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Seahawks, Broncos to Clash Sunday in Super Bowl

by Mike Richman



Sign for NFL football's Super Bowl XLVIII in front of MetLife Stadium, East Rutherford, N.J., Feb. 1, 2014.

After two weeks of dissecting the strengths and weaknesses of the teams playing in this year's Super Bowl, the championship game of the U.S. National Football League, the time has come to compete on the field.

Late Sunday just outside New York City, the Denver Broncos and Seattle Seahawks kick off in Super Bowl 48 (XLVIII) at sold out MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey. It's the biggest sporting event in the United States, with more than 110 million viewers expected and many more millions around the world, with broadcasts to nearly 200 countries and territories.

The game has the makings of a classic.

The Broncos and Seahawks are widely considered the NFL's two top teams. They both posted 13-3 regular-season records, the best in the league, before winning two playoff games apiece to qualify for the Super Bowl. They also tallied the league's highest net point differentials against their opponents: Denver at 207 and Seattle at 186.

There's no shortage of other storylines.

The Broncos will showcase the league's No. 1 offense, which set an all-time NFL record with 606 points. The Seahawks are led by the NFL's No. 1 defense, a nasty, hard-hitting bunch.

Then there's Denver's Peyton Manning, one of the greatest quarterbacks in NFL history. He set league records this season with 5,008 meters passing (5,477 yards) and 55 touchdown passes, and is vying for his second Super Bowl win. He also won a Super Bowl with the Indianapolis Colts seven years ago, and with a win over Seattle, would become the first NFL starting quarterback to ever capture Super Bowls with two different teams.

It's been rumored in the media that the 37-year-old Manning, who has had four neck surgeries, may retire after the Super Bowl. He has said nothing definitive about that.

"When you still enjoy the preparation and the work part of it, I think you ought to be still doing that," he told reporters a few days ago. "I think as soon as I stop enjoying it, if I can't produce, if I can't help a team, that's when I will stop playing. If that's next year, then maybe it is. I certainly want to continue to keep playing."

Seahawks defensive cornerback Richard Sherman, who intercepted a league-high eight passes this season, has also been a hot topic. In Seattle's 23-17 win over the San Francisco 49ers in the

conference championship game two weeks ago, he made a game-saving play in the final seconds.

The loquacious Sherman went into a rant after the game. In a live television interview with FOX sports reporter Erin Andrews, he touted himself as "the best corner in the game" and called the 49ers' Michael Crabtree a "sorry receiver."

Those comments went viral in mainstream and social media, with Sherman being accused of bad sportsmanship at the least.

Sherman has kept the fire simmering. He said a few days ago he stands by his past remarks that Denver's Peyton Manning sometimes throws "ducks" (wobbly passes), while at the same time calling Manning a "great quarterback who does a great job."

Manning agreed with Sherman's "duck" reference.

"I believe it to be true as well," Manning said. "I don't think that's a real reach what he's saying. I've thrown a lot of yards and touchdowns with ducks."

This year's Super Bowl also marks the first time it is being held outdoors in a cold weather region. But it doesn't appear the weather conditions will be enough to hamper the game. Forecasters are predicting temperatures at kickoff of about four degrees Celsius (40 degrees Fahrenheit), with little chance of precipitation and minimal winds.

