Beat: Sports

PANTHERS VETERANS DAY GAME

Broncos and Panthers

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USPA NEWS - Carolina Panthers veteran wide receiver Steve Smith sat beside second-year quarterback Cam Newton, leaned in and spoke into his ear.Neither would share the details of their talk.Smith said then he didn't regret the conversation, but wished he hadn't told the media.

On Sunday, Smith wouldn't say a word to anyone but Newton. At this point, there's very little left to salvage in terms of the 2012 season. The Panthers are 2-7, and the only thing more surprising about this year in the NFL than the comeback of Broncos quarterback Peyton Manning has been the stark regression of Newton. He's now thrown more interceptions (10) than passing touchdowns (8) through nine games, a season after passing for 21 scores, rushing for 14 and earning rookie of the year honors.

After Smith and he spoke, Newton put back on the suit he wore into the stadium, hours before he had sprinted from the tunnel with arms outstretched like a plane, before two picks, seven sacks and yet another loss.

"It's very embarrassing," he said. "But hopefully things are going to change. I can't keep saying that and not holding up to it, but there are brighter days for the Carolina Panthers.

"Coach Rivera always asks, "Are you a person that looks through a window and points a finger, or are you a person that looks in the mirror?' I look in the mirror."

Newton blamed himself for the interceptions, and refused to put blame on a faltering offensive line, but didn't exactly bear all of the weight of the disappointment.

On a fourth quarter sack for a safety, Newton says he was expecting an outlet option that wasn't there.

"When I looked and no one was out there I either have to run the ball or throw it away," Newton explained. "

Meanwhile, owner Jerry Richardson, who fired long-time general manager Marty Hurney on Oct. 22, is searching for a replacement.

It's not where Richardson envisioned the Panthers would be when they took Newton No. 1 overall in last year's draft. Ironically, Sunday's glory belonged to the man taken No. 2 in 2011 “" Broncos linebacker Von Miller “" who may win conference defensive player of the week with a dominant six-tackle (four for loss), one-sack performance.

Panthers offense fails in 36-14 loss to Denver. Let's hope the Panthers have better luck next week.

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:
United Press Association, Inc.
3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168
Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA
(702) 943.0321 Local
(702) 943.0233 Facsimile
info@unitedpressassociation.org
info@gna24.com
www.gna24.com