

Getting a head start on Christmas

Christmas has come a little early to the Darrel Pattillo apartment. I set up my Christmas tree Sunday, even though it's obscenely early to be doing so.



Darrel Pattillo
On the Ball

Now, before you get a picture in your head of me sitting around stringing popcorn and replacing broken light bulbs on 200 yards of lights, you should know that I have a very small tree that fits perfectly in my very small apartment. And the lights are built in.

It sits on an end table and spins around, and thanks to the miracle of fiber-optic technology, about a million little tiny lights constantly change color as the tree rotates around in its base. It takes about 15 minutes to set up (not counting the time it takes to carefully bend the little branches around so it looks like a real tree), and bada-bing, bada-boom, it's Yule time. There are several reasons I decided to get an early jump on the holiday season. One reason is that I heard them selling Christmas music on TV last week. That makes it official—the holiday season is underway when Johnny Mathis is singing "It's beginning to

look a lot like Christmas!"

By the way, it seems to me that the people in charge of Halloween should be getting a little concerned.

Not only has your holiday turned into an egg-throwing exhibition of juvenile hooliganism, it's just flat being pushed aside by the Merchants of Christmas. If I was in charge of Halloween, I'd think seriously about moving to mid-June. All that's going on then is baseball.

Anyway, another reason I'm early this year is that Christmas time is the time of year that people start being a little nicer to one another. I think we could all benefit by that kind of attitude, so I'm kick starting my efforts to be a little nicer to people.

(Hey, if it works, I'll leave my tree up all year. It's only two feet tall.)

Also, being the absent-minded fool that I am, seeing a Christmas tree this early might just get me to do my Christmas shopping on time, instead of the more traditional 10 p.m. Christmas Eve sprint through Wally-world.

I also wanted to be the first one on my block to have Christmas stuff up. I think I might have made it this year. So, if you live in my apartment building, or in one of the two houses on my block, and you had your tree set up before Sunday, congratulations. If not, then 'nanny-nanny foo-foo', I win!

Darrel Pattillo is the sports editor for the Colby Free Press. His column appears on Monday. You can reach him by phone at the paper or by e-mail at colbysports@nwkans.com or dpattillo@nwkans.com. Merry Christmas!

Chiefs go down to wire again, beat Jets

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. (AP) — If Priest Holmes was looking to draw headlines during his visit to the big city, he certainly spoke loudly on the field.

A lot louder than in the locker room, where Holmes was silent after a superb all-around performance lifted Kansas City past the New York Jets 29-25 Sunday. Holmes ran for 152 yards and a touchdown and caught nine passes for 81 yards for the Chiefs (3-2).

His biggest contribution came with 27 seconds to go when he took a short pass from Trent Green and outran linebacker James Darling to the end zone to win it.

"It's good that he had a game like this in New York," coach Dick Vermeil said in speaking for his star, who refused interview requests. "It's nice to see him get the credit he deserves."

Holmes, the NFL's leading rusher last season, sneaked out of the backfield for the catch, then easily eluded Darling before leaping in for the winning score.

It was his eighth touchdown already this season.

It was a fitting ending for the Chiefs, whose 171 points lead the league. Every week, it seems, they go down to the wire.

"The fourth quarter has been good to

us all year," said Kansas City coach Dick Vermeil, who evened his record against his protege, Jets coach Herman Edwards. "

On that last drive, they went on the field with confidence that they could score and it showed."

Green guided the Chiefs 78 yards in 10 plays following John Hall's 25-yard field that goal gave the spiraling Jets (1-4) the lead.

On their previous drive, the Chiefs used a 60-yard pass to Dante Hall against loose coverage — a staple of New York's defense — to tie it 22-22.

Against a defense that ranked 31st overall, ahead of only Kansas City's, the Chiefs rang up 504 yards. They did it with star tight end Tony Gonzalez (four catches for 25 yards) practically invisible.

But they also have Holmes, Green, a strong offensive line and a suddenly burgeoning group of wide receivers.

"The only people who can stop us is ourselves," Hall said.

The Jets certainly couldn't stop them when it counts. They bemoaned their soft, leaky defense that offset a strong first NFL start by quarterback Chad Pennington and Curtis Martin's return to form, even though the blocking was spotty.

While the Jets did limit the Chiefs to

field goals by Morten Andersen three times, they couldn't protect a rare late lead after being blown out in the previous three games.

"The positive thing is the offense looked good," DE John Abraham said. "I'm really mad that the defense couldn't stop them and do its part."

Edwards was plenty mad, too. The switch to Pennington, the revitalization of Martin (119 yards rushing, 21 more than he had entering the game) and the strong showing by wideout Laveranues Coles (eight receptions, 116 yards) went for naught.

"We are not playing good enough defense and it showed up in the fourth quarter when we needed a stop," Edwards said.

"You have to make a stand, you have to make a play."

New York made plays against the Chiefs' weak defense, including Martin's 17-yard scoring run and TD passes of 2 yards to Anthony Becht and 27 to Santana Moss when Pennington sniffed out a blitz and beat it.

But the Chiefs are finding ways to win this season even as the Jets discover ways to lose.

"We've been in some really crazy situations this year," Green admitted. "We've found some success with them."

Denver Broncos roll past San Diego, 26-9

DENVER (AP) — The Denver Broncos figured out how to stop LaDainian Tomlinson: Stay patient.

Brian Griese threw for 316 yards and two touchdowns, and Denver clogged Tomlinson's running lanes to hold the league's leading rusher to 48 yards as the Broncos beat the San Diego Chargers 26-9 Sunday.

Instead of aggressively pursuing Tomlinson, as most teams have this season, Denver's defenders hung around the gaps, waiting for him to make his move before collapsing on

him. The plan forced San Diego to lean on quarterback Drew Brees, who wasn't up to the task.

"Wait for people to come to you, that's the key," Denver defensive end Trevor Pryce said of stopping cutbacks. "If you're overzealous trying to make a play, trying to do too much, that's when cutbacks happen. Wait for him to come to you, and if he doesn't run to your gap, now you go find him."

Denver (4-1) moved into a tie with San Diego (4-1) for second in the AFC West. Both teams are a game behind

Oakland, which is now the league's only undefeated team.

Tomlinson tied a team record with 217 yards last week against New England, but he was held to just 38 yards on 13 carries in the first half. That forced San Diego to go almost exclusively to the pass.

There'll be no repeat of last year's World Series, at least

NEW YORK (AP) — There will be no rematch of last year's thrilling World Series: The Arizona Diamondbacks and New York Yankees were both sent home long before the Fall Classic.

The wild-card Anaheim Angels roughed up Yankees starters Andy Pettitte, Mike Mussina and David Wells in succession to win the AL di-

vision series 3-1 and end New York's four-year run as league champions. The World Series will be without the free-spending Yankees for the first time since 1997.

Randy Johnson, Curt Schilling and the Diamondbacks were swept by St. Louis in three games. The Cardinals will play either Atlanta or San Francisco in the next round.

St. Louis Rams get beat up by San Francisco, 37-13

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The St. Louis Rams were winless and hurting, and the San Francisco 49ers were only too happy to shove their biggest rivals deeper into despair.

Jeff Garcia threw for a touchdown and ran for another, and Garrison Hearst rushed for 116 yards and a score in a 37-13 rout that ended the 49ers' six-game losing streak to the defending NFC champions.

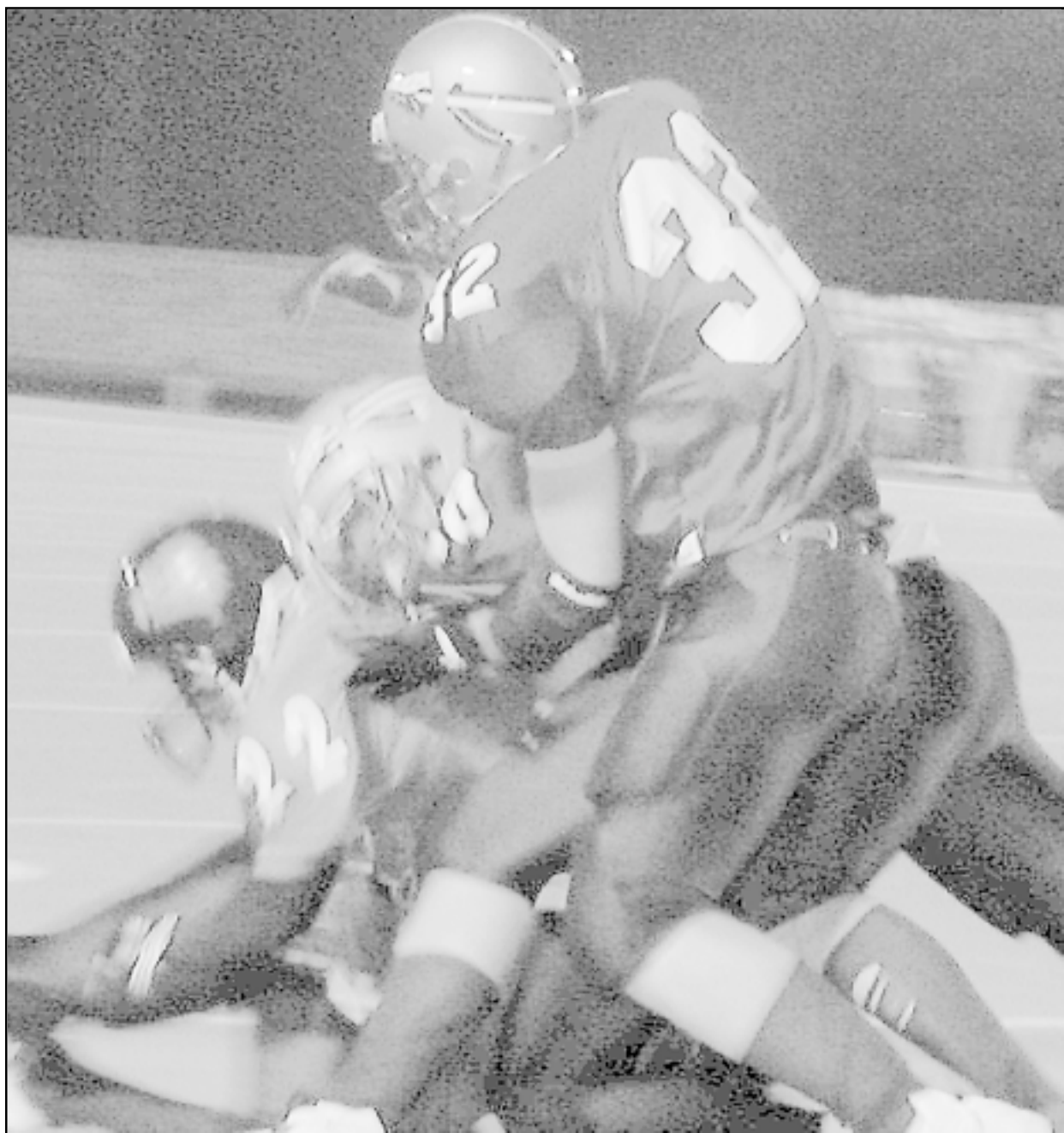
Jason Webster staggered the already roughed-up Rams when he intercepted career backup Jamie Martin — starting for the injured Kurt Warner — and

returned it 37 yards for a touchdown and a 27-3 lead just before halftime.

The 49ers (3-1) looked forward to this game for months.

Not only did they reclaim superiority in the NFC West, they all but ended St. Louis' playoff hopes — no team has come back from an 0-5 start to reach the postseason.

"They're down right now, and we took the attitude that we wanted to take it to them and not allow them to get back into a playoff hunt or get back into a position where then can get rolling," Garcia said.



DARREL PATTILLO/Colby Free Press

Colby Eagle Ryan Arensdorf was wrapped up by a host of Hays Indians during Friday night's game in Hays.

Hays too much for Eagles, 34-12

By **DARREL PATTILLO**
Colby Free Press

HAYS — After being clobbered the previous Friday by Garden City High School, and pumped up for homecoming, the Hays High Indians Friday night were looking for a football team to take out its frustrations on.

The Colby Eagles were that team, and the Indians got their first win of the year, beating the Eagles 34-12 Friday night at Lewis Field Stadium.

Hays established a running game on the first possession, scoring twice on the ground, but both times penalties nullified the scores. Colby got the ball back, but gave it up again, and Hays scored its first touchdown with 4:49 left in the first quarter.

Colby went three and out again, and

the Indians, after a successful fake punt, scored again on a 30-yard pass play.

The Eagles got the ball back with less than a minute to play in the first period, and marched into Indian territory, making two gutsy 4th-and-long plays to get to the Hays 8-yard line.

The third time Colby tried to convert on fourth down, Jared Cranston was intercepted, but Jeff Reavis intercepted a Hays pass and Colby charged down field, scoring with no time left in the half on a 9-yard Brian Sulzman catch from Cranston. The extra-point try failed, and the Eagle went to the locker room with the score 14-6, Hays.

Colby still had the momentum starting the second half, when Ryan Arensdorf took the opening kick-off all

the way down to the Indian 20-yard line.

Hays stopped the Eagles and took over, but Theo Kleinsorge's huge tackle on 3rd-and-2 got forced Hays to punt, but the Eagles couldn't score.

That's when Hays broke the game open, scoring on a 69-yard run, followed minutes later by a 40-yard touchdown pass that took the air out of the Eagles sails.

Both teams scored once in the final quarter, Hays on a 6-yard run and Colby on a 5-yard Arensdorf run late in the game. The game ended 34-12 in favor of Hays.

The Eagles (1-4) are home for the next three Friday nights, hosting Smith Center at Dennen Field this Friday night at 7 p.m.

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