

Vermeil hopes next year better

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — At 49, the Kansas City Chiefs aren't going to the playoffs this season.

But coach Dick Vermeil says he's not expecting to ask fans to be patient for long.

"I would hope next year," he said when asked how soon the Chiefs might compete for an AFC West title.

The Chiefs' first-year coach, who developed Philadelphia and St. Louis into Super Bowl teams, has found encouragement the past two weeks in an exasperating two-point loss to Oakland and a 26-23 overtime victory over Denver.

"If you asked Denver right now I think they'd say it's reasonable," he said. "If you ask Oakland, I think they'd say it's reasonable. It's not boasting. I just think we've continued

to improve. You've got to stay lucky."

The Chiefs, who finish their home season Sunday against San Diego, will face an off-season challenge of signing some important players whose contracts are up, including All-Pro tight end Tony Gonzalez.

"What would be really nice would be take all your salary cap dollars and bring all the guys in here who are free agents and say, 'you guys divide it up and you can all stay,'" Vermeil said.

"You'll have guys who want to stay who won't end up being able to stay because the agents will be working to find them a new job for more money."

"We've got to be sure that when we lose a good player that we either have developed one in his place or we come up with one from the draft."

Chargers need to snap streak against Chiefs

SAN DIEGO (AP) — One day, Drew Brees will have to go into Kansas City and try to get the San Diego Chargers a win. It just won't be this Sunday.

While admitting there's a good argument to play the rookie from Purdue, coach Mike Riley said Doug Flutie will remain the quarterback as the Chargers (5-9) try to snap a seven-game losing streak that's ruined their season.

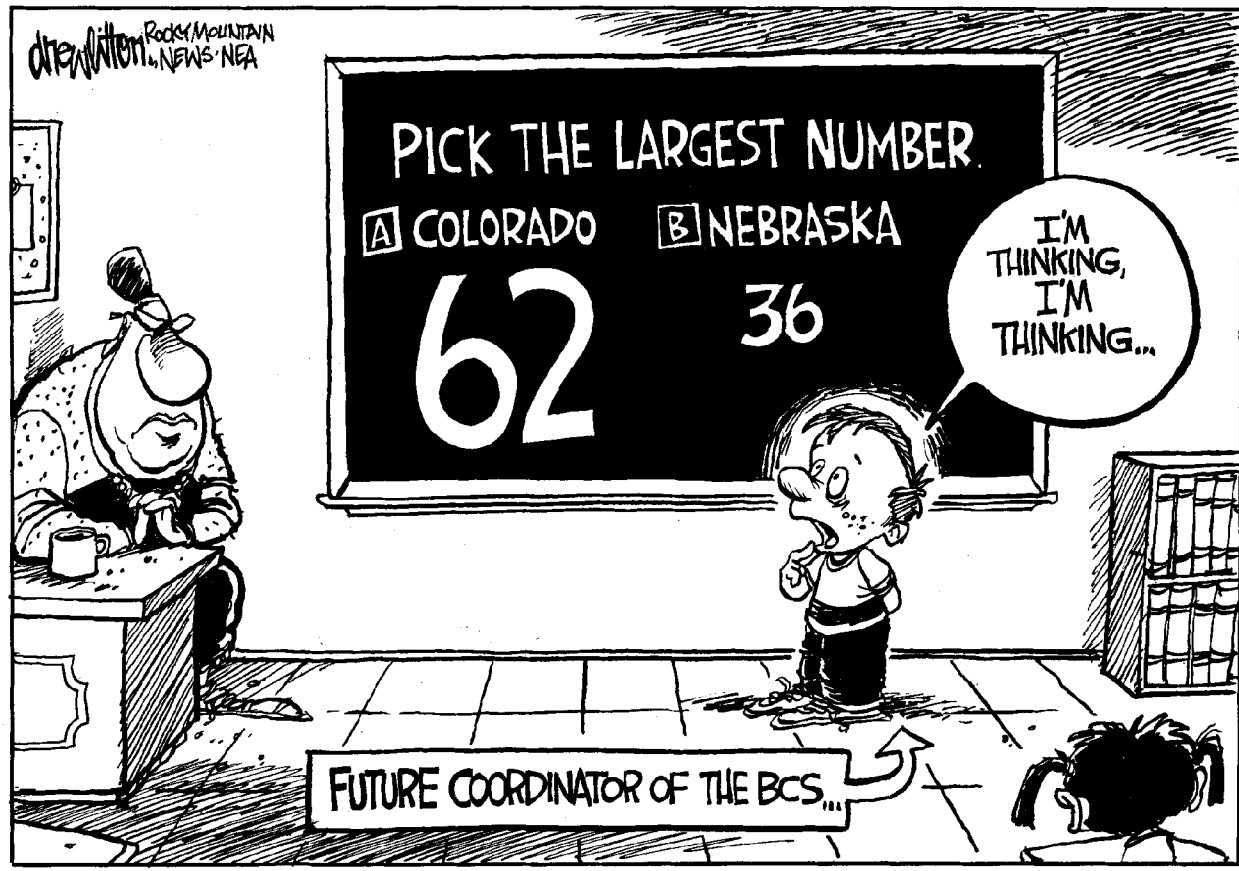
"My inclination is to stay with the guy that we've got and let him have an opportunity to finish the season," Riley said Monday.

If the Chargers lose, they'll drop below the Chiefs (4-9) into last place

in the AFC West.

Flutie has thrown 13 interceptions and lost two fumbles during the losing streak while throwing just five touchdown passes. He had three pickoffs in Saturday's 13-6 loss to the Oakland Raiders, two of which killed drives at the Oakland 2 and 11.

Riley said getting a win is more important than playing Brees. He said everyone on offense has struggled, not just Flutie, and suggested it might not be wise playing Brees in a tough place like Kansas City. The Chargers have been outscored a combined 130-20 in losing their last four games at Arrowhead Stadium.



Knight a target says son

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — High-profile coaches like Bob Knight "are a target" for publicity-seekers, his son said Tuesday.

Stepping in for his father in the weekly Big 12 coaches' conference call, Pat Knight also praised the way the Texas Tech athletic department has handled his father's latest scrap with unwanted publicity.

"They stuck up for coach. They stuck by him and believed what he had to say," he said.

Knight, who won three NCAA championships at Indiana but was fired after losing his famous temper numerous times, was accused by a Houston man last week of confronting him on a loading dock.

Jerry MacDonald, the general manager at the Compaq Center in Houston, said a polite conversation over Knight's complaints about Texas

Tech's cramped locker room turned profane and combative.

MacDonald, who has sent a letter of apology, also said Knight offered to go outside to settle things.

Such accusations, Patrick Knight said, are "more or less what my dad has to deal with."

"I just think they took a molehill and built it into a mountain," said the younger Knight. "It wasn't a big deal. I didn't know anything about it until the next day."

Bob Knight's absence from the weekly call, which he normally handles, was not explained.

"Coaches who have a temper and a passion for the game, (Bill) Parcells, guys like that. They are targets," said the younger Knight.

Knight, in his first year at Texas Tech, appears to have the support of his Big 12 colleagues.

"I think sometimes people forget coaches are human beings with feelings," said Colorado's Ricardo Patton. "I think there needs to be more done to see coaches aren't provoked. We're human beings. We have feelings. We hurt."

Coaches, Patton said, have to learn "to bite our tongue even when we want

to lash back out."

"Things that happen with coaches happen everyday with people but it's not written about. But because we're in the arena we're in, it's going to be talked about and written about."

If Knight thinks the locker rooms at Compaq Center are small, said Oklahoma coach Kelvin Sampson, wait until he visits Missouri's Hearnes Center.

"I can't wait until he sees that locker room in Missouri," Sampson said. "Small locker room are part of college basketball. I can't imagine him being real serious about that."

Sampson also said he has a rule of thumb when people seek to provoke him.

"The only thing I'll say about it is I learned a long time ago to let common sense be your guide."

Oklahoma State coach Eddie Sutton, in the meantime, is bracing his sixth-ranked Cowboys for an ambush at Missouri-Kansas City.

The Kangaroos, off to their most impressive start in their 15 years as a Division I NCAA program, host the Cowboys on Wednesday night in what many are calling their biggest game ever.

Spurs beat Nuggets 102-93

DENVER (AP) — Determined to double-team Tim Duncan in the fourth quarter and make the other San Antonio players beat them, the Denver Nuggets got what they wanted.

The other Spurs got what they wanted, too: wide-open shots.

While Duncan finished with 24 points and 16 rebounds, the Spurs used final-quarter contributions from Antonio Daniels and Charles Smith to beat the Nuggets 102-93 Tuesday night.

Daniels had 10 of his 16 points in the final period as the Spurs posted their eighth straight victory and fourth in a row on the road.

San Antonio outscored Denver 31-21 in the fourth period.

Asked about passing the ball in the final period, during which he had three assists, Duncan said, "I have to. What they are going to give up we have to take advantage of. They came on the doubles, and our shooters were wide open. I'll take our shooters wide open any night."

Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said his team "brought some energy in the fourth quarter. We played pretty good defense in the fourth, and Tim did a great job of finding people off of the double team."

high school scores

By The Associated Press

Boys Basketball Scores

Results of games Tuesday night

Atwood 92, St. Francis 55
Herndon 59, Brewster 44
Hill City 71, Ransom 41
Hoxie 52, Dighton 45
Jennings 83, Cheylin 77
WaKeeney 58, Wheatland 48

Girls Basketball Scores

Results of games Tuesday night

Brewster 51, Herndon 40
Cheylin 40, Jennings 39
Dighton 37, Hoxie 33
Hill City 47, Ransom 41
St. Francis 53, Atwood 46
WaKeeney 52, Wheatland 45

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football scoreboard

By The Associated Press																		
American Conference					National Conference					Atlanta								
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	6	7	0	.461	231	295	
East					East					Carolina								
Miami	9	4	0	.692	276	249	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	1	12	0	.077	208	304
New England	9	5	0	.643	313	253	Philadelphia	9	4	0	.692	299	161	x-clinched playoff spot				
N.Y. Jets	8	5	0	.615	246	231	N.Y. Giants	6	7	0	.461	221	239	y-clinched division				
Indianapolis	5	8	0	.385	339	405	Washington	6	7	0	.461	181	256	Saturday, Dec. 22				
Buffalo	2	11	0	.154	214	344	Arizona	5	8	0	.385	231	306	Miami at New England, 11:30 a.m.				
Central					Central					Dallas								
Pittsburgh	11	2	0	.846	254	165	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Philadelphia at San Francisco, 3 p.m.					
Baltimore	8	5	0	.615	258	240	Chicago	10	3	0	.769	261	175	Tennessee at Oakland, 7 p.m.				
Cleveland	6	7	0	.461	230	223	Green Bay	9	4	0	.692	302	221	Sunday, Dec. 23				
Tennessee	6	7	0	.461	264	314	Tampa Bay	7	6	0	.539	241	232	Buffalo at Atlanta, 11 a.m.				
Jacksonville	5	8	0	.385	222	220	Minnesota	5	8	0	.385	271	314	Chicago at Washington, 11 a.m.				
Cincinnati	4	9	0	.308	177	249	Detroit	1	12	0	.077	241	343	Seattle at N.Y. Giants, 11 a.m.				
West					West					New Orleans								
Oakland	10	3	0	.769	350	267	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	St. Louis at Carolina, 11 a.m.					
Seattle	7	6	0	.539	231	257	St. Louis	11	2	0	.846	392	211	Detroit at Pittsburgh, 11 a.m.				
Denver	7	7	0	.500	307	293	x-San Francisco	10	3	0	.769	337	252	Cincinnati at Baltimore, 11 a.m.				
										New Orleans								
										Dallas								
										Cleveland								
										N.Y. Jets								
										Open: Denver								

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