

# Girl competes for Bronco team title

**Game on ESPN  
at 6:30 p.m. Sunday**

A Goodland girl will compete for the Denver Bronco's team championship in the National Football League/Gatorade Punt, Pass and Kick contest on Sunday.

Goodland's Michelle Smith will show her stuff before the Broncos run out onto the field at Invesco Mile High stadium at 6:30 p.m. to face the Indianapolis Colts.



Smith



Krayca



Raymer



Bellamy

"We are only worried about freezing in the snow," said Michelle's mother,

Sondra Smith, an aide for the Goodland School District. "We are planning

to be there, and hope she does well." Smith was one of four Goodland youngsters who traveled to Parker, Colo., on Oct. 13 for the sectional punt, pass and kick competition.

Smith qualified for the Broncos' team championship by winning the girls 10-11 division.

Jason Krayca placed second in the 12-13 year-old boys division; Samantha Raymer was second in the 12-13 year-old girls division; and Reed Bellamy participated in the 8-9 year-old boys division.

# Colts take a deep breath before mile-high air

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — The Indianapolis Colts don't understand all the fuss about thin air.

Yes, they've played at difficult sites before, and, yes, they've played some strong opponents in the past.

But when Indianapolis visits Denver on Sunday, most players aren't sure what to expect when they take the field. "I've never really played there before, so I couldn't tell you," two-time Pro Bowl quarterback Peyton Manning said. "All I know is they've got a good football team."

Manning isn't alone. Because of a scheduling quirk, the Colts (6-4) haven't played in Denver since 1993, long before the Broncos won two Super Bowls or switched stadiums. The only Colts player in the league that year was wide receiver

Qadry Ismail, then a rookie with Minnesota.

When Indianapolis arrives at the stadium Sunday, though, it won't take long for the Colts to know where they are or what they face. A sign outside the locker room will remind them that they are playing a mile above sea level, where breathing patterns can be affected.

Some people believe that has given the Broncos a significant home-field advantage during the past three decades.

Broncos coach Mike Shanahan realizes high altitude can cause problems. "All I know is that, for our players, it takes about seven to 10 days to get in shape if you're not working out here," he said.

Shanahan's comment may be nothing more than gamesmanship, but al-

titude illness is real. While symptoms include dizziness, fatigue, difficulty breathing or sleeping, nausea and even vomiting, the biggest problem for football players can be catching their breath.

Players frequently wear oxygen masks on the Denver sidelines following big plays or long drives.

And thin air isn't the only problem the Colts may have to contend with.

Denver can get cold, especially during a night game in late November. Snowstorms aren't out of the question, either.

When you're a team built on speed and finesse, and you play at home in a domed stadium, the elements can dictate success or failure. That could explain the Colts' 0-5 record in Denver, or their record when playing in cold-weather cities late in the season. India-

napolis is just 2-5 in its last seven games under those conditions.

But the Colts don't see it quite that way.

"Usually if one of the teams is better, the home team has a good chance of winning," coach Tony Dungy said. "If they're even, it really doesn't make any difference."

Dungy hopes his team can prove that Sunday night, when the Colts play the first of three straight road games in which they could be facing cold weather. They visit Tennessee on Dec. 8 and Cleveland on Dec. 15.

Colts players just want to take a deep breath and play their game.

"We've got to go in and play well," defensive end Brad Sciolio said. "We have to have our guys fresh and ready to go. That's all you can do."

# Bronco's Beuerlein gets ready for his first start

DENVER (AP) — It's the day after a Denver victory, so Steve Beuerlein is supposed to be running.

Instead, he's leapfrogging 3-year-old son Jacob and taking him down with a piledriving tackle. Next is a game of chase with daughter Kailey, followed by a short run with the 4-year-old on his shoulders.

But this isn't just fun for Beuerlein, it's training. When you're 37 and about to start for the first time in nearly two years, any little advantage can help.

"That's how I've kind of stayed in game shape. I've let them jump all over me," Beuerlein said. "I have a 5-year-old at home, too. I let him jump on me and wrestle whenever possible. If you're not getting hit in a game, you have to get hit somehow to keep the joints used to it."

Beuerlein was half-joking, but the Broncos have little doubt he'll be ready to take over for injured

starter Brian Griese Sunday night against Indianapolis.

Griese could be out three weeks with a sprained knee and Beuerlein hasn't started a game since Christmas Eve 2000, but the Broncos feel as comfortable as Beuerlein did with his kids earlier this week.

When you've got one of the premier backups in the league, someone who makes smart decisions and knows the intricacies of your offense, it's hard not to feel at ease.

"We expect him to perform well," Denver coach Mike Shanahan said. "Steve's a competitor. He's had a lot of experience. He knows our system. I'm sure he's looking forward to the opportunity."

After floating around like a kernel in an air popper — six teams in 16 seasons, filling nearly every

possible role — Beuerlein relishes any playing time he gets.

But no matter what happens the next few weeks, Beuerlein plans to stick to the role he's been most comfortable with.

"I'm here to do what I'm going to do this week, to go in and play when he (Griese) can't, and hopefully go in and play at a high level," Beuerlein said. "Whenever the time comes when it's determined that he's ready to go, then he's the guy. I have no problem with that."

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# Avalanche get fourth tie at home vs. Predators

DENVER (AP) — Andreas Johansson scored 14 seconds into the third period, and the Nashville Predators and Colorado Avalanche tied 1-1 Thursday night.

Rob Blake had a first-period goal for the Avalanche, who continued to struggle at home this season (1-4-4-1).

Nashville goaltender Tomas Vokoun withstood Colorado's 9-3 edge in shots in overtime, finishing with 31 saves.

Colorado's Patrick Roy had 29 saves, including a solid third period in which his team was outshot 14-2.

Colorado had a power play for the final minute of overtime after David

Legwand went off for closing his hand on the puck, but the Avalanche couldn't convert.

Johansson's ninth goal of the season — from in front of the net — came after a Colorado turnover and a pass from teammate Scott Hartnell from the right corner.

Roy withstood Nashville's onslaught in the third period, capped by stops on back-to-back shots from close range by Vladimir Orszagh.

Blake scored 3:51 in. Milan Hejduk put two consecutive shots on goal, the second one from left of the goal into the crease, where Blake punched it in for his second goal of the season.

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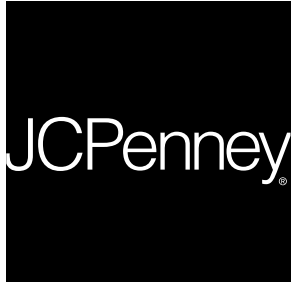
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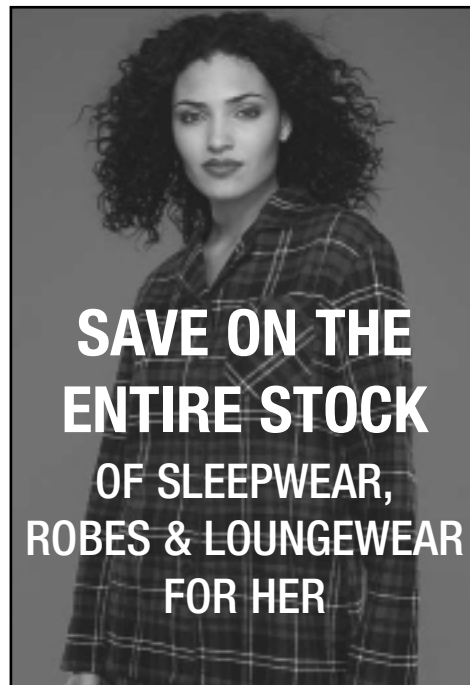
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