

Playoff win overshadowed as Bo Nix breaks ankle

BY ARNIE STAPLETON

AP PRO FOOTBALL WRITER

DENVER — Bo Nix broke his right ankle late in overtime of the Denver Broncos' divisional-round victory over Buffalo on Saturday and will have surgery that will sideline him for the rest of the playoffs.

Coach Sean Payton delivered the stunning news about his second-year quarterback in the aftermath of Denver's biggest win in a decade. Backup Jarrett Stidham, who is 1-3 as a starter in six seasons, will start the AFC championship game next weekend.

"Stiddy's ready," Payton said after returning to the postgame lectern to discuss the injury following Denver's 33-30 victory over Josh Allen and the Bills.

Payton said Nix got hurt on a keeper where he lost 2 yards and was tackled by safety Cole Bishop. Nix was

limping after the play, but there was no indication that he suffered such a serious injury.

On the next play, Nix threw a deep pass to Marvin Mims Jr. that drew a 30-yard pass-interference flag and got the Broncos well into field-goal range. Nix then took a knee to center the ball for Wil Lutz's game-ending 23-yard field goal.

Payton said Nix will have surgery Tuesday in Birmingham, Alabama.

"He's such a strong, faith-based guy," Payton said. "He's sitting in the hallway with his family and coming over and we're all talking to him. He knows that God's got a plan for him and he said he had (a broken ankle) in high school and then he said he had one at Auburn.

"And I said I didn't realize that. I said if I had known that I wouldn't have drafted you," Payton cracked.

Nix said nothing about being hurt during a

postgame interview with CBS, and he sounded like he was looking forward to the next game.

"It's great to have home-field advantage in a situation like this. It's exciting. This is why you play the game, this is why you compete. You get to playoff football, and good things happen," Nix said.

The locker room had

cleared out and reporters were waiting in an interview room for Nix when Payton returned and delivered the news.

Nix, the 12th overall pick out of Oregon in the 2024

NFL draft, tied Russell Wilson's NFL record with two dozen victories in his first two seasons. Saturday's victory was his first in the playoffs. The Broncos lost last year at Buffalo, but Nix led Denver to the AFC's

top seed this season.

"He's a tough cookie,"

Payton said. "And this team

all year has lost key players

and will rise up for the next challenge.

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