

Chiefs need to include wide receiver in offense

By Steve Brisendine

AP Sports Writer

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — As good as the Kansas City Chiefs' offense has been over the first half of the season, coach Dick Vermeil still isn't satisfied. Specifically, Vermeil said Monday, the Chiefs need more production from their wide receivers.

"The one way we can grow offensively is to get the ball in the wide receivers' hands more efficiently," Vermeil said.

The Chiefs have the NFL's most prolific scoring offense (32.4 points per game) and the league's top rusher and touchdown scorer in Priest Holmes

(857 yards, 15 TDs). What they don't have is a wide receiver anywhere near the top of the list in either yardage or catches.

"Regardless of what the reasons are for that, we know as coaches that we have to do a better job of getting them the ball," said Vermeil, who gave his team the day off on Monday.

Holmes leads the Chiefs in both categories with 51 catches for 440 yards, and All-Pro tight end Tony Gonzalez — despite drawing double coverage all year — has 429 yards on 33 catches.

Holmes, in fact, has 13 more catches than starting wide receivers Eddie Kennison and Johnnie Morton put to-

gether. Kennison has 22 catches for 383 yards and Morton has 202 yards on 16 receptions.

"A lot of Priest Holmes' catches are not passes called to Priest Holmes," Vermeil said. "They're passes called to wide receivers, and he gets the checkdowns."

In Sunday's 20-10 win over the Oakland Raiders, running backs or tight ends caught 14 of Trent Green's 18 completions. Morton had no catches at all, dropping one ball and seeing another swatted away in the end zone.

"There is not a wide receiver in the National Football League that does not get down not catching the ball. That's

what they do. That's the contribution they make," Vermeil said. "But they also know that there are a lot of things called where they could end up with the ball."

Kansas City (4-4) has an extra week to deal with the issue; the Chiefs are in their bye week and next travel to San Francisco on Oct. 17.

The Chiefs, whose 20-point output against Oakland was their lowest this year, could easily have surpassed the 30-point mark for the fifth time in eight games this season.

A crackback block penalty called against wide receiver Marc Boerigter wiped out a touchdown run by Holmes and forced Kansas City to settle for a

field goal, and Green threw two interceptions inside the Raiders' 20-yard line.

"That's very frustrating," Green said. "Even if we had settled for field goals in the situations where we had interceptions, there were a lot more opportunities to score."

Vermeil didn't fault Boerigter for the crackback penalty, saying the block was legal and the official "just saw it wrong."

Vermeil also wasn't quick to criticize linebacker Glenn Cadrez, whose unnecessary roughness penalty for a late tackle out of bounds led to the Raiders' only touchdown.

"That was just a case of a guy trying

too hard to make a play," Vermeil said.

Also on Monday, the Chiefs cut kickoff specialist Michael Husted and signed free agent linebacker Quinton Caver to a 1-year contract. Caver, a second-round pick by Philadelphia in 2001, played in 19 games for the Eagles before being cut last week.

In five games this season, he had one tackle on defense and two on special teams.

"We liked him in the draft," Vermeil said. "I had him rated as a third-round pick, and I think our coaches had him rated as a third-round pick."

Husted, signed Oct. 12, appeared in three games for the Chiefs.

Broncos have no plans for another kicking derby

DENVER (AP) — Although Jason Elam hit short kickoffs for the second straight game on Sunday, Denver Broncos coach Mike Shanahan said he wasn't likely to bring in any kickoff specialists for tryouts as he did last week.

One day after his team's 24-16 victory over New England, Shanahan had few complaints.

His team, 6-2 as it heads into a bye week, dominated statistically and defied the odds by winning for the second straight week when it lost the turnover battle — both times on the road.

"When you give up only 170 yards (actually 179) in total offense, it's not

surprising," he said Monday. "When you lose the turnover battle, usually you don't win. But when you can dominate on one side of the ball or both sides of the ball, then you have a chance to do something."

The Broncos had no injuries of significance from Sunday's game.

Although special teams had some breakdowns, Shanahan didn't include Elam's kickoffs among them.

"I wasn't disappointed in the kickoffs," he said. "I wouldn't say Jason had his best day. He averaged kicking the ball to the 10- or 11-yard line, but that's what he's been averaging on the road for the last three years. So that's

not unusual."

The usually reliable Elam kicked a 19-yard field goal but missed from 48 and 39 yards in the second half.

"A lot of people don't pay attention to where people kick off unless they miss a couple field goals," Shanahan said. "Then all of a sudden all of the attention goes to the kickoffs."

"Jason has done a lot of good things for us. Right now, you'd probably call him in a little bit of a slump. But I'll be surprised if he doesn't come out of it."

The Broncos brought in eight kickers last week with the idea of signing one of them to handle kickoffs while Elam retained his field-goal and extra-

point duties. When Elam had a solid week of kicking kickoffs in practice, the team elected to stand pat.

Asked if he might revisit the issue this week, Shanahan said, "No, not really."

Punter Tom Rouen and the punt-coverage team were another matter.

"Our punter had a tough day," the coach said. "He kicked one about 16, 17 yards on the fly, and the other one was a little more of a line drive. It wasn't just him. Our snap was a little low and he had to hurry it up."

"With a low line drive comes poor coverage. They get a big return (40 yards) that could have gone the dis-

stance. Tom made a good tackle. He put his body in there and found a way to break it up."

"We'd like to become more consistent in the special teams area, and we're going to keep working on it."

With a bye week, the Broncos are on an abbreviated schedule.

Players were off Monday and Tuesday. Morning practices were scheduled for Wednesday and Thursday, with the players then getting the rest of the week off.

Denver doesn't play again until Monday night, Nov. 11, at home against the Oakland Raiders.

"We won't spend any time as a team

this week looking at the Raiders, but we will as a coaching staff," Shanahan said. "On Wednesday and Thursday we will review different things that we have done poorly over the first eight games."

"It won't be a lot. It will be probably about 24 or 25 plays a day on offense and defense, working on the things we can improve on and working on the things that have caused us some problems over the first eight games."

"As a coaching staff, we'll have a game plan for the Raiders so when the players come in here next week we're ready to go."

Lou Piniella introduced as manager for Tampa Bay Devil Rays

By The Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — For Lou Piniella, the opportunity to work near where he grew up was just part of the appeal of becoming the manager of the struggling Tampa Bay Devil Rays.

Piniella was introduced after finalizing a four-year, \$13 million contract that makes him the second-highest paid manager in the majors behind Joe Torre of the New York Yankees, who earns about \$5 million per year.

OAKLAND, Calif. — The Oakland Athletics didn't look far to replace Art Howe — just one seat down the bench.

Ken Macha will be introduced as the A's new manager on Tuesday, his agent said.

Macha was Howe's bench coach for the past four seasons as Oakland made three straight trips to the playoffs. The loquacious former big league catcher and infielder was a top candidate for several managerial vacancies this fall.

CLEVELAND — Eric Wedge will fit right in with the youthful Cleveland Indians. He's as young as most of them.

The Indians will make the 34-year-old Wedge the youngest manager in the majors, a team source told The Asso-

ciated Press.

Wedge, who managed Cleveland's Triple-A team in Buffalo the past two seasons, will be introduced at a news conference Tuesday at Jacobs Field.

SEATTLE — The Seattle Mariners obtained All-Star outfielder Randy Winn from Tampa Bay as compensation for letting manager Lou Piniella go to the Devil Rays.

Seattle also agreed to send minor-league infielder Antonio Perez to the Devil Rays.

NEW YORK — The New York Mets officially introduced Art Howe as their

new manager, confirming the worst-kept secret in baseball.

Howe agreed to a four-year contract worth \$9.4 million after being released from the last year of his deal with the Oakland Athletics.

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Tom Glavine, Jim Thome and Ivan Rodriguez were among 70 players who filed for free agency as baseball's offseason began.

Frank Thomas of the Chicago White Sox, who is under contract, also opted to explore the market, his right because the team exercised a provision in his deal that would defer most of his sal-

ary without interest.

Meanwhile, Atlanta Braves catcher Javy Lopez decided against free agency, deciding to exercise his \$7 million option for 2003.

NEW YORK — Commissioner Bud Selig will consider new rules regarding who is allowed in the dugout after the child's play by the San Francisco Giants' bat boys during the World Series.

Darren Baker, the 3 1/2-year-old son of Giants manager Dusty Baker, was nearly hurt at home plate in Game 5 last Thursday when he ran out to retrieve a bat while the ball was still in play.

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