

John Elway

John Elway (1960–) is a former National Football League quarterback and general manager of the **Denver Broncos**. Elway won two Super Bowls as a Broncos player (1997 and 1998) and a third (2015) as the team's general manager. As perhaps the most popular and most accomplished player in Broncos history, Elway retains a prominent role in the **Denver** community through his business work and philanthropy.

Early Life

John Albert Elway Jr. was born on June 28, 1960, in Port Angeles, Washington, along with his twin sister, Jana. Their father bounced from school to school as a football coach, which forced the family to move a lot during Elway's youth, including stays in Missoula, Montana, and Pullman, Washington.

The family's final move was to Granada Hills, California, where Elway starred on the football and baseball teams at Granada Hills Charter High School. Although Elway was more well known for his abilities on the football field, he led the baseball team to the Los Angeles City Baseball Title in 1979. In 1999 Granada Hills renamed their football field John Elway Stadium.

College Career

Elway stayed on the West Coast for college and enrolled at Stanford University in 1979. He played on the school's football team all four years and the baseball team his last two. He ended his collegiate football career holding almost every statistical passing record at Stanford. He earned 1980 Pac-10 Player of the Year, and in 1982 he was named a consensus All-American and Pac-10 Player of the Year, in addition to winning the Sammy Baugh Trophy and finishing second in the Heisman voting. In November 2013 Stanford retired Elway's No. 7, making him the third player in the school's history to have a number retired.

Elway also played baseball during his junior and senior seasons at Stanford, performing so well that the New York Yankees selected him in the second round—fifty-second overall—in the 1981 Major League Baseball draft. Elway played briefly in the Yankees' minor league system, where he showed star potential by tallying forty-eight hits, twenty-five runs batted in, and four home runs in forty-two games.

Denver Broncos Quarterback

Selected first overall in the 1983 NFL Draft by the Baltimore Colts, Elway threatened to play baseball full time with the Yankees if the Colts did not trade him. They listened, and ahead of the 1983 season traded him to the Denver Broncos, where he would spend his entire sixteen-year career. Elway looked average during his first three seasons as a quarterback before finding his stride during the 1986 season, when the Broncos advanced to Super Bowl XXI before losing to the New York Giants.

In the 1987 season, Elway's fifth in the NFL, he earned his first AFC Pro Bowl selection and won the NFL's Most Valuable Player Award. The Broncos returned to their second consecutive Super Bowl, but once again fell short of a championship. Two years later the Broncos advanced to Super Bowl XXIV but lost for the third time in Elway's career.

It took another eight years for the Broncos to return to the Super Bowl, but on January 25, 1998, Elway and the Broncos won Super Bowl XXXII against the Green Bay Packers. It was the first-ever championships for both Elway and the franchise. Elway announced that the 1998 season would be his last in the NFL. He then finished his career in storybook fashion by leading the Broncos back to the Super Bowl and turning in an MVP performance in his final game to win a second consecutive championship.

In sixteen seasons, Elway amassed 51,475 passing yards—currently ninth in NFL history—along with 300 passing touchdowns and 33 rushing touchdowns. In addition to his 1987 league MVP award, Elway was named to nine Pro Bowls. He played in six AFC Championship games and was the first quarterback to start in five Super Bowls. At the time of his retirement, Elway had the most wins of any quarterback in league history (143) and ranked second in passing yards, attempts (7,250), and completions (4,123). In 2004 Elway was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

During his time with the Broncos, Elway managed to simultaneously blossom as a family man. In 1984 he married his college sweetheart and former Stanford swimmer Janet Buchan. The couple had four children, Jessica (34), Jordan (32), Jack (30), and Juliana (30), before getting divorced in 2003. Elway remarried in 2009 to former NFL cheerleader Paige Green. John and Paige currently live in the Denver area, where they are active philanthropists in the community.

General Manager

After retirement, Elway entered the business side of football. In 2003 Elway partnered with Broncos owner Pat Bowlen and Denver Nuggets and Colorado Avalanche owner Stan Kroenke to start the Colorado Crush, an Arena Football League team based in **Fort Collins**. Elway took over the team's day-to-day operations along with the duties of chief executive officer, general manager, and part-owner. In only their third season of existence, the Crush won the 2005 Arena Bowl Championship. The team shut down when league owners voted to suspend operations ahead of the 2009 season because of financial issues. The league returned for the 2011 season, but the Crush did not. The team made five playoff appearances in its six-year existence.

On January 5, 2011, the Broncos named John Elway general manager and president of football operations. Elway's first move as general manager was to sign renowned free-agent quarterback Peyton Manning. During Manning's tenure the Broncos won four straight division titles, two AFC Championships, and one Super Bowl. The team's victory in Super Bowl 50 gave Elway his first Super Bowl ring as a general manager and his third overall. Since that triumph and Manning's subsequent retirement in March 2016, the team's fortunes have been considerably rockier.

In 2017 Elway sparked controversy when he wrote a letter endorsing **Neil Gorsuch**, President Donald Trump's nominee for the Supreme Court, on letterhead featuring the team's logo. Writing that Gorsuch was "a big Broncos fan," Elway drew criticism from many media members and fans for appearing to use his status as general manager to endorse a political appointee. In response, the team claimed that the stationery was Elway's personal letterhead and not its own. Several months later, Elway's endorsement appeared hypocritical; after NFL players, including members of the Broncos, began kneeling during pregame playing of the national anthem in support of ending police brutality, Elway said he understood the players' choice but hoped that the league would "take politics out of football."

Philanthropy and Business Career

In addition to his work with the Broncos, Elway's business pursuits include Elway's Steakhouses in Denver and Vail, and a chain of car dealerships along the **Front Range**. A major reason Elway remains an iconic figure in Colorado, however, is his ongoing involvement in Denver-area charitable organizations, which date back to his time as a Broncos player. In 1987 he started the Elway Foundation, a nonprofit organization that assists in the prevention and treatment of child abuse in the Denver area. In 1992 Elway received the Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year Award, the league's annual award for community service.

In addition to the foundation, Elway has supported numerous local and national charities. In 2014 Elway and his wife, Paige, teamed up with then-Bronco Wes Welker and his wife to help host the Bowl and Bark, with proceeds going to the local humane society. In October 2015 the couple received the High Hopes Tribute Award for their involvement with the Barbara Davis Center for Childhood Diabetes. In 2017 Elway received the Mizel Institute Community Enrichment Award in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the Denver community. Elway is also cofounder and chairman of Pivot, a nonprofit that works to increase collaboration and fundraising among organizations that address the academic, nutritional, and mental needs of children in the Denver area.

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