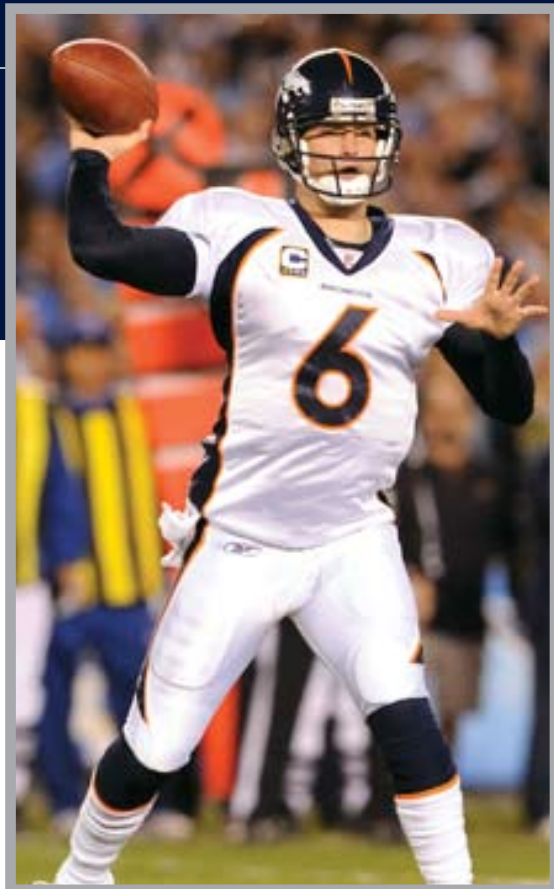


## Player Spotlight:

# QB JAY CUTLER CHICAGO BEARS

by Jason Wood – Senior Writer, Footballguys.com



**J**ay Cutler grew up a Chicago Bears fan, but he never had reason to think his NFL fortunes would ever coincide with his childhood fandom. After all, teams simply don't let franchise passers go. It's so rare to find a true franchise cornerstone that no organization would be foolish enough to let one go in his prime. Cutler will be a Denver Bronco for life. Right?

Yikes, if you're a Broncos fan reading this let me apologize for the flippant recap but let's be honest, this offseason was shocking. Regardless of where you place the blame, the simple truth is Josh McDaniels and Jay Cutler couldn't co-exist. The Bears traded two 1sts, a 3rd, a 5th and Kyle Orton for the 26-year old star. In Chicago expectations are sky high. For years, Bears fans have thought they were only a QB away from Super Bowl contention.

**Jay Cutler is the best quarterback in modern Bears history.** Sid Luckman is a Hall of Famer, and I'm not going to try to compare his achievements in the 1940s to offensive numbers of today's game. But Luckman's career ended in 1950, which means Jay Cutler is the best QB the Windy City has seen in almost 60 years. Don't believe me? Take a look at the Bears Top 5 passers of the modern era:

1. Jim Harbaugh ('87-'93) – 89 games, 58.2% completion, 11,567 yards, 50 TDs, 56 INTs
2. Jim McMahon ('82-'88) – 66 games, 57.8% completion, 11,203 yards, 67 TDs, 56 INTs
3. Erik Kramer ('94-'98) – 49 games, 58.6% completion, 10,582 yards, 63 TDs, 45 INTs
4. Billy Wade ('61-'66) – 59 games, 54.5% completion, 9,958 yards, 68 TDs, 66 INTs
5. Ed Brown ('54-'61) – 98 games, 48.7% completion, 9,698 yards, 63 TDs, 88 INTs

Compare that to Jay Cutler's career numbers:

- Jay Cutler ('06-'08) – 37 games, 62.5% completion, 9,024 yards, 54 TDs, 37 INTs

But just because Jay Cutler is the

best Chicago QB in generations doesn't mean he's a great bet to lead your fantasy team to a championship. In fact, there are a lot of reasons to think that Jay Cutler will be more valuable to the Bears than he will be to fantasy owners.

**The Offensive Line** – The Bears offensive line only allowed 29 sacks last year (13th best) and signed Orlando Pace to improve the left tackle position this offseason, but that can't compare to the Broncos OL, which allowed a league-low 12 sacks.

**Receiving Corps** – It's fair to say the Bears receivers will look better with Jay Cutler throwing to them, and Earl Bennett and the pair of rookies are particularly attractive sleepers. But it's equally fair to say that Brandon Marshall is demonstrably better than any Bears receiver and Eddie Royal may be, too.

**Run/Pass Balance** – The Broncos threw 620 passes last year while the Bears have averaged 500 pass attempts during Lovie Smith's tenure. It's easier to think the Bears will throw more with Cutler under center, but realistically he'll still throw fewer than 550 passes.

**Offensive Coaching** – Mike Shanahan is a two-time Super Bowl champion and offensive guru, while Bears OC Ron Turner is, shall we say, decidedly less

### Positives

- Jay Cutler is a strong-armed, accurate passer in his prime
- The Bears have above average receiving options at TE and RB
- The Bears offensive line is above average, with depth

### Negatives

- Ron Turner is a conservative play-caller
- The Bears wide receivers aren't as good as the Broncos
- Expect the Bears to have a more balanced run/pass ratio

accomplished. Turner is infamous for being an ultra-conservative play-caller which doesn't play into Jay Cutler's strengths.

### Final Thoughts

Jay Cutler is one of the best young quarterbacks in the league. The fact the Bears were able to acquire him, in his prime, was a coup and sets the Bears up as a title contender for years to come. But is what's good for Bears fans necessarily what's good for fantasy owners? Even though Cutler should win more games in Chicago than he did in Denver, it's not clear he's going to be a better fantasy player. The Bears run a more conservative offense, maintain a more balanced run/pass ratio, have a less imposing offensive line, and don't have proven WRs on the roster. Cutler should elevate the Bears offense to new levels, but the aforementioned factors should crimp his upside. Cutler could be a Top 5 fantasy passer on talent alone, but more likely slots as a rock solid QB2 who should finish in the 10-12 range this year.

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