

Hunt says Mackovic will finish season

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — While declining to give embattled head coach John Mackovic a vote of confidence, owner Lamar Hunt of the Kansas City Chiefs said Monday no changes would be made in his struggling National Football League team before the end of the season.

The Chiefs broke training camp this season confident of making their first playoff appearance in 14 years. But a 31-3 loss to San Francisco on Sunday dropped their record to 3-8 and stretched their losing streak to a club-record seven in a row.

The Chiefs are 17-28 under Mackovic, who was hired off the Dallas Cowboy staff in 1983 to replace the fired Marv Levy. There has been speculation for several weeks that Mackovic's job was in peril.

"In light of the Chiefs' losing streak, I am aware that there is speculation regarding our coaching situation on both a national and local level," Hunt said in a statement released through the team's public relations office.

"We as an organization are deeply disappointed with our record and the team's performance over the last seven-game period. That disappointment is shared by coaches, players and management in equal portions. There is great emotion that goes into the preparation and conduct of a season and we, like the fans, are very deflated at our current status."

"The Chiefs are struggling at the moment and I'm sure John Mackovic, his assistants and the 45-man squad want to do everything possible to turn things around in the remaining five games. We are working in that direction as a total organization."



Mackovic



Hunt



The frustration of seven straight losses shows on the faces of the Chiefs' Dave Lindstrom (left) and Bob Hamm.

"I do not believe in votes of confidence in the middle of a season," the statement said. "They inevitably are distorted and misinterpreted and we would prefer to wait and evaluate the season as a whole."

Hunt made clear he would have no further comment.

"This statement must stand on its own and will not be expanded or

elaborated on," he said.

The Chiefs have played poorly in virtually every phase of the game since the onset of their losing skid. Their running game and special teams rank at the bottom of the league and the productive passing attack which netted more than 4,000 yards in 1983 has been almost nonexistent.

When Mackovic replaced Levy after the 1982 season, he began tearing down his predecessor's run-oriented foundation to install a pass-oriented offense. His team posted a 6-10 record in 1983 and won its last three games in 1984 to finish 8-8.

Amid great optimism that the club's long period of decline had finally come to an end, the Chiefs

opened the season by beating New Orleans, Seattle and the Los Angeles Raiders in three of its first four games this year. But in successive weeks, the Chiefs have lost to the Raiders, San Diego, the Los Angeles Rams, Denver, Houston, Pittsburgh and San Francisco. The Chiefs are home this week against the Indianapolis Colts.



Tim Hostetter
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

Playoff success puts MCL at top of state's leagues

Let's debate. Name the most successful high school football league in Kansas.

Naturally, if classes weren't considered, a league from Class 6A or 5A would be the best against the smaller classes in the long run. That's not debatable because it's unfair.

What I want to kick around is the best football league in relation to the class or classes (many leagues represent two or three classes) it competes in.

Let's focus our comparison on the six seasons of the '80s.

The eastern part of the state might argue for the Mid-East League (Silver Lake, Rossville, Santa Fe Trail, etc.), the Sunflower (Lawrence, Shawnee Mission schools), the Big Seven (Hiawatha, Maur Hill, Nemaha Valley), and Southeast Kansas League (Pittsburg, Parsons, Coffeyville, Independence).

The southerners would bark for the Greater Wichita League (Kapaun-Mt. Carmel, East, Carroll, South-east) — a good argument.

In this area, consistently strong leagues have been the I-70, North Central Kansas, North Central Activities Association, Mid-Continent, Northwest Kansas and Western Athletic Conference just to name several.

A quick look at the records, however, puts the Mid-Continent League at the top of my list.

Over the last five seasons and not counting this year yet, the 10-team league had a 28-10 state playoff record and had four different state champions in three different classes.

Throw in this year's playoffs, heading into this weekend's sub-state round, and that record improves to 34-11 because Norton, Plainville and Victoria have all won their bi-district and regional games in Classes 4A, 3A and 2A, respectively. WaKeeney lost to Plainville in bi-district play.

The MCL could have three teams playing for state titles on Nov. 30. Of course, Norton must beat unbeaten Mulvane, Plainville must beat unbeaten Clifton-Clyde and Victoria must beat unbeaten Caldwell for that rarity to happen.

Norton head coach Neil Melillo, who's had the Blue Jays in the state playoffs in each of his four years at the helm, offered three reasons why the MCL has been so tough over the years, and Plainville head coach Larry Friend and Victoria mentor Doug Moeckel agree.

"First, you have excellent athletes in this area who love to play the game," Melillo said. "Second, you have several schools — like Plainville, Smith Center, WaKeeney, Victoria and Norton — which have strong football traditions, and third, the league has several fine coaches."

Friend, who has coached in the league for 18 years, offers a postscript.

"There's also a lot of pride in this league," Friend said. "The kids really want to win."

Friend's Cardinals won the 3A title in 1980 and have been to the playoffs every year since except 1982.

The energetic Melillo hasn't coached a state title, but his four teams have finished second once (1983), reached the sub-state round twice (1982 and 1985) and the bi-district round once (1984).

Victoria is a team that benefits from the district playoff system because it must play the bigger schools like Norton, Plainville, Smith Center and WaKeeney in league play, then drop down to 2A competition for district play. Two of the Knights' four losses were to Norton and Plainville.

"Our league is tough enough that the teams we'll play in the playoffs aren't as tough as several of the teams we'll play during the season," Moeckel said.

The Knights won the 2A title the first year of the district format (1981). This year, Victoria posted a 2-4 league record before winning all three of its district games and its first two playoff contests against Dighton and Johnson.

Last year was the first time this decade that the MCL didn't have a state champion. In addition to Plainville and Victoria's crowns, Smith Center, under Roger Barta, won 3A in '82 and Osborne, under the dean of MCL coaches, Dave Johnson (23 years), won 3A in '83.

I agree that the MCL has excellent coaching, but the heart of the success lies in the pride of those hard-nosed kids from rural communities. Those kids have an innate trait to reach the "Big Game" and show the rest of the state what they're made of.

Marymount treks to Dodge City to face SMOP

DODGE CITY — Marymount's men's basketball team continues its busy early-season schedule tonight when the Spartans visit St. Mary of the Plains.

Tipoff is scheduled for 8 p.m. at the Sheridan Activities Center.

The Spartans, 2-1, are coming off a third-place finish in the Benedictine Tipoff Classic last weekend. Marymount dropped a 72-70 decision to Hastings Friday night but bounced back to defeat host Benedictine in the consolation contest on Saturday, 79-53.

Sophomore Lonnie Sanders continues to sparkle for the Spartans. The 6-6 forward scored 32 points and grabbed 21 rebounds in the two tournament games.

"I think Lonnie is always going to be productive for us," said MC coach Dan Pratt. "And the rest of our offense will be by committee."

To date, the committee has played well. In the loss to Hastings, sophomore guard Todd Rhine scored a career-high 16 points. Another sophomore, 6-4 forward Gerard Ward, also had a career-high 16 points in the victory over Benedictine. Senior forward Anthony Stephens continues to lead Marymount in rebounding as he snared a career-high 15 boards in the Benedictine win.

"We've received some good support from some guys," Pratt said. "But we still have some question marks — we've only seen it (good performances) once in some cases."

Tonight's game will be the home opener for St. Mary of the Plains. The Cavaliers have split their first two road games, dropping an 82-47 decision to Oklahoma Christian and defeating Colorado College, 85-75.

Senior center Larry Williams and junior forward Robert Wilks have paced the Cavs' attack in the early going. Williams, 6-6, has scored 33 points and grabbed 18 rebounds in two games, while Wilks is averaging 15 points and 6.5 rebounds per contest.

"It's always tough to play at Dodge City," said Pratt, who is 1-0 at Sheridan since he took over the Spartan program four years ago.

Following tonight's game, Marymount returns to Smoot Gymnasium Wednesday when the Spartans entertain Benedictine in a 7:30 p.m. contest.

"Playing Benedictine so soon will be awful tough," Pratt said. "But at least we get them at home this time."



Sanders

McGee adds MVP to NL batting title

NEW YORK (AP) — Batting champion Willie McGee, the flashy center fielder of the National League champion St. Louis Cardinals, was named the NL's Most Valuable Player by the Baseball Writers Association of America on Monday.

McGee received 14 first place votes from a 24-writer panel, two from each league city, and finished with 280 points.

Dave Parker of the Cincinnati Reds, who led the league with 125 runs batted in, finished second with six firsts and 220 points. Pedro Guerrero of the West champion Los Angeles Dodgers was third with three firsts and 208 points and pitcher Dwight Gooden of the New York Mets, who won the Cy Young Award last week, finished fourth with one first and 162 points.

Tommy Herr of St. Louis, Gary Carter of New York, Dale Murphy of Atlanta, Keith Hernandez of New York, John Tudor of St. Louis and Jack Clark of St. Louis completed the top 10.

McGee, Parker and Guerrero were the only players listed on all 24 ballots. Points were assigned 14-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 with voters asked to list 10 players on their ballots.

"I feel I'm still young and I still have some things to learn," the 27-year-old outfielder said in a conference call from his Richmond, Calif., home. "This has been a special season for me. I'm most proud of the Cardinals as a team and an organization."

McGee became the ninth Cardinal player to win the NL batting title, hitting .353 last season. It was the highest average ever for a NL switch-hitter, topping the mark of .348 by Frankie Frisch of the New York Giants in 1923 and matched by Pete Rose in 1969. Mickey Mantle of the New York Yankees set the major league mark in 1957 when he batted .365.

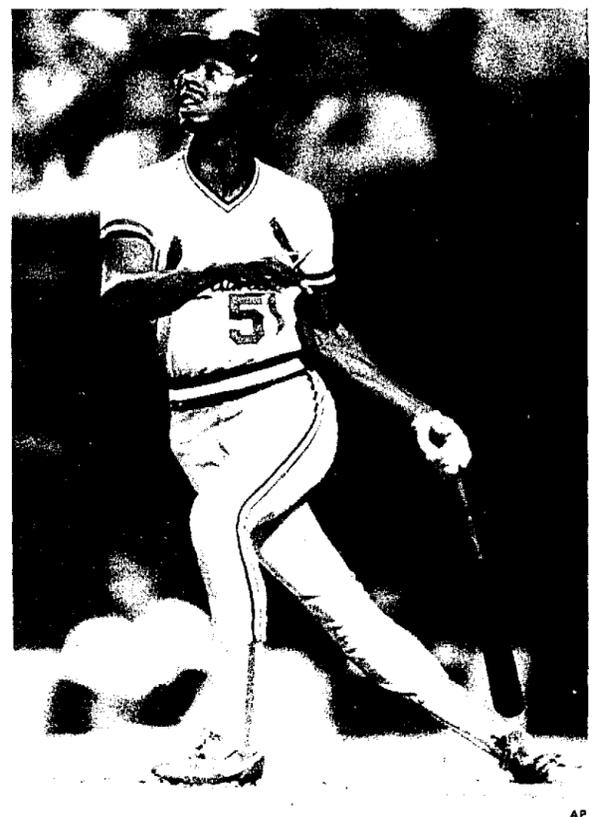
Coming into the season, McGee said, "I thought I had to improve my batting right-handed and I felt I had to be more disciplined at the plate. I'd rather be known as an all-around ballplayer able to help the team win in different ways."

Batting second in the Cardinal lineup, McGee led the league with 216 hits and 18 triples. He scored 114 runs, third in the league and, with rookie leadoff man Vince Coleman, served as the catalyst for the racehorse St. Louis attack which produced 311 stolen bases.

The Cardinals acquired McGee from the New York Yankees in exchange for pitcher Bob Sykes on Oct. 21, 1981.

"I read about the trade in the small type in the newspaper," McGee recalled. "I called the club a few days later and I said, 'I think I belong to you. What are your plans for me?'"

McGee started the 1982 season at Louisville of the American Association and was called up in May to replace injured David Green. He won a regular job, batting .296 and helping the Cardinals win the world championship. In the Series, he set



Willie McGee is the 14th Cardinal to win MVP honors.

a record for rookies by hitting two home runs in Game 3. His 24 putouts in the seven games tied another record.

McGee became the 14th Cardinal MVP winner since the BBWAA began the award in 1931. The last one was Hernandez, now with the New York Mets, who shared the

award in 1979 with Pittsburgh's Willie Stargell.

Gooden and Tudor, who was second in the Cy Young voting, were the only pitchers to finish in the MVP top 10.

The American League MVP award will be announced Wednesday.

Lakers appear ready for another NBA title

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP) — It's early in the season, but the Los Angeles Lakers appear to be playing even better than when they won the National Basketball Association title last season.

"When I was with the Lakers, we'd look at tapes and see a lot of little things we did wrong," says Dave Wohl, who spent the last three years as a Los Angeles assistant before becoming head coach of the New Jersey Nets.

"Now that I'm coaching against them, I watch tapes of the Lakers and I don't find any weaknesses. They don't do anything wrong. They're awesome."

The 1985-86 Lakers, seeking to become the first team to repeat as NBA champions since Boston did it in 1968-69, are off to a 10-1 start, the league's top record and their best start since they moved to Los Angeles in 1960.

They've won six straight after losing to the Cleveland Cavaliers Nov. 5, and have outscored

their opponents by an average of more than 14 points in their 11 games.

Lakers coach Pat Riley, although saying that there's still a lot of room for improvement, believes the players' experience as a unit — most of the same group has won three NBA titles in the past six years — is extremely important.

"Maybe the biggest thing this team has going for it is its chemistry," Riley said. "The players on this team have been blending together for a long time."

"It's on and off the court. They know each other very well, understand each other and like each other. During a game, they can almost sense what the other players are going to do."

Said Wohl: "In addition to having great talent, I think they have supreme confidence in each other because the nucleus of the team has been together for so long. Not only do they know what each other

is going to be doing during a game, they have that feeling that they're always going to be able to find a way to win."

The Lakers are winning the same way they did last season, with 38-year-old Kareem Abdul-Jabbar dominating the middle and guard Earvin "Magic" Johnson igniting the offense. And they've gained new dimension up front with the addition of forwards Maurice Lucas, a veteran, and A.C. Green, a rookie.

Lucas has averaged 10.9 points and 7.4 rebounds coming off the bench. Green, selected by the Lakers out of Oregon State as the 23rd player taken in the draft, has averaged 9.8 points and 5.9 rebounds.

"I think one of the strengths of this team, because of its time together, is that adjustments aren't made for new players," Riley said. "They are expected to blend into it, and they do."