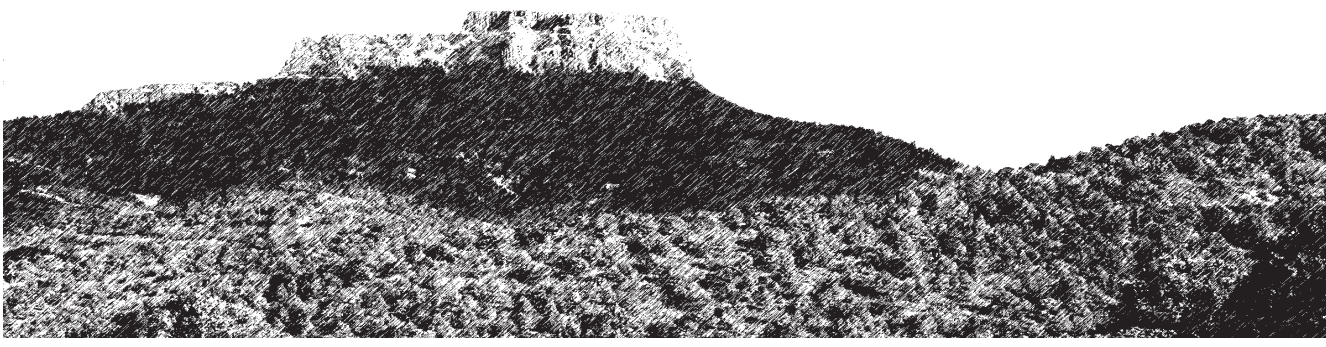


OVER THE PASS



CONNECTIONS

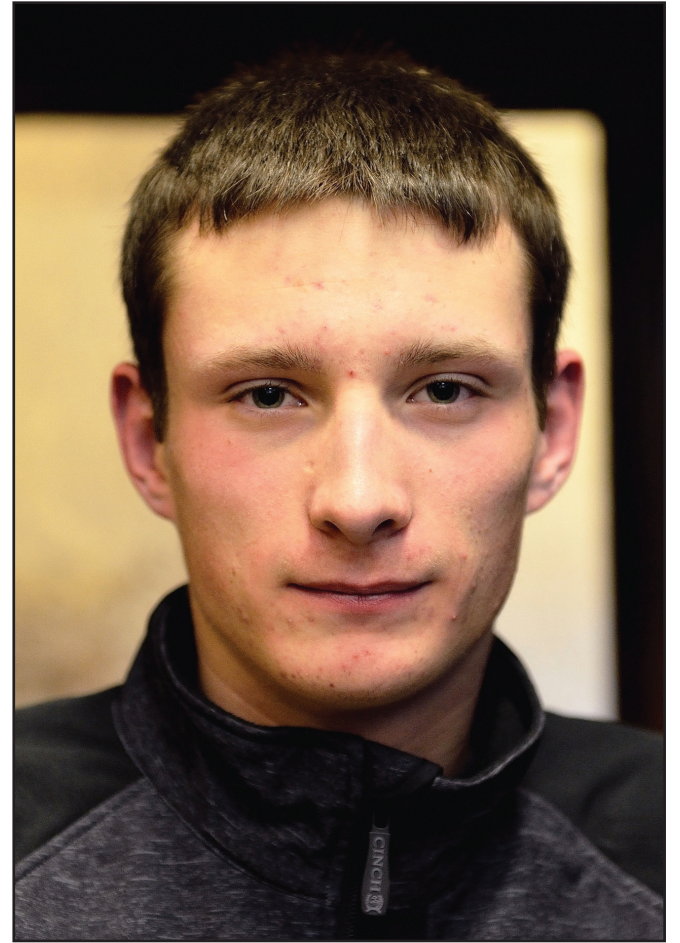
“What’s a mistake you’ve made?”

By **Tim Keller**
Correspondent
The Chronicle-News

Photos by **Tim Keller / The Chronicle-News**

“From a spiritual perspective, some of the things I saw as mistakes have turned out to be the greatest blessings of my life. I’ve learned and grown because of them.”

– Deb Hodel, massage therapist and jeweler, Trinidad



“My biggest regret is abusing someone’s trust. It was only a month ago. A friend trusted me with information. She was trying to save me from a bad situation. Words got twisted and it got messy. I violated her trust.”

– Christian, equipment operator, excavating company, Trinidad



“I didn’t learn how to listen well enough. Everyone needs to learn that. If you answer before you hear the whole matter, then you didn’t hear it. It’s a matter of respect and communication. We misinterpret before the other person even has a chance to get their point across.”

– Gerri Snyder, retired telecommunications, Trinidad



“Having surgery on my foot, because it’s more painful now than before. I had torn tendons from falling down the steps. It was three months ago so maybe it will get better.”

– Kathy Mrace, TSJC Bookstore manager, Trinidad

DENVER FOOTBALL

Road to the Super Bowl Want the Lombardi Trophy? Pay attention to your lessons

BARRY WILNER
AP Pro Football Writer

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — Every team in the second round of the NFL playoffs learned some lessons about themselves.

For the four winners, how they apply those lessons will determine if they make the Super Bowl.

All four have been to the big game in this century, with the Patriots, of course, leading the way. But even the four-time champions who looked the most solid of the survivors of the second round have some self-searching to do.

They simply have fewer questions to answer, which makes sense when Tom Brady is your quarterback.

“I think we had plenty of plays out there that we left on the field, things that we can definitely do better, and I think we can be sharper next week.” Brady said after the 27-20 win against Kansas City. “So that’s what we’re going to try to be. We’re going to need it.”

Both NFC teams will need to find their previously staunch defenses. Carolina was opportunistic and impenetrable for 30 minutes, almost amateurish for the next 30 in surviving Seattle 31-24.

Arizona was victimized for big plays by receivers few people outside of Green Bay knew in a 26-20 overtime victory.

And Denver must find the end zone rather than settling for field goals against New England after a 23-16 win over Pittsburgh.

Some things the final four — and the rest of the football world — learned over the weekend:

NEW ENGLAND:

The Patriots couldn’t run the ball against Kansas City, and Denver had the best regular-season defense in the NFL. New England was helped greatly by a timid Chiefs defense, but to expect to so easily move the ball against the Broncos could be a major mistake.

Of course, the Patriots discovered that Julian Edelman could step right back in after missing nearly a month with a broken foot. That’s a significant boost to the offense if Edelman came out of the victory in good shape.

The defending champions also have prospered with several backups being called upon because of injuries. Top linebackers Jerod Mayo and Jamie Collins were hurt on Saturday, so there could be more holes to fill.

DENVER:

Peyton Manning came through with yet another winning drive, his 55th in the fourth quarter or overtime, extending one of the dozen NFL records he owns. Not to be overlooked, though, is it was the only touchdown march for Denver; stalling in the red zone is a formula for failure

against the Patriots.

Consistent pressure when Brady drops back to pass, as he will do from the outset next Sunday, also is required. Denver recognizes that, and also found it can provide it with a multi-dimension defense.

In fact, the Broncos’ best chance of getting Manning to another and likely final Super Bowl is the D. That fact was hit home pointedly against Pittsburgh.

“Our confidence is perfect. We’re good,” cornerback Aqib Talib said. “We’re playing a team who we beat earlier in the year. We’re at home. We’re healthy. So, let’s get it.”

CAROLINA:

The Panthers saw what they lacked even as they were being schooled by the Seahawks: a finishing touch.

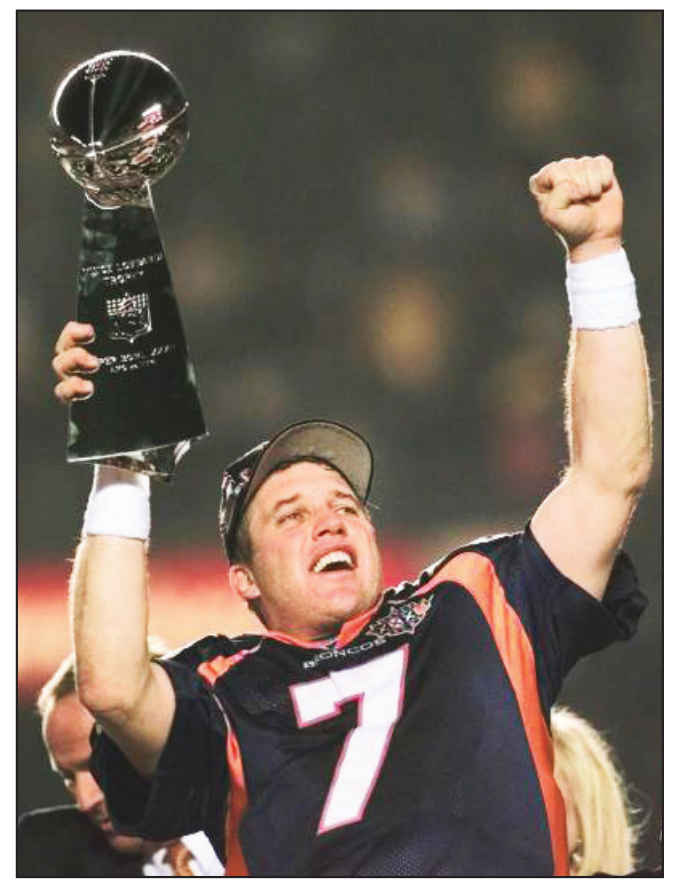
Yes, they have the league’s top record at 16-1, but playing half a game or so isn’t going to cut it anymore. The Panthers seemed to wear down against Seattle, mentally and physically. An immaturity still exists in Carolina on both sides of the ball.

“We have to find a way to complete a full game of football,” All-Pro quarterback Cam Newton said of his team turning 31-0 at halftime into a 31-24 thriller. “We have been known to take our foot off the throttle and we have to find that killer instinct. Yeah we won the football game, but there are some things we have to go back and fix and do better with.”

ARIZONA:

Aaron Rodgers’ second sensational desperation pass in six weeks emphasized how vulnerable the Cardinals’ defense, particularly the secondary, is to big plays. Remember, Rodgers hit Jeff Janis for 60 yards on a fourth-and-20 before the Hail Mary to Janis forced overtime.

Just as worrisome and in need of immediate repair is Carson Palmer’s poor decision making, something that took many by surprise considering the great season he



AP Photo / Dave Martin, File

In this Jan. 25, 1997 file photo, Denver Broncos quarterback John Elway holds the Super Bowl trophy as he celebrates the Broncos 34-21 victory over the Green Bay Packers in Super Bowl XXXII in San Diego. The salary cap, extra playoff games and a league bent on parity have made the NFL one of the planet’s most competitive leagues, where champions fall quickly and teams regularly make one-season turnarounds.

is having. Arizona’s running game is good, but the Cardinals will need to mount a steady passing attack minus those errors in Charlotte.

All of that said, any of these four teams is highly capable of lifting the Lombardi Trophy. Paying attention to the lessons learned will make that goal more reachable.

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