



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

From the Desk of Senator Jack M. Martins

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The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack of will. - Vince Lombardi

Earlier this week I was asked by one of the local newspapers to predict an outcome for the upcoming Super Bowl XLVIII matchup between the number one offense, Denver Broncos and the number one defense, Seattle Seahawks. The paper collects the opinions of various people and then does a side by side comparison to see who comes closest. It sounded like good fun and although I love watching football, I can't imagine why they'd ask me. If I had any luck prognosticating that sort of thing, election years would be a whole lot easier.

In any case, let me first confess that I am a life-long New York Giants fan. As such, I tend to believe that their conference, the NFC, is the better of the two. The Seahawks being an NFC team, advantage: Seahawks. That also means I am a fan of the traditional NFC, smash-mouth, run the ball till you drop kind of game that has traditionally brought glory to the Giants and I firmly believe that defense wins titles. Again, advantage: Seahawks. Throw in that meteorologists are calling for snow, rain and frigid temperatures which usually hamper highly-charged passing offenses and once more, advantage: Seahawks. And yet despite these observations I believe that the Denver Broncos will come out on top this weekend.

Why, you ask? Two words: Peyton Manning.

In case you're not a fan of the game, Mr. Manning has had a fabulous career full of record-breaking feats ever since high school. As a professional in the National Football League, he has been named to 13 Pro Bowls and won a Super Bowl with his former team, the Indianapolis Colts, against the Chicago Bears in 2007. Tragically, Peyton Manning's 2011 season was derailed as he underwent several neck surgeries including a very serious spinal fusion in an attempt to repair nerve damage that was weakening his throwing arm. It cost him the season and what many, myself included, thought was his career. Despite his assurances that he would recover, the Indianapolis Colts let him go.

Hindsight being 20/20, that may have been a huge mistake. He was picked up by the Denver Broncos and now, on the strength of his arm, are going to the Super Bowl. Naturally there were naysayers who doubted that his throwing strength and durability would ever be the same but Peyton has proved them very wrong thus far. He's come back stronger than ever, leading this Broncos team to a 13-3 season with a record-breaking total of 606 points scored, 55 touchdown passes and 5,477 passing yards for the best quarterback season ever. Peyton must be familiar with the old saying, "if ifs and buts were candy and nuts, we'd all have a Merry Christmas."

What does that mean? In essence, that people are prone to making excuses as to why something can't be done. It's far more common a response than positive action and sadly, it gets us nowhere. Peyton Manning seems the perfect inverse. Excuses would have come easy with such a career-ending injury. He was already a millionaire with an admirable football legacy and nothing to prove, but he chose to return to the game he loved. Through sheer will, with a tremendous force of character, he's led his teammates to the Super Bowl. Like all great leaders, Peyton raises the quality of play of those around him, including those on the opposing teams.

I've thought about Peyton's example often throughout this past year of challenges in Albany. It used to be that people in our state capital would throw up their arms in resignation, opting for the status quo instead of tackling real problem solving. I daresay we've turned that corner these last three years. We've balanced budgets, closed deficits, attracted new business and even lowered taxes. But most important, we've developed a real sense of optimism and accountability for making New York great again. Truth be told, the capacity and the knowledge were always there. Albany lacked the will to make it happen, but not anymore. And like the Vince Lombardi said at the top of this column, will is what makes all the difference.