

# Elam among Broncos who might not return

DENVER (AP) — Placekicker Jason Elam figures he'll be playing elsewhere next year. Tight end Shannon Sharpe and quarterback Steve Beuerlein haven't decided whether they want to keep playing, and quarterback Brian Griese has an uncertain future with the team.

The Denver Broncos, who failed to qualify for the playoffs for the third time in four years, will face some critical personnel decisions during the offseason.

Elam, the best kicker in Broncos history, is one of five players who are set to become unrestricted free agents. The others are safety Izell Reese, cornerback Tyrone Poole, defensive lineman Montae Reagor and running back Olandis Gary.

Elam kicked first-half field goals of 44, 54 and 21 yards in Sunday's 37-7 win over the Arizona Cardinals. He said he felt sad walking off the field for what probably was the final time in a Denver uniform.

"It's a little sad and depressing that I might not be back and playing in front of this crowd," he said. "But that's the NFL. When I came here, I didn't think I was going to be here for 10 years. So I can't be unhappy about anything."

Asked to assess his odds of signing a new contract with Denver, Elam said, "I don't think it's very good, but I never want to say never. We've kept an open dialogue through all of this. I feel like I've got a good relationship with Mike (coach Mike Shanahan) and everybody in the organization. I would love

to stay here."

Elam, 32, said being a free agent "guarantees me that I can at least go out on the free-agent market and see what I'm worth."

Sharpe, the NFL career leader in receptions and yards by a tight end, finished the season with 61 catches for 686 yards despite missing three games with a partially dislocated right elbow.

Sharpe, who returned to the Broncos last spring and signed a two-year contract, acknowledged that he was expecting to play only one year.

"I'll sit down with Mike and see the direction he wants to go in, and I'll let him know the direction I want to go in," Sharpe said after Sunday's game. "I dislocated my elbow and missed 3 1/2 games and I still was able to put up decent numbers. I still feel I can make a contribution to this ballclub and help this team win."

Sharpe, 34, has adhered to a rigorous workout schedule, and said the difficulty of maintaining that schedule might factor into his decision.

"Starting in March, do I feel like getting up at 7 o'clock and going to run and lift all over again to give myself a chance to compete?" he said. "If I start missing workout days, it's time to walk away."

Beuerlein started three games this season, including Sunday's game after Griese was benched following a poor performance last week in Oakland. He completed 16 of 24 passes for 203 yards and two touchdowns.

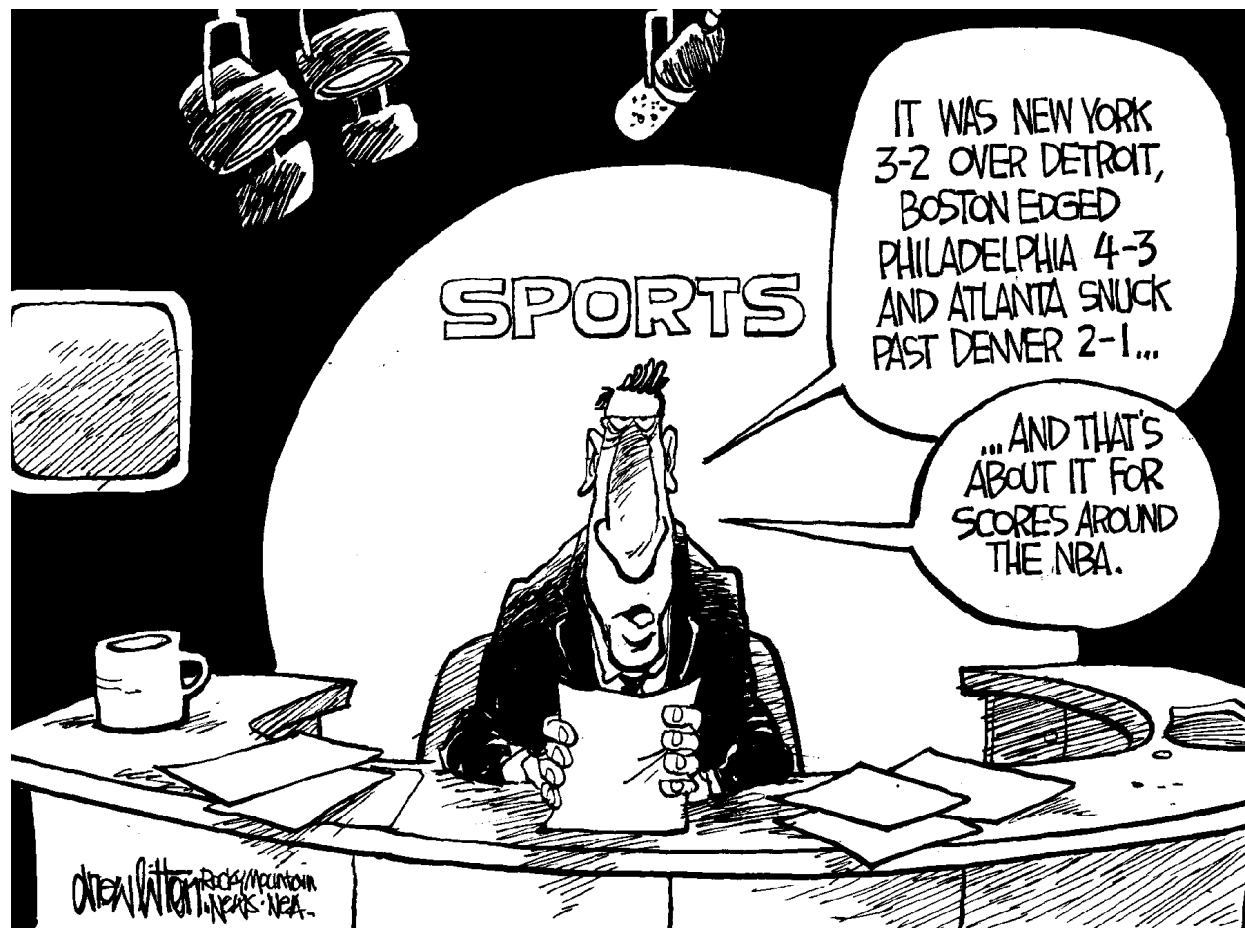
At 37, Beuerlein said he, too, was

uncertain about playing another season or two.

He said he would find appealing any offer the Broncos make, including a chance to return as the starter next season, during which he would also help groom a younger quarterback.

"But it's premature to talk about that now," he said. "I have a lot of soul-searching to do. One day I feel like I've had enough, and the next day I feel like I could go a lot longer."

Griese has gone 27-24 as a starter in four seasons and seems to have exhausted the Shanahan's patience. On the other hand, he has four years left on a \$39 million contract, and the Broncos would take a huge salary-cap hit if they released him.



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# Kansas Jayhawks topple California

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Not every sports team with Kansas in its name got pummeled in rainy Oakland.

While the Chiefs were getting snuffed out by the Raiders 24-0 Saturday, ending their season on a down note, the Kansas Jayhawks of Roy Williams were playing one of their finest games of the young season.

So well did Kansas play in beating California 80-67 in the Pete Newell Classic, they drew rare praise from the host and namesake of the event.

"You really played the game the way it's supposed to be played," hall of fame coach Pete Newell told Williams' players.

"I said before the season that I thought you were going to be one of the Final Four teams, and now more than ever I think I'm going to see you in New Orleans."

It would be difficult to play the game in more of a textbook style.

Aaron Miles passed out 11 of the Jayhawks' 22 assists. He also scored in double figures along with the other four starters. As impressive as anything was the patience and ball distribution, something that may have been lacking during a halting getaway to the season that included three losses.

"That was the downfall early in the year," said Miles. "Now, everybody's sharing the rock."

Wayne Simien had 17 points, Miles and Nick Collison 16, Kirk Hinrich 14

and Keith Langford 12.

Altogether, Williams' crew shot 63.3 percent.

"There's a night-and-day difference in our offense from earlier in the season," Collison said. "At the beginning of the year we weren't getting opportunities because we were taking such quick shots. Now we're playing together."

The Jayhawks (7-3) led 42-24 at halftime behind 9 points and 9 rebounds from Collison. California (6-2) went on a 16-2 run in the second half to shave Kansas' 53-31 lead to 55-47.

But after a time out, Simien scored two straight baskets, then Langford and Miles added field goals and Cal never threatened again.

"Kansas played a fabulous game," Cal coach Ben Braun said. "They made runs in transition, their big guys came loose and they got a lot of points inside."

In one stretch, Kansas scored 19 of 21 points.

"They're a good basketball team," Williams said. "We expected them to go on a run and they did. The crowd got into it a little bit, but we weathered the storm."

Following the Jan. 1 holiday, the Jayhawks get back into action at home on Thursday against North Carolina-Ashville, then meet UMKC in a Saturday afternoon game at Kansas City's Kemper Arena.

# Forsberg scores three for Avs

DENVER (AP) — As one of the NHL's top scorers, Peter Forsberg has always taken an odd approach: pass first, score second.

Forsberg had his fifth career three-goal game as the Colorado Avalanche ended a two-game losing streak with a 6-1 victory over the Los Angeles Kings on Sunday night.

"I'd rather assist than score, but somehow there is no way around it," Forsberg said.

Forsberg scored twice on the power play in recording his first hat trick since March 3, 1999. Dean McAmmond had a goal and two assists, Radim Vrbata and Alex Tanguay also scored and

Milan Hejduk had three assists for Colorado.

"Usually, I score every three games," Forsberg said. "With Joe (Sakic) out, somebody has to pick up the slack."

Forsberg's scoring abilities are no surprise to Colorado coach Tony Granato.

"I don't think he's underrated as a scorer," Granato said. "There are other parts of his game that people look to as being his best, but he certainly is a good goal scorer."

Ziggy Palffy scored his first goal in five games for Los Angeles, which lost its fourth straight road game.

# bowling results

Thursday Night Mixed League  
December 26, 2002  
HoJo's over Pirate Electric 3-1  
Weis Oil over The Loop 3-1  
Lucky Horseshoes over Three Men & A Little Lady 4-0  
Sunamerica tied The Grannies and The Gramps 2-2  
Not Again over The Blind Team 4-0  
Women's high game: Diana Nichols-217

Women's high series: Diana Nichols-570  
Men's high game: Larry Cearley-215  
Men's high series: Aaron Thompson-564  
Team high game: HoJo's-839  
Team high series: HoJo's-2445

League Standings: No. 1 Sunamerica; No. 2 The Grannies and The Gramps; No. 3 Weis Oil

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