

NFL Predictions: Denver Broncos AFC West Preview

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The Denver Broncos have no doubt enjoyed their quite off season. The current legal troubles of wide receiver Brandon Marshall aside, they do not compare to the tragedy the team endured last year when cornerback Darrent Williams was killed in a drive by shooting and running back Damian Nash died suddenly in a charity basketball game. This year the team just needs to regroup from a poor 7-9 finish to the 2007 season. NFL Betting odds at Sportsbook.com have the Broncos at 22-1 odds to win the AFC Championship.

Without question the feeble production of the Denver offense last year was both a surprise and disappointment to coaches, fans, and players alike. Jay Cutler performed reasonably well in his second season, but he did not have the type of breakout year that everyone expected. The team certainly moved the ball under his direction, but all the yardage they amassed did not translate into points. On the season, Denver ranked just 21st in points per game at an average of 20.00.

In the off season the club cut Javon Walker, but they did sign veteran receivers Darrell Jackson and Samie Parker. Cutler's favorite target, though, will be the aforementioned Brandon Marshall. In 2007 Marshall lit up opposing secondaries for 102 catches and seven touchdowns. Assuming he is not suspended, he is likely to post some gaudy numbers again.

Leading the Broncos stable of running backs will be second year player Selvin Young. As an undrafted free agent, Young shocked everyone by rushing for nearly 800 yards and averaging 5.2 yards per carry. The ground game, which compiled 122 yards per game in 2007, should be just as effective in 2008.

As disappointing as the Bronco offense was, the defense was even more lackluster. Head Coach Mike Shanahan had a hectic off season trying to shore up a unit that allowed 25.6 points per game in 2007. The team drafted four defensive players and also signed five defensive free agents. Among those signed were linebacker Boss Bailey (Champ's younger brother), former Jet DT Dwayne Robertson, and former Charger safety Marlon McCree.

Despite the horrendous number of points given up, the Bronco defense did have a few bright spots. They ranked seventh in the league in passing yards allowed at 193.4 and they also recorded 33 sacks -- a tally good for 16th best.

It should also be noted that the Broncos lost long time kicker and clutch artist Jason Elam to the Falcons in the off season.

NFL Betting odds at Sportsbook.com are giving Denver 9-2 odds to win the AFC West, and 50-1 odds to win the Super Bowl.

Prediction: 2nd Place AFC West