstanding. It is disappointing, but the season is not over yet."

The Jets remain atop the AFC East with a one-game lead over New England, who also lost on Sunday to the tough Pittsburgh Steelers.

The Jets go west to face the San Francisco Forty Niners on Sunday, December 7 for a 4:15 p.m. start. On that same day, the New York Giants host the Philadelphia Eagles at home in a 1 p.m. start.

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