

NFL

Tight ends could be decisive in Super Bowl

By BARRY WILNER
AP Pro Football Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — In a tight spot, Cam Newton and Peyton Manning just might look for their tight ends.

It works. Newton’s target is Greg Olsen. Manning’s is Owen Daniels.

Some observers believe Olsen is as valuable to his team as All-Pro TE Rob Gronkowski is to the Patriots.

If you think that’s a stretch, look at Olsen’s numbers: 77 receptions, 1,104 yards and seven touchdowns during the season, when the next leader in catches for Carolina was Ted Ginn Jr., with 44.

In two playoff games, Olsen has 12 catches for 190 yards and one sensational TD. Next best is Philly Brown with six receptions.

“He’s a guy I can always turn to, always count on,” Newton said of the nine-year veteran acquired from Chicago for a mere third-round draft choice in 2011.

And he’s done so week after week. Olsen is averaging just under eight targets a game through Carolina’s

17-1 record.

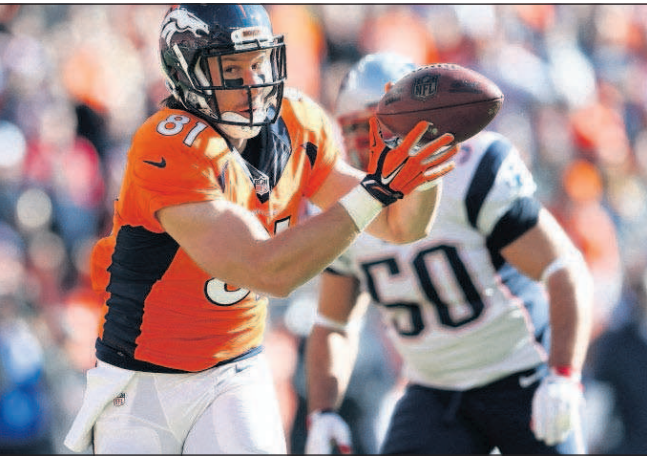
Unlike Newton, Manning has two top-level wide receivers in Demaryius Thomas and Emmanuel Sanders. But throughout his superb career, Manning always has had a symbiotic relationship with his tight ends, from Dallas Clark to Julius Thomas and now, for this season, with Owen Daniels.

Daniels was signed as a free agent in 2015 after one year in Baltimore. That followed a highly productive eight seasons with the Texans, where current Broncos coach Gary Kubiak was in charge from 2006, when Daniels was a fourth-round pick, until 2013.

Daniels has made two Pro Bowls and had 46 catches and three touchdowns this season. He caught both of Manning’s TD passes in the AFC championship game win against New England.

No one knows this offense better than Daniels, who has spent his entire career on the same team as Kubiak.

“Having Owen Daniels in the huddle was very helpful,” Manning said of Denver’s 14-4 record. “Owen, to have



FILE - In this Sunday, Jan. 24, 2016, photo, Denver Broncos tight end Owen Daniels (81) catches a 21-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Peyton Manning during the first half of the AFC championship game against the New England Patriots in Denver.

in the huddle, a play call would come in and I would recite the play just basically repeating it, trying to process it at the same time.

“And Owen would sort of remind you at the very end what route he had, who’s hot on this play, or Demaryius had a post route. So he was doing a lot of coaching out there, still does.”

On Sunday, each team is faced with a tricky situation in covering the tight ends. Olsen could require the attention of

one of Denver’s outstanding cornerbacks, Chris Harris Jr., or Aqib Talib. He poses more of a threat overall than any of Carolina’s wideouts.

And while Daniels won’t get the attention of All-Pro cornerback Josh Norman, who will be busy with Thomas and Sanders, he could draw ball-hawking safety Kurt Coleman’s attention. Maybe even one of the Panthers’ two All-Pro cornerbacks, Luke Kuechly or Thomas Davis, will draw

some of those assignments.

“Tight ends always improve offense,” Daniels said, noting he’s gotten more looks and produced even more since Vernon Davis joined the Broncos in midseason.

“We’re involved a pretty good amount, they want to involve us. The matchups we’re looking at this weekend is a good challenge all around the field, their linebacking corps.”

Kubiak isn’t concerned that Daniels will be over-matched.

“I’ve said this numerous times: as a coach, when you bounce and you go somewhere and guys are free, you get asked about them,” Kubiak said. “If you’re going to stand up and say, ‘Go get this player’ ... you better be right. There are a lot of players out there, but I’ve always thought the world of Owen. I knew he had some football left in him.

“I knew he’d be a great guy in the locker room. I told John (Elway), ‘You watch the film, but I’ll stand up for him as a person.’”

The good news for Carolina is that Olsen is having

as good a season as any tight end this side of Gronk. He’s even more of a weapon than Daniels because Olsen can get deep.

So can Ginn and Brown, who scored touchdowns against Arizona in the NFC title game. But neither of them can run routes with anything close to the precision Olsen displays.

“I think our production speaks for itself. We’re as productive as any quarterback-tight end combo in the league the last handful of years,” Olsen said. “I think a lot of that comes from playing with one another. We’re very familiar with one another. We spend a lot of time together. We spend a lot of time at practice. Not necessarily just during the practice, but in-between periods talking things through trying to get an understanding of what each other are expecting.

“My goal every week is to see things through his eyes. I’ve got to be where he wants me to be, make the adjustments that he wants me to make. If you can do that, you’re going to be in a friendly position and the quarterback trusts you.”

Men's Basketball

Boise State rallies to beat Utah State

By NICK JEZIERNY
Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho — James Webb III scored 19 points and Boise State rallied from 13 points down in the second half to beat Utah State 70-67 on Tuesday.

The Broncos (16-7, 7-3 Mountain West) didn’t lead until Lonnie Jackson hit a 3-pointer from the top of the key with 1:28 left to play. It was his first 3-pointer after missing six attempts from behind the arc.

Webb scored all but two of his points in the second half, when Boise State twice rallied from double-digit deficits to finally overtake the Aggies (11-10, 3-7) and sweep the season series.

“Our guys have backbone and character and could have surrendered and found ways to lose that game,” Boise State coach Leon Rice said. “Instead, we found a way to get it done.”

Utah State led 67-63 with 2:48 to play, but the Aggies didn’t score again.

“This is our toughest



Boise State’s Chandler Hutchison (15) goes for a layup during the first half of an NCAA basketball game against Utah State in Boise, Idaho on Tuesday.

loss of the year,” Utah State coach Tim Duryea said. “We did so many things so well. We responded a couple times and righted the ship, but we just look like a group that’s afraid to win.”

Chris Smith scored 20 points on 7-of-10 shooting for the Aggies, who had a final chance to win or force overtime. Down 69-67 with 12 seconds left, Shane Rector drove to the basket and his layup was off the mark. Jackson rebounded and hit 1 of 2 free throws to seal the win.

“He got fouled — there’s absolutely no question,” Duryea said. “I saw the hand on his wrist.”

Boise State, which has had difficulty closing out games this season, somehow finished this one.

“We have been preposterously bad defensively the last five minutes of games,” Rice said. “As crazy as it sounds with 12 seconds to go, I was like ‘great we have to get a stop to win this game.’ I’m not sure we got a stop, but the ball didn’t go in.”

Mikey Thompson scored 16 points and Anthony Drmic added 12 for Boise State, which made only 5 of 23 shots from 3-point range. The Broncos had a 39-22 edge on the boards and scored 18 second-chance points off of 17 offensive rebounds.

Chris Smith led Utah State with 20 points. Jalen Moore and Rector added 11 apiece for the Aggies, who lost despite shooting 50 percent from the field and 12 of 22 from 3-point range.

Olympics

Zika virus overshadows buildup to Rio de Janeiro Olympics

By STEPHEN WADE
AP Sports Writer

RIO DE JANEIRO — The Zika virus is overshadowing the final preparations for the Rio de Janeiro Olympics, even eclipsing concerns over deep budget cuts and severe water pollution.

Hundreds of reporters packed Olympic headquarters on Tuesday to hear about ticket sales, venue construction and a reminder that Friday marks six months until the opening of the games on Aug. 5.

Instead, they got the organizers’ medical director, Dr. Joao Grangeiro, and government health officials offering assurances that the games will be safe from Zika and that only pregnant women are at risk from the mosquito-borne virus with its epicenter in Brazil.

“Athletes should come to the Olympic Games,” said Grangeiro, who said organizers are following guidelines of the World Health Organization, which calls the spread of the virus an “extraordinary event and public health threat.”

“They (athletes) are not at risk,” Grangeiro added, promising the mosquito count will fall in August during Brazil’s winter.

“We will have Summer

Games, but for us it’s winter time,” he said. “We will not have an epidemic or pandemic situation. We can’t say we won’t have any cases (during the games) but we see this as a minimal risk.”

Daniel Soranz, Rio’s city health secretary, told reporters the mosquitoes around the Olympic Park, the heart of the games, were not primarily the Aedes aegypti type that transmit Zika.

“We have routine daily actions in the area in order to diminish the number of mosquitoes,” he said.

Jaques Wagner, the chief of staff for Brazil president Dilma Rousseff, said Monday there was no risk to athletes unless “they are pregnant women.” He said pregnant women were “not recommended” to travel to Brazil.

The Zika virus is another problem for Rio organizers, who have been forced to cut about \$500 million to keep the \$2 billion operating budget in balance with Brazil going through its deepest recession since the 1930s.

The local currency has lost about 30 percent of its value against the dollar in the last year, inflation is above 10 percent and Rousseff is fighting impeachment.

Rio organizing committee spokesman Mario Andrada

was asked how organizers can fund programs to kill mosquitoes as they slash other expenditures.

“In this case the most important thing to do is obviously to care for those who have been infected and to prevent new infections, and not to worry if we have budget or not,” Andrada said.

“We have the funds that we need to do the work that we have to do,” Andrada added, without specifying the cost.

He was also asked if tourists were getting worried about traveling to Brazil.

“No. I don’t have even one request to return tickets,” he replied.

Christophe Dubi, the IOC’s executive director of the Olympic Games, said sports federations were briefed about Zika on Tuesday at the IOC offices in Lausanne, Switzerland.

He said the Olympics had dealt with the SARS virus before the 2008 Beijing Games, and Ebola during the 2014 Summer Youth Games in Nanjing, China.

“It is not unusual, not comfortable obviously, but at the same time there’s a very good response from the Brazilian authorities,” he said.

SCOREBOARD

Local slate

Friday

Stanfield at Culver, 4:30 p.m.

Heppner at Weston-McEwen, 6 p.m.

Pilot Rock at Irrigon, 6 p.m.

Hermiston at The Dalles, 7 p.m.

Hood River at Pendleton, 7 p.m.

Mac-Hi at Baker, 7:30 p.m.

Stanfield at Culver, 7:30 p.m.

Mitch/Spray at Condon/Wheeler, 7:30 p.m.

Dufur at Ione, 7:30 p.m.

Arlington at Horizon Christian, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday

Culver at Heppner, 4 p.m.

Weston-McEwen at Pilot Rock, 4 p.m.

Irrigon at Stanfield, 5:30 p.m.

Condon/Wheeler at South Wasco, 5:30 p.m.

Ione at Arlington, 5:30 p.m.

Powder Valley at Echo, 5:30 p.m.

Nixyaawii at Helix, 5:30 p.m.

Umatilla at Riverside, 7 p.m.

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Nixyaawii at Helix, 4 p.m.

Powder Valley at Echo, 4 p.m.

Condon/Wheeler at South Wasco, 4 p.m.

Ione at Arlington, 4 p.m.

PREP WRESTLING

Thursday

Hood River at Hermiston, 6 p.m.

The Dalles at Pendleton, 6 p.m.

Mac-Hi at Baker, TBD

Saturday

Pendleton, Hermiston at Oregon City Tournament, 10 a.m.

Hermiston (JV), Heppner, Echo, Irrigon at Pine Eagle Invitational, 10 a.m.

COLLEGE MEN'S BASKETBALL

Friday

Multnomah at Eastern Oregon, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday

Blue Mountain at Walla Walla, 4 p.m.

Warner Pacific at Eastern Oregon, 7:30 p.m.

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Hermiston (JV), Heppner, Echo, Irrigon at Pine Eagle Invitational, 10 a.m.

COLLEGE MEN'S BASKETBALL

Friday

Multnomah at Eastern Oregon, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday

Blue Mountain at Walla Walla, 4 p.m.

Warner Pacific at Eastern Oregon, 7:30 p.m.

COLLEGE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Friday

Multnomah at Eastern Oregon, 5:30 p.m.

Saturday

Blue Mountain at Walla Walla, 4 p.m.

Warner Pacific at Eastern Oregon, 7:30 p.m.

Sunday

Blue Mountain at Walla Walla, 4 p.m.

Warner Pacific at Eastern Oregon, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday

Blue Mountain at Walla Walla, 4 p.m.

Warner Pacific at Eastern Oregon, 7:30 p.m.

Sunday

Blue Mountain at Walla Walla, 4 p.m.

Warner Pacific at Eastern Oregon, 7:30 p.m.

Blue Mountain at Walla Walla, 2 p.m.

Warner Pacific at Eastern Oregon, 5:30 p.m.

PREP BOYS BASKETBALL

Friday

Stanfield at Culver, 4:30 p.m.

Heppner at Weston-McEwen, 6 p.m.

Pilot Rock at Irrigon, 6 p.m.

Hermiston at The Dalles, 7 p.m.

Hood River at Pendleton, 7 p.m.

Mac-Hi at Baker, 7:30 p.m.

Stanfield at Culver, 7:30 p.m.

Mitch/Spray at Condon/Wheeler, 7:30 p.m.

Dufur at Ione, 7:30 p.m.

Arlington at Horizon Christian, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday

Culver at Heppner, 4 p.m.

Weston-McEwen at Pilot Rock, 4 p.m.

Irrigon at Stanfield, 5:30 p.m.

Condon/Wheeler at South Wasco, 5:30 p.m.

Ione at Arlington, 5:30 p.m.

Powder Valley at Echo, 5:30 p.m.

Nixyaawii at Helix, 5:30 p.m.

Umatilla at Riverside, 7 p.m.

PREP GIRLS BASKETBALL

Friday

Mac-Hi at Baker, 6 p.m.

Stanfield at Culver, 6 p.m.

Mitch/Spray at Condon/Wheeler, 6 p.m.

Dufur at Ione, 6 p.m.

Arlington at Horizon Christian, 6 p.m.

The Dalles at Hermiston, 7 p.m.

Pendleton at Hood River, 7 p.m.

Heppner at Weston-McEwen, 7:30 p.m.

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Saturday

Culver at Heppner, 2:30 p.m.

Nyssa at Umatilla, 3 p.m.

Vale at Riverside, 4 p.m.

Irrigon at Stanfield, 4 p.m.

Weston-McEwen at Pilot Rock, 4 p.m.

Nixyaawii at Helix, 4 p.m.

Powder Valley at Echo, 4 p.m.

Condon/Wheeler at South Wasco, 4 p.m.

Ione at Arlington, 4 p.m.

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Thursday

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The Dalles at Pendleton, 6 p.m.

Mac-Hi at Baker, TBD

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