

Some Broncos will get lots of time off before playoffs begin

DENVER (AP) — Some Denver Broncos will get more than a week off to prepare for the playoffs.

The Broncos have secured a first-round bye and have nothing to play for Sunday at San Diego, where the Chargers are out of the playoff race. So, coach Mike Shanahan can rest several of his starters, including quarterback Jake Plummer, running back Mike Anderson and banged-up cornerback Champ Bailey.

"Everyone will have different opinions on what to do," Shanahan said. "Some people will say you should play the starters the whole game, then when somebody gets hurt, they change their minds and say you guys are dummies... We'll

go with our gut feeling."

After San Diego, the Broncos (12-3) won't play again until mid-January, when they'll host their first home playoff game since John Elway led them to consecutive Super Bowls in 1997-98. They haven't won a playoff game since then either — going 0-3, including lopsided losses at Indianapolis the last two seasons.

They're trying hard not to think that far ahead. Or think about the recent past.

"The season's not over," receiver Rod Smith said. "We've got to finish the season off right."

Defensive lineman Ebenezer Ekuban expects to see personnel

used as normal in the regular season finale.

"I do, especially for a half," he said. "We still need to go out there and stay focused and keep doing what we've been doing. If we take off two weeks, then to have to play in the playoff game is going to be hard."

Defensive end Trevor Pryce said: "You don't want to lump into the playoffs and be rusty. You want everything to be clicking." So, he's prepared to play four quarters even though it's as meaningless in the standings as a preseason game.

"In '98 we were in the same situation," Pryce said. "We had already gotten the bye, we were the No. 1

seed and all the starters played the whole last game. So, I'm sure that's going to happen again."

Probably not.

Bailey has been banged up all season and could use some rest. So could Plummer. Anderson sprained his left ankle in Denver's 22-3 win over Oakland on Saturday night, so Tatum Bell, who is 131 yards shy of 1,000 himself, expects to start in his place. And linebacker Al Wilson has a broken right thumb and isn't expected to play Sunday.

Backup quarterback Bradlee Van Pelt expects to finally get to throw his first NFL pass.

"I am sure they are going to give a lot of key guys rest to avoid inju-

ries," he said. "Then again, we do have a bye week, so I don't think you can give the starters too much time. I am going to prepare like I do every week and maybe this week I will actually play."

Regardless, the Broncos aren't looking for a vacation.

"It means nothing unless we get deep into the playoffs and hopefully go all the way," Plummer said. "We've had good years and lost in the first round in the past two years. We have a first round bye this year so that isn't going to happen. We know we have a game at home. We hope to get a win at home. We're not done working yet."

Safety John Lynch, however,

knows the value of earning one of the top two seeds in the conference, as he did with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers when they won the Super Bowl three years ago.

"I remember the year we did it, we got the bye, played at home and then beat San Francisco and they told me we're going to the NFC championship. I knew that going in but I was like, 'That's all you have to do?'" Lynch recalled.

Still, he insisted he's not allowing himself to think about just how close he is to another shot at the Lombardi Trophy.

"We want to beat San Diego," Lynch said. "I think that's what's on our mind right now."

Memphis earns victory at Detroit's Motor City Bowl on Monday

DETROIT (AP) — DeAngelo Williams lived up to the hype.

Williams set an NCAA record with his 34th 100-yard rushing game and scored three touchdowns, leading Memphis to a 38-31 victory over Akron in the Motor City Bowl on Monday.

Williams ran for 233 yards on 30 carries and finished his career with 6,021 yards rushing — trailing only Ron Dayne, Ricky Williams and Tony Dorsett in Division I-A history — and an NCAA-record 7,568 all-purpose yards.

"I'm really not a statistical guy, but when you mention those guys, it's huge," Williams said.

The Tigers (7-5) took a 21-point lead with 3:09 left, but needed to recover an onside kick with 55 seconds left to seal the win after Luke Getsy threw his fourth touchdown pass to cut the lead to seven points.

"I didn't want to be the only coach in the country to get a Gatorade bath — then lose the game," Memphis coach Tommy West said. "I give them credit. Akron has been doing that all year, that's why they won their championship."

Akron (7-6) made a good showing in its first Division I-A bowl game after scoring 21 fourth-quarter points to beat Northern Illinois in the Mid-American Conference championship game.

"This became an awakening around the campus and the town," Zips coach J.D. Brookhart said. "To come out and see that wave of blue and gold on the sideline was awesome."

Getsy was 34-for-59 for a Motor City Bowl-record 455 yards, and tied Chad Pennington's mark for passing touchdowns in the bowl's nine-year history. Jabari Arthur broke Randy Moss's bowl record with 180 yards receiving, scoring twice on eight receptions.

"I would've rather won," Getsy said.

The Tigers led by 10 at halftime after scoring on three straight drives, then pulled away in the second half with three TDs and a field goal in four drives before nearly collapsing in the final minutes.

It was a wild finish — with 46 points scored in the final 15:46 — after Akron led 3-0 midway through

the first quarter. The teams combined for 1,018 yards of offense.

Williams, who shared the 100-yard rushing record with Heisman Trophy winners Archie Griffin of Ohio State and Dorsett of Pittsburgh, broke the mark in the third quarter when he ran up the middle and bounced to the outside on an 18-yard carry.

Griffin set the mark in 42 games, and Dorsett matched it in 43 games — one fewer than Williams.

"Coach West tells me all the time

that I'll appreciate it when I'm 50-, 60-years old," he said.

It wasn't shocking to see Williams run through and around the Zips with his NFL-caliber speed after Northern Illinois' Garrett Wolfe ran for 270 yards against Akron in the MAC championship game.

"He's really fast," Brookhart said. "Nobody catches him, and he takes away angles real quick."

After Getsy threw a 72-yard TD pass to Brett Biggs early in the

fourth quarter to cut Akron's deficit to 23-17, Williams showed his speed and power.

He burst through a small hole in the middle of the line and sprinted for a 67-yard gain to set up his 2-yard, linemen-dragging TD for his third score, tying the bowl record.

"That touchdown run was as good of a run as he had all day," West said.

Williams, who finished seventh in voting for the Heisman, was taken out of the game midway

through the fourth quarter while Memphis was driving for its 38-17 lead.

He finished 4 yards rushing short of the Motor City Bowl record set by Northwestern's Jason Wright against Bowling Green in 2003.

"He's got too much at stake to go back in there for 10 yards," West explained.

A crowd of 50,616 attended the game in Ford Field, where the Super Bowl will be played in less than six weeks.

'Monday Night Football' ends 36-year run on ABC

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. (AP) — The lights are out at ABC's "Monday Night Football."

"Monday Night Football" ended an unprecedented 36-year run on the network with a lackluster game, a 31-21 New England victory over the New York Jets, that didn't come close to epitomizing the special place the program has occupied in the American cultural landscape.

The series switches networks next season, when ESPN begins an eight-year deal in which it will pay \$1.1 billion per year for Monday

night rights.

The 555th broadcast opened with the most recognizable voice in "Monday Night Football" history: Howard Cosell. It ended with his longtime foil, country boy Don Meredith, singing his trademark line "Turn out the lights, the party's over..."

Famous faces such as John Lennon, Bill Clinton, George Bush and Richard Simmons appeared during a halftime montage that illustrated how the program was as much entertainment as sport.

AP Briefs

PRO FOOTBALL

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Tony Dungy and his wife stood for more than three hours greeting hundreds of mourners with handshakes and hugs. From NFL players past and present to well-wishers off the street, all came to offer the couple condolences for the loss of their son.

The Indianapolis Colts coach and his wife, Lauren, will bury 18-year-old James Dungy on Tuesday.

The Dungys took the time to thank each person for coming by to pay respect to James, who was found dead in his suburban apartment last week of an apparent suicide.

The crowd began forming about an hour before the visitation and about 300 people were lined up by the time coach Dungy and his family arrived at the funeral home in a limousine.

The Colts still don't know when Dungy will return as coach.

IRVING, Texas (AP) — The Dallas Cowboys released inconsistent kicker Billy Cundiff, the team's fourth change at the position since training camp.

The Cowboys re-signed rookie Sean Suisham, who was cut when the team brought back Cundiff on Nov. 19 and didn't miss a field goal or extra point in two games.

Cundiff, who was released in training camp when he injured his leg, was 5-for-8 since returning to the Cowboys. He kicked a team-record 56-yard field goal in his first game back against the Lions.

joined last week and is now 24th.

BASEBALL

CLEVELAND (AP) — Free agent pitcher Jason Johnson agreed to a \$4 million, one-year contract with the Cleveland Indians, just hours before Kevin Millwood agreed to join the Texas Rangers.

PRO BASKETBALL

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Spurs guard Tony Parker was cited for impeding traffic and failing to produce a valid Texas driver's license during a traffic stop in which girlfriend and "Desperate Housewives" actress Eva Longoria was his passenger, police said.

An officer on a bicycle saw the stopped car holding up traffic early Saturday and rapped the hood with his hand, according to a police report.

Parker, behind the wheel, questioned why the officer touched the car, and the couple "began screaming in a verbally abusive and demeaning manner," police said.

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COLBY CINEMA & ARCADE

DEC. 23 - DEC. 29

CHRONICLES OF NARNIA

Fri.: 7:15 (PG)
Sun.: 7:15 2:20

Mon. - Thurs: 7:00 & 9:30

KING KONG (PG-13)

Fri.: 7:00 3:07
Sun.: 7:00

Mon. - Thurs: 6:00 & 9:15

COLBY THEATRE

DEC. 23 - DEC. 29

CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2

Fri.: 7:00 (PG) 1:34
Sun.: 7:00

Mon. - Thurs: 7:00 & 9:00

FUN WITH DICK & JANE

Fri.: 7:15 (PG-13) 1:304
Sun.: 7:15

Mon. - Thurs: 7:15 & 9:00

CMS
Dodge
4x14
PLACE
85%
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