

Raiders pound Broncos

DENVER (AP) — Denver was determined to not let Oakland beat them deep. The Raiders didn't, but Rich Gannon sure picked the Broncos apart. Gannon threw for 352 yards and three touchdowns, and completed 21 straight passes during one stretch as the Oakland Raiders ended a four-game losing streak with a 34-10 victory over the Denver Broncos on Monday night. Gannon was sharp as Oakland opened the season 4-0, but struggled at times during the Raiders' losing streak. Against Denver, he could hardly miss. Gannon completed 29 of his first 30 passes, and his 21 straight completions in the second and third quarters broke Ken Anderson's single-game record of 20 set nearly 20 years ago.

"He takes a three-step drop and they're max-protecting him, it's hard to get to the QB," Denver DT Lionel Dalton said. "We tried to push and get our hands up in his face, and he kept throwing it over our hands. Unfortunately, he was hot."

Denver (6-3) dropped its safeties deep in coverage and rushed Gannon with as few as two players, which Gannon used to his advantage. He repeatedly dropped off passes underneath, then threw over the top when Denver tightened its coverage.

Gannon didn't miss until his ninth pass, and that came when running back Charlie Garner was unable to come down with both feet inbounds. He threw touchdown passes of 6 and 34 yards to Jerry Rice, and was 9-for-9 for 94 yards during a third-quarter scoring drive that Jerry Porter capped a 22-yard TD reception.

"They weren't going to let us take a whole lot of shots downfield, so we were real patient," said Gannon, who had a quarterback rating of 131.6. "And that's the thing, you need a quarterback who is going to be patient against a defense like that, and not try and jam it in the seams and turn the ball over. We knew if we could do that, we'd have a chance."

The 36-year-old Gannon had help from the rest of Oakland's old folks.

Bronco tight end Sharpe injured against Raiders

DENVER (AP) — Denver tight end Shannon Sharpe partially dislocated his right elbow in the first quarter against the Oakland Raiders on Monday night.

Sharpe was injured when his arm got caught under Oakland's Bill Romanowski on a pass play late in the quarter. He caught the ball with his left hand, but it popped loose

when Romanowski fell on him. Sharpe lay on the field for about a minute, then went straight to the locker room for X-rays. He did not return.

Sharpe, the league's all-time leader in receptions and receiving yards by a tight end, is second on the Broncos with 38 catches for 455 yards and two touchdowns.

The 40-year-old Rice continued to play like he's 20, catching nine passes for 103 yards to break the NFL record for all-purpose yards and become the first player with 200 touchdowns.

He reached 200 TDs by adjusting his route for a 6-yard score over Tyrone Poole in the second quarter, and his 34-yard touchdown pass over Deltha O'Neal in the third quarter gave him 21,817 total yards — 14 more than Walter Payton's record.

"They guy's phenomenal," Denver safety Izell Reese said. "To be able to do that at his age and be able to do it continuously, what can you say about the guy? He's still doing, he still can do it."

Rod Woodson, Oakland's 37-year-old free safety, turned the game by doing what he does best — returning an interception for a touchdown.

Denver was poised to take a 7-3 lead on its first drive after reaching Oakland's 4, but Woodson stepped in front of Clinton Portis for an interception at the 2. He took off up the right sideline and was slowing down when Denver's Rod Smith tackled him from behind into the end zone.

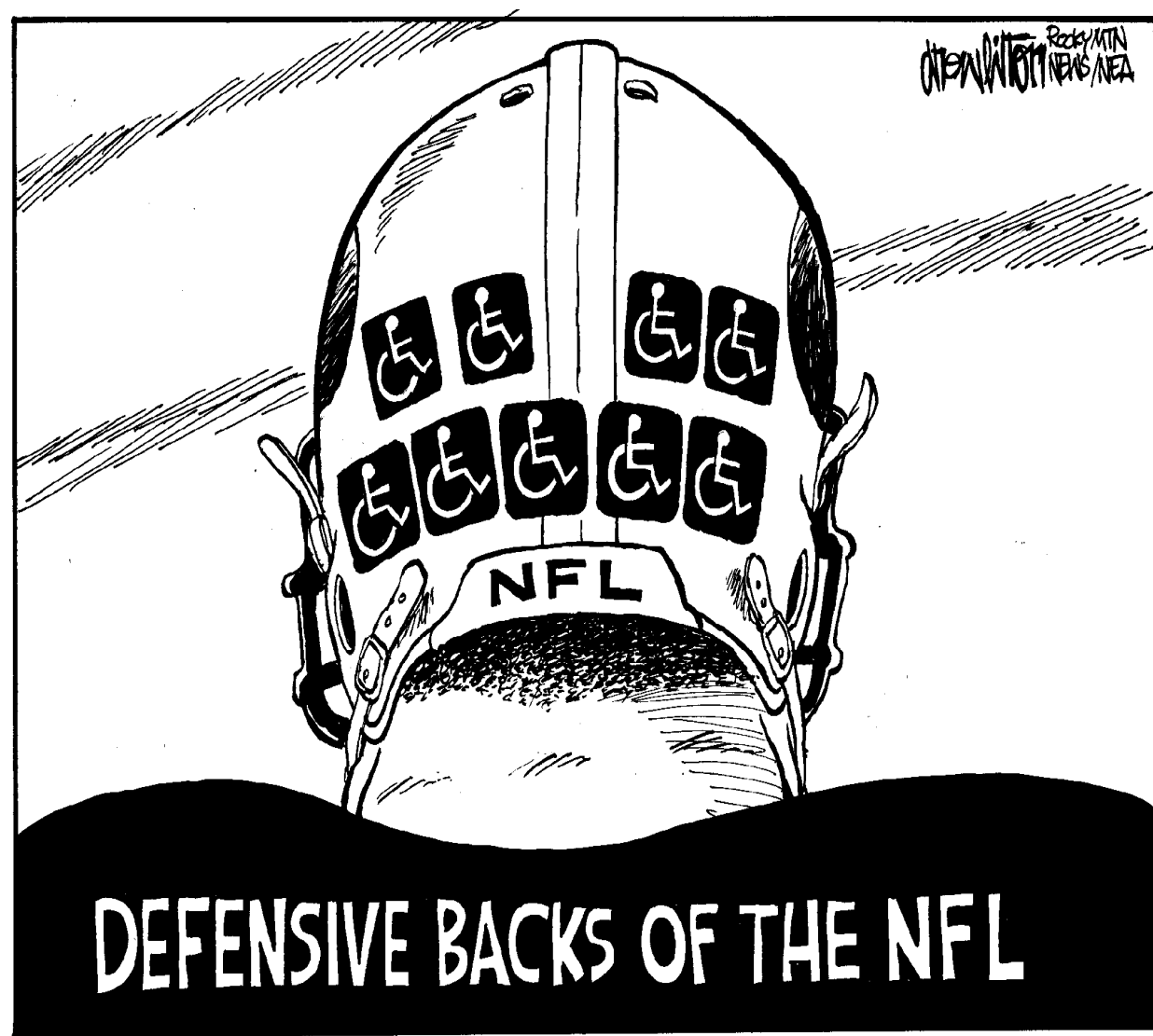
"I'm glad it wasn't over 100 yards. I was out of gas," said Woodson, who extended his own NFL record with his 12th interception return for a touchdown.

Denver never recovered. The Broncos managed just 342 yards against an Oakland defense that has struggled in recent weeks. Denver's only points came on a 1-yard touchdown run by Portis in the second quarter and a 27-yard field goal by Jason Elam in the third.

Worse yet, Broncos tight end Shannon Sharpe is expected to miss 2-to-4 weeks with a partially dislocated right elbow, and defensive end Trevor Pryce will have an MRI on Tuesday on his injured knee.

"That's about as bad as it gets," Denver linebacker John Mobley said. "I wouldn't say they wanted it more than us, but they came in here pretty desperate."

Notes: ABC celebrated the game as its 500th on "Monday Night Football." ... Oakland won in Denver for the first time since beating the Broncos 48-16 on Sept. 18, 1994 — a span of eight games. ... Denver is 6-0 in games played during the day and 0-3 in night games this season. ... The 75,822 fans set an Invesco Field at Mile High record for a Broncos game. ... Gannon's 34 completions were the second-most allowed by Denver, one short of the record he holds. ... The record for most consecutive completions is 22, set by San Francisco's Joe Montana in two games in 1987.



As Chief's defense rises, offense slumps

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — The world is rife with irony for the Kansas City Chiefs these days.

For almost the entire first half of the season, their defense stumbled around as a laughingstock while their offense soared with the best.

They were scoring more points than anyone else in the NFL and coughing them up at nearly an identical rate.

Now look what's happened. In their past two games, the Chiefs' sadsack defenders have held Oakland to 10 points and San Francisco to 17.

In September and October, that would have spelled two easy victories for Dick Vermeil's squad. But now it has meant one win, one loss and heaps

of frustration because that unstoppable offense is suddenly trailing white smoke.

In a 17-13 loss to the 49ers on Sunday, the Chiefs (4-5) managed only 16 plays in the first half and 46 for the game. They held the ball just 21:16 to San Francisco's 38:34.

Priest Holmes had only 51 yards rushing, his lowest output in almost a year. Three-time Pro Bowl tight end Tony Gonzalez caught one pass. Wide receiver Johnnie Morton didn't catch that many.

"We went into that ballgame as the No. 1 scoring team in football," a weary-looking Vermeil said Tuesday. "But we didn't come out the No. 1 scoring team."

A month ago, Vermeil warned that maintaining their high-octane offense at such a level would be "very, very tough."

Now events seem to be bearing him out.

"I've not been disillusioned by it," he said. "I know why you score a lot of points sometimes and why you don't and what you have to do to keep scoring."

The offense will come back to life, Vermeil predicted.

"I believe we're better than we were yesterday. I think we've proved it. But we'll have to prove it again since we didn't do it yesterday. That's the nature of this business. I think we'll go back into the scoring range that we're capable of."

But if the Chiefs need a reason to feel encouraged for the second half of the season, there's a steadily improved defense that for the past two games, at least, has not looked or played like the worst in the league.

"We gave (San Francisco) 105 yards of total offense in the second half. We're doing better," Vermeil said. "They couldn't break out. The one big play they got was a 19-yard reverse and we had a defensive mistake in the signals."

"And I've said that all along, that there are signs of things getting better, players getting better, scheme improving. It's a shame we weren't rewarded. But the fact is they controlled the clock like they did, and had so many more offensive opportunities to win the game than we did."

Penalties in key situations were also key to the loss in San Francisco. Gonzalez was furious over a holding call on him that nullified a 44-yard run by Holmes that would have put the Chiefs on the 3.

"That was a bad call," Gonzalez said. "I block like that every play."

Adding to his frustration, he said, was the fact he was getting held but officials would not call it.

Vermeil said he usually alerts the back judge before every game to watch for Gonzalez being held.

"Tony's used to it," he said.

"When you're a marquee player and you line up in a tight end position, you get held. I just know it's going to happen. He got held up some, no question. I know we've got to get the ball into Tony Gonzalez's hands to be more productive."

Oklahoma, Stoops looking to rebound at Baylor

By R.B. Fallstrom
AP Sports Writer

For the first time all season, Oklahoma is not OK.

Coach Bob Stoops is confident the Sooners, knocked from No. 1 to No. 4 by an upset loss to Texas A&M on Saturday, will bounce back. But he recognizes that taking that first loss this late in the season carries extra sting.

"There are added mental difference when you've won for a long period of time," Stoops said Monday on the Big 12 coaches teleconference. "Regardless of what anybody says, all the BCS talk, all the media attention, you have to deal with all of that."

Stoops said Oklahoma players might have been unduly influenced by positive press during their 8-0 start.

"Dealing with the media is a different dynamic than it used to be," Stoops said. "Our players are smart and know it doesn't mean anything, but it can take some of the edge off."

The Sooners (8-1, 4-1 Big 12) trail Texas (9-1, 5-1) in the South Division

heading into Saturday's game against Baylor.

"We didn't walk out of that locker room with our tail between our legs," Stoops said. "We also recognize we've got a lot in front of us, and it'll be up to us how we go after it."

"We still believe we're a much better team than a year ago and whether we can finish it, we'll find out."

Stoops pointed at secondary breakdowns as the primary reason the Sooners aren't still unbeaten. On all four of Texas A&M freshman quarterback Reggie McNeal's touchdown passes, he said the receivers were wide open. "Can we play better? I think so," Stoops said. "Bottom line is we didn't. Why it happens, I don't know."

Baylor coach Kevin Steele certainly isn't looking forward to seeing the Sooners this week.

"They don't need motivating factors at Oklahoma," Steele said. "They're going to come and play championship-style football, regardless of what happened last week."

GO FOR 2?: Knowing his defense was struggling, Missouri coach Gary Pinkel

still never considered going for a 2-point conversion and an instant verdict in Saturday's 42-35 overtime loss to Colorado after the Tigers scored late to force the extra period.

He said he never will, either. "Knowing we each have an equal opportunity in the overtime, I don't know how we could miss the conversion and look my players in the eye," Pinkel said. "I couldn't do that. I'll go in and have an equal chance to win the game, give my team a chance to win."

Pinkel didn't quibble with a perhaps controversial ruling that Darius Outlaw fumbled away the Tigers' chance in overtime.

"You know what, I really thought that was close, I didn't think it was one you could argue either way," Pinkel said. "Trust me, if I felt without question that he did not have control I would say that, but I can't say that."

BROWN FOR HEISMAN: Colorado coach Gary Barnett said junior running back Chris Brown, the nation's leading rusher with 1,617 yards, is deserving of the Heisman Trophy.

But he said he has virtually no chance of winning it because the national media seems to be preoccupied with quarterbacks and staying with preseason candidates.

"I don't think it would do me much good to talk about Chris Brown," Barnett said. "I think he's the best run-

ning back in the country and he's carrying us, but that isn't what everybody thought would happen before the season."

"You never see a guy come out of nowhere to win the Heisman. It doesn't sound like Chris has a chance."

LONG HAUL: Kansas coach Mark Mangino hasn't become discouraged by a trying first season.

"I think it's been trying at time," Mangino said. "That's what these rebuilding projects are all about."

"You've just got to hang in there and believe in yourself and the people around you."

Mangino believes players see progress, even though the record doesn't show it. And he said he'll be better-prepared next season.

"It's been a good learning experience for me," Mangino said. "There's so many things that need attention that you need to spend a great deal of time on issues that have nothing to do with Xs and Os. I think I've learned I have to budget my time well."

REGGIE'S TIME: Texas A&M's McNeal will get his first start this week against Missouri and redshirt freshman quarterback Brad Smith, after his sensational outing against Oklahoma.

"I've been trying to ease him along," coach R.C. Slocum said. "I don't think he'll get carried away with this."

"Stepping up as a starter will be part of the growing experience."

Huskers look to get win on the road over Wildcats

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska football coach Frank Solich has yet to beat Kansas State on the road, but he is hopeful the third time will be a charm when his team faces the No. 11 Wildcats on Saturday.

Solich and the Cornhuskers were disappointed in their last two trips down U.S. Highway 77 to Manhattan.

In Solich's first season in 1998, Kansas State beat Nebraska 40-30 and gave the Huskers' new coach his third loss. Two years ago, the Wildcats knocked the Huskers out of the Big 12 title hunt by only one point, 29-28.

"They're such a good program and so talented year in and year out," Solich said Monday.

While Manhattan has not been kind to Solich, his teams have always re-

turned the hospitality when Kansas State visits Lincoln, beating the Wildcats 41-15 in 1999 and 31-21 last year.

Solich said he doesn't refer to Kansas State (8-2, 4-2 Big 12) as a rival when preparing his team for the game, but he definitely treats the Wildcats like one.

"You have to make sure there is an understanding that you are playing a special team," he said. "We don't really identify rivals, but it is obvious ... you need to step it up when you face them."

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Thursday, Nov. 14 - Basketball parents meeting, 7 p.m., high school.

Monday, Nov. 18 - First possible Basketball practice; Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., high school library.

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