

Red Peppers



By Gus Schrader
Gazette sports columnist

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Want to sit in on an autopsy?

Want to examine the anatomy of a perfect play? The one that enabled the Kansas City Royals to bury the legend of Yankee late inning lightning in the last two fateful innings Thursday night.

You know the plot (Howard Cosell always calls it the story line). The Royals are protecting a 3-2 lead. Yanks at bat in the eighth. Willie Randolph on first, two outs. Batter is Bob Watson, who led the Yankees in hitting this year with .307. Watson drills Dennis Leonard's pitch to the left-field corner.

OK, that's the setting. Now come with us into the bowels of Royals Stadium as we interview the principals of The Biggest Play in Kansas City Baseball History:

Willie Wilson, baseball's fastest player who plays left field for the Royals — "The ball came off the cement so fast it handcuffed me. I just grabbed it and threw as fast and as hard as I could. I wasn't throwing to either U.L. Washington (shortstop) or George Brett (third baseman) in particular."

George Brett, Royal superman who certainly has a big red "R" on his chest — "I'm the back-up relay man in that situation. Washington is the primary man, but he was way out there and Wilson's throw was over his head. It's the way we are taught that play in spring training. If I wasn't there and the ball rolled all the way to the catcher, I'd be in his (Manager Jim Frey's) office right now. No, I didn't hear anybody yell to throw it home. Hell, you can't hear yourself think out there at a time like that. I had no idea the play was gonna be close. I had my back to the plate, remember. I just wheeled and threw it as hard as I could to Darrell Porter (catcher). It's the biggest play I've ever made, and I didn't do it with my bat. People never give me credit for my glove."

Darrell Porter, Kansas City catcher — "Brett's relay was perfect. Just perfect. He must have heaved it 100 miles an hour. It was a play I'll savor forever. It was the most exciting game I ever played in in my whole life."

Willie Randolph, fleet Yankee who was cut down by a step — "I slipped as I took off from first base. I had one foot on the turf and one on the dirt. My back foot gave away just a little, but I should have beaten the throw even with the slip. They had to handle it perfectly to beat me. I'm on my own out there. You have to go on a play like that. Sure, I started my slide high because I could see the catcher blocking the plate, and I tried to knock him over. You don't have time to think of all those things when you're running."

Reggie Jackson, Yankee star who was in the on-deck circle — "I was telling Willie to slide. Yes, he was out easy, but it took great execution by them to get him. Willie is one of the fastest guys on our club, and he had to think we hadn't been generating a helluva lot of offense, and I know he felt he should go."

Dick Howser, Yankee manager — "I don't think it was a mistake to send Randolph home. When I saw Wilson's throw going a little high, I thought we had a chance. With two outs, we had to hope they would misplay it, because it took a perfect play by three guys."

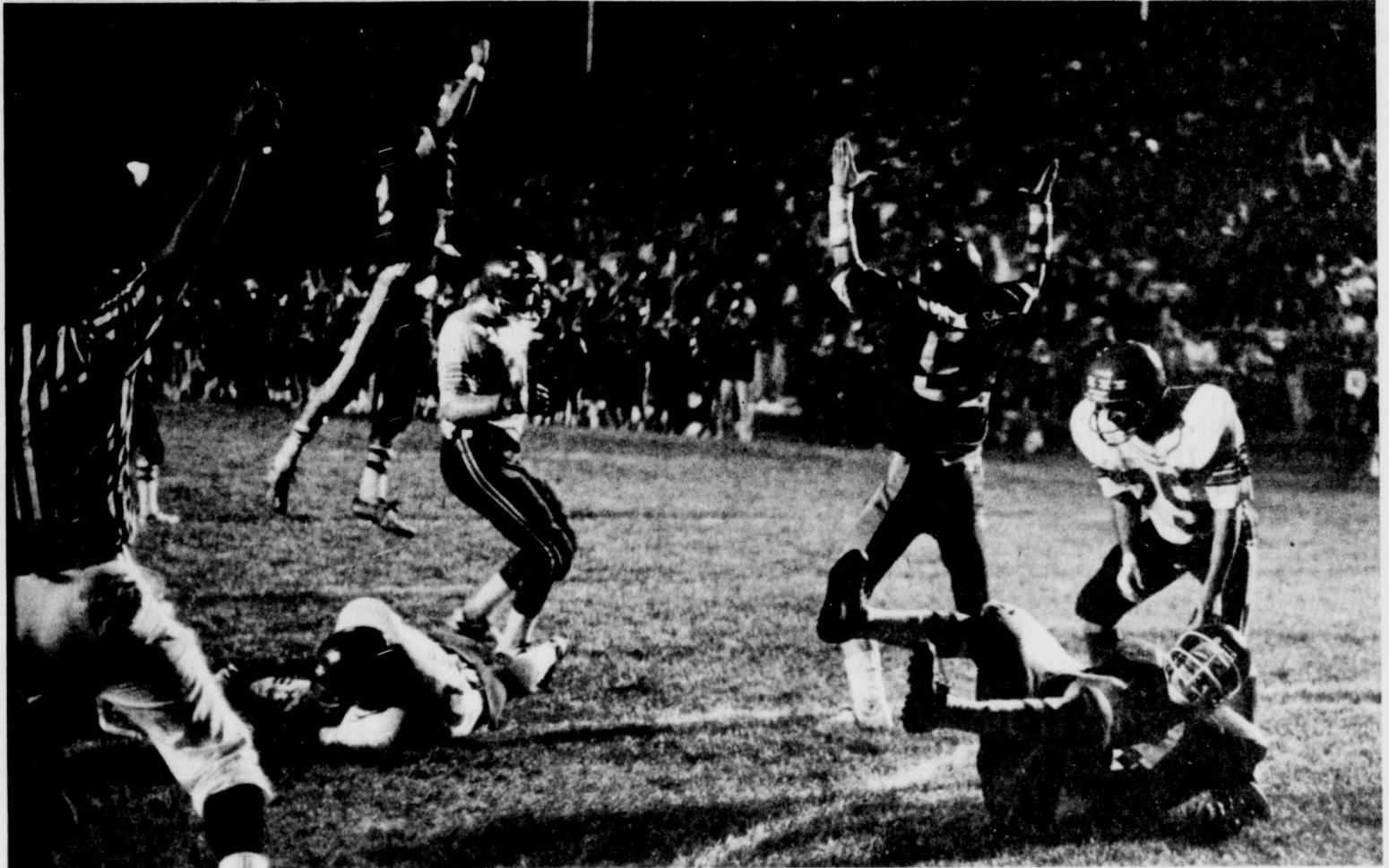
Jim Frey, Royals manager — "You won't see a better relay than that in watching 20 years of baseball. We use a trailer on that play. The shortstop goes out deep and we tell the fielder to throw the ball high, where both the shortstop and the third baseman have a chance at it. You don't want a low throw there. Brett was in the right position and completed the play perfectly."

Now that you've digested all that, how about the two plays John Wathan made on Yankee extra-base hits in the fifth inning?

"I didn't think John could have played the ball any better on Graig Nettles' drive (that went for an inside-the-park homer). He lost the second one (Randolph's double) in the lights and there wasn't anything he could do about it."

"Those were tough plays for anyone," said Wathan, a catcher by trade who occasionally plays first base or the outfield.

Kennedy stuns Wash, 14-7



Gazette photo by Tom Merriman

Marc Meyer lies in the end zone after scoring Kennedy's first touchdown in a 14-7 upset over No. 1 Washington.

By Jack Ogden
Senior sportswriter
Cedar Rapids Kennedy players were jumping around their locker room shouting "Green Power, Green Power" Thursday night at Kingston Stadium.

And the green-clad club had plenty of reason.

The steadily improving Cougars, now with five straight victories after an opening overtime loss to Regis, had just put on a spectacular performance to topple No. 1 ranked Washington, 14-7, before some 8,000 fans.

The win left Kennedy alone atop the Mississippi Valley Conference standings with a 5-0 league record heading into next week's game against Iowa City City High.

"I guess we are in front and the other teams will have to catch us," admitted Reed. "But we aren't looking any further ahead than Iowa City. That's what we have been doing all year, taking one game at a time."

Thursday, Reed couldn't find enough nice things to say about his club, particularly its defense, the passing of Mark McClintic under heavy pressure and the running of Marc Meyer, who had his biggest night of the season with 60 yards in 16 carries.

"I know no one will believe me," said Reed, still sweating after his Cougars had staved off a last ditch bid by Wash on an interception by Greg Spicher on the Cougar one with just 37 seconds remaining.

"But we didn't do anything special tonight. Our defensive coach, Jim Lewis, did a great job. We just hit their ends at the line from our basic 5-2 defense and then dropped everyone off to cover. We gave up the pass rush, although our line did get a couple of sacks."

The strategy obviously worked. Wash was held to just 67 net yards rushing, but quarterback Pat Dale

still had his problems. He completed only 12 of 33 pass attempts and had four intercepted. Greg was emphatic about one thing. "This has to be the biggest football victory in Kennedy history."

McClintic, who had his most impressive passing night, with 10 of 14 for 128 yards despite seven Wash sacks, still gave credit to his line. "The line did a great job," he said. "You can credit the line and the receivers for the passing."

Wash Coach Wally Sheets presided over a quiet Washington locker room as the top-ranked Iowa prep club lost its first game in six starts.

Kennedy took the ensuing kickoff on its own 34 and marched 66 yards in eight plays with Meyer scoring from the two.

"Marc did a super job," said Reed. "We just ran our basic plays, but he did an excellent job of reading the Washington defense and he turned that into extra yards."

Washington started off like a team that planned to make Kennedy its sixth straight victim, keeping Kennedy in the hole for most of the first half and scoring with 17 seconds left in the first quarter.

That drive started after Eddie Davis returned a short punt to the Kennedy 17. Dale then hit Randy Luter on a first down pass to the six. Dale faded back on the next play, then ran left untouched into the end zone.

But that was to be the last Wash threat until the closing minutes of the game.

Kennedy dominated right from the start in the second half. The winning touchdown drive started midway in the third after Jay Fitzharris got one of his two interceptions, this one at the Kennedy 47. The drive went 53 yards in eight plays with Joel Smith racing in from the 12 yard line.

Washington finally got its act together with just over three minutes left in the game, but it was too little, too late. The Warriors took over on their own 17 and marched 63 yards in 12 plays to the Kennedy 20, largely on the passing of Dale.

Then, with just 37 seconds left, Spicher ended the threat on his third down interception at the Kennedy one yard line.

Kennedy 14, Washington 7

	Wash	Kennedy
First Downs	12	15
Yards Rushing	67	64
Yards Passing	113	128
Passes	33-12-4	14-10-1
Punts-Avg.	5-39	5-30
Fumbles lost	0-0	1-1
Yards Penalized	15	15
Washington Kennedy	7 0 0 0 - 7	0 7 7 0 - 14

Washington: TD - Pat Dale (3 run), XP - Rims Roof (kick).
Kennedy: Marc Meyer (2 run), Joel Smith (12 run), XP - Kevin Mote (2 kicks).

Spotlight on LaSalle-Prairie game Saturday

By Mark Dukas
Gazette sportswriter

Coaches from Cedar Rapids LaSalle and Cedar Rapids Prairie may be using the same source for different types of motivation when the two football teams collide Saturday afternoon.

Tom Kopatich of LaSalle and John Oertel of Prairie undoubtedly remember their 1977 meeting. That game and Saturday's Kingston Stadium contest at 1:30 p.m. have similarities.

Three years ago, Kopatich directed LaSalle to a 5-0 start while Prairie had lost three of its first five games. In the sixth game of the season, Prairie stunned visiting LaSalle, 14-11.

Now it is the sixth game of the 1980 season, and the coaches probably have been reminded of the '77 game. LaSalle enters with a 4-1 mark, losing only to unbeaten Benton Community, while Prairie stands 1-4 with four consecutive losses.

In tonight's games involving Metro schools, undefeated Marion hosts Monticello, Jefferson entertains Dubuque Senior and Linn-Mar travels to unbeaten Benton Community.

Kopatich may have had the '77 game in the back of his mind when he was asked to assess Prairie. "Prairie is a pretty dangerous football team," Kopatich said. "We're worried about them because they're big and their record is deceiving."

One of the most remarkable aspects about LaSalle is that it has committed only two turnovers (two fumbles, no interceptions) in five games. Few teams across the state

can boast of that statistic. "That is what we have talked about here every year, because a lot of times you beat yourself," Kopatich said. "It's about 70 percent of the time that the other team will score after your turnover. We're still fumbling too much (10 times), but we're fortunate to have lost only two."

Meanwhile, Prairie has fumbled 12 times and had six passes intercepted. The Hawks' passing attack will get a stiff test, because LaSalle has intercepted 10 passes, including five by Kary Schulte.

Prairie rediscovered its rushing game in the first half of a 34-18 loss to Dyersville Beckman last Friday.

The Hawks finished with their best running performance of the season, 185 yards.

Prairie's defense has been vulnerable to the run, though, allowing 225 yards each game.

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