

Abilene places four on 4-5A squad

By HAROLD BECHARD
There probably wasn't another football team in the state that dominated its class like the Abilene Cowboys.

Oh sure, there was Douglass with its 13-0 record (the same as Abilene) in Class 3A, but even the Bulldogs had trouble with several opponents.

Abilene didn't. Coach Paul Dennis' club was as close to perfect as you can get. The Cowboys piled up 3,927 yards of total offense to 1,845 for their opponents and outscored them 361 to 46. Only Moscow in Eight-Man may have done as good.

Four players from that awesome Class 4A State Championship team — Kirk Lowry, Ben Sexton, Steve Flynn and Shane Palmer — head The Journal's Class 4-5A All-Area Football Team.

Other players on the 11-man squad are Tracy Clements of McPherson, Curtis Cobb and Jim Sargent of Russell, Bob Runge of Concordia, Dave Reed of Goodland, Rod Weinman of Phillipsburg and Verl Neidens of WaKeeney.

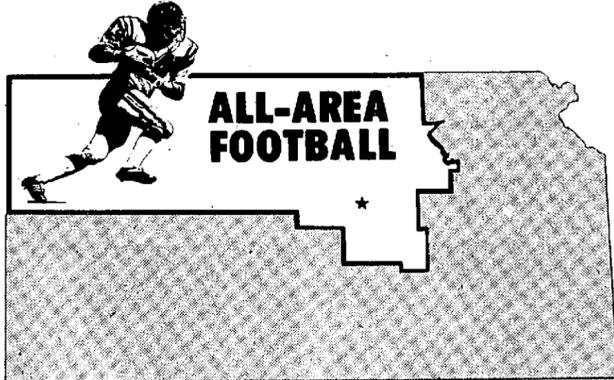
Lowry, a 6-0, 185-pound senior, has been a three-year starter for the Cowboys. He played fullback as a sophomore when Frank Wattleit (now at KU) was the quarterback and then took over the controls his junior and senior years.

Lowry has picked up 2,347 yards of total offense in his career, 16 touchdowns passing and 19 running. His completion ratio was 52 percent, which is outstanding on a wishbone team. He also played strong safety and was the kickoff man and punter.

"He really made our wishbone go," said Dennis. "I think he represented what it was all about on offense and defense for us this year."

Sexton, a 6-0, 230-pound senior, anchored an Abilene defensive line that allowed just 75 yards a game rushing. He has been a three-year starter on defense and was a starter on offense for some of his junior year. The Cowboys' defensive captain was in on 97 tackles in '78 and 200 in his career.

"Ben has been a real durable player



for us," said Dennis. "He did miss the first game last season because of an injury, but he has played in all the rest. He's been right at the top of the defensive charts the past two years and played with a lot of intensity this season. He gave us a lot of leadership."

The 5-11, 170-pound Flynn was the surprise of the year for Dennis. The senior halfback gained just 41 yards on eight carries his junior year and spent most of the time on the "B" team. But in his final prep season, he went wild with 1,627 yards rushing and 20 touchdowns on 234 attempts. Those stats represent 12 games. He missed one earlier in the year with an injury. The rushing and touchdown totals also are school records.

"Steve was really tremendous for us," said Dennis. "That's what you like to see when you're coaching — to have a player come along and mature like he did. It also makes me look like a very smart coach or a very dumb one."

Palmer, a 6-3, 205-pound senior, was the only two-way starter on the line for Abilene. The Cowboys' big tackle was in on 51 tackles on defense, but it was on offense where he made All-NCKL first team honors.

"Shane started three years for us at offensive tackle," said Dennis. "It's kind of hard to keep stats on a guy offensively, but he was outstanding for us ... one of the best we've ever had."

"He is the type of player that just loves to play. He's started 34 straight

games at offensive tackle and I don't think he's ever been hurt. Potentially he's our best college prospect. He could get up to 235 with his kind of height."

McPherson a surprise

McPherson surprised several people the past season with its 8-2 record, Ark Valley League co-championship and a spot in the Class 5A playoffs. And even after coach John Hoffman's Bullpups had defeated an opponent, that team was wondering how it happened. After all, McPherson was small throughout its lineup. But what the "Pups" lacked in physical ability, they made up with a lot of other intangibles.

Tracy Clements, a 5-10, 165-pound nose guard, was that kind of player for Hoffman. He was an All-AVL performer on defense even though he was outweighed by 20 or 30 pounds every Friday night.

"The biggest strong point for Tracy was his quickness," said Hoffman, who was voted the coach of the year in the AVL. "He was the big play man for us. We did a lot of stunting and he was also trying to make things happen. He was double-teamed most of the time."

Runge good receiver

Concordia's Runge, a 6-1, 157-pound senior, was an All-Area 3A selection last year as well as a first team Top 12 pick. He caught 35 passes for 590 yards and four touchdowns this season and nabbed 68 in his career.

"I think he's got a great knack for



Bob Runge



Dave Reed



Ben Sexton



Tracy Clements



Shane Palmer



Rod Weinman



Jim Sargent



Kirk Lowry



Curtis Cobb



Steve Flynn

getting open," said coach Ron Gardner. "He has the best pair of hands I've ever seen. He made some unbelievable catches this year whether it was falling down, falling backwards or falling out of bounds."

Rod Weinman from Phillipsburg was in on 117 tackles, caused five fumbles and recovered five bobbles on defense for the Panthers. The 5-11, 195-pound senior played tackle on both offense and defense and was All-MCL both ways.

"Rod was by far the leader on defense for us until he got hurt and had to miss a game against Hill City," said coach Dave Koelsch. "The week we didn't have him you could really tell it. He handled people pretty well all season long. When we needed the yardage, we ran over his position. There weren't very many teams that he wasn't successful against."

Curtis Cobb is one of two juniors from Russell on the 4-5A first team. The 5-10, 184-pound halfback rushed for 1,063 yards and 10 touchdowns while averaging 5.7 yards a carry. He also caught 12 passes for two scores. His best game of the season came against Thomas More Prep when he ran for a school-record 276 yards and was named the Area Player of the Week.

"We think he's as good as any back in the league," said coach Herb LaMar. "He played about half the time his sophomore season because we brought him along kind of slow, but we feel he's going to be an outstanding player next year."

The other junior from Russell on the first team is Sargent, a 5-9, 170-pound linebacker, who was the top defender in the Mid-State AA with 217 defensive points (two points for an unassisted tackle and one for an assist). He was a

unanimous all-league choice on defense and was also the top vote-getter at the guard position on offense.

"Jim's pretty quick and is just a very alert player," said LaMar. "He has an excellent football mind. He's also a hard worker and is already working with the weight machine. We hope to get him up to 185 next year."

Top receiver

Dave Reed of Goodland caught more football thrown to him than any other player in the area this season. The 5-10, 155-pound junior, latched on to 50 passes for 561 yards and four touchdowns. He also led the NWKL with six pass interceptions from his safety spot and was involved in 58 tackles.

"Dave is a converted quarterback and he really came through for us," said Cowboy coach Richard Anderson. "After a few games, it became appar-

ent he was our only receiver, so he drew double coverage a lot. In our last game, he caught nine passes while being harassed by two defenders. He plans on teaching someone to play quarterback next year so can stay at split end."

WaKeeney's Neidens was an All-MCL performer at fullback and defensive end for coach Earl Barber's club. He gained 958 yards rushing on 166 carries and scored nine touchdowns for the 8-2 Golden Eagles. On defense, he was in on 73 tackles and blocked four punts.

"Verl is a very deceptive player," said WaKeeney coach Earl Barber. "Sometimes he accomplishes more in a game than I give him credit for. He did a much better job this year than I've given him credit for. He's played that defensive end position for us three years now and has done it extremely well."

All-Area 4-5A Team

Player — School	Hgt	Wgt	Yr.	Position
FIRST TEAM				
BOB RUNGE — Concordia	6-1	157	Sr.	End
DAVE REED — Goodland	5-10	155	Jr.	End
BEN SEXTON — Abilene	6-0	230	Sr.	Lineman
TRACY CLEMENTS — McPherson	5-9	165	Sr.	Lineman
SHANE PALMER — Abilene	6-3	205	Sr.	Lineman
ROD WEINMAN — Phillipsburg	5-11	195	Sr.	Lineman
JIM SARGENT — Russell	5-9	170	Jr.	OG-LB
KIRK LOWRY — Abilene	6-0	185	Sr.	QB-S
VERL NEIDENS — WaKeeney	6-0	170	Sr.	DE-FB
CURTIS COBB — Russell	5-10	184	Jr.	Back
STEVE FLYNN — Abilene	5-11	170	Sr.	Back
SECOND TEAM				
MARK BROWN — Norton	6-5	205	Sr.	End
MIKE WEDEL — Minneapolis	5-11	155	Sr.	End
MIKE LACY — McPherson	6-0	162	Sr.	Lineman
MARK CEROSOVSKY — Colby	5-8	150	Sr.	Linebacker
RAY CARLETON — Clay Center	5-9	160	Sr.	Lineman
JERRY FOSE — WaKeeney	5-10	162	Sr.	Lineman
CRAIG WEST — Abilene	5-9	165	Sr.	Lineman
TOM PITNER — Goodland	6-0	180	Sr.	QB-LB
SCOTT FULHAGE — Beloit	5-11	184	Jr.	FB-LB
TERRY SCHIPPERS — T. M. P.	6-1	170	Jr.	HB-DB
DAVID LETOURNEAU — Concordia	5-10	160	Sr.	QB-DB
DOUG SCHROEDER — McPherson	5-10	150	Sr.	QB-K
HONORABLE MENTION				
BRIAN HOWIE — Chapman, ERIC HUBER — Concordia, KEITH WALTERS — Thomas More Prep, ROGER WEINMAN — Phillipsburg, RON JOHNSON — Concordia, KARMAN KINDALL — Minneapolis, AXEL THOMAS — Concordia, DAVID BAUGH — Abilene, CRAIG HENKLE — Abilene, PHIL NEEDHAM — Abilene, KIRK HAMILTON — WaKeeney, CREIGHTON LARSON — WaKeeney, NOEL SCHREINER — WaKeeney, STAN JOHNSON — Hays, MARK WITTEK — Clay Center, KEVIN ADAMS — Hays, ERIK ANDERSON — Abilene, CHARLES STOFFER — Abilene, BRIAN LAMAR — Russell, MARTIN CROSON — Minneapolis, BRIAN PIERSEE — Minneapolis, WENDALL NORTH — McPherson, BRAD MINEAR — McPherson, J. W. Antrim, GLEN TROUCHET — Chapman, KENT LIPPS — Clay Center, BRIAN REID — Beloit, TROY HAWK — Beloit, LYNDON McClintock — Beloit, CURT PEIRANO — Russell, BLAINE MAIER — Russell.				

5 picked from New Mexico State

6 Tulsa players get MV honors

TULSA, Okla. (UPI) — Tulsa, which made a dramatic turnaround this year, and New Mexico State, which won its first outright championship, dominate the United Press International All-Missouri Valley Conference football team this year.

The Hurricane, which finished 9-2 this year after 1977's 3-8 mark, placed six players on the UPI first team, while NMSU under first-year coach Gil Krueger had five players on the first team.

Offensively, the team selected by league coaches includes New Mexico State's big play combination of quarterback David Spriggs and wide receiver Jeff Evans along with record-setting placekicker Skip Vernon.

Spriggs led the conference in both passing and total offense as he threw for 2,558 yards and 17 touchdowns while averaging 254.7 yards per game total offense. Evans was the league's leading receiver with 48 catches for 926 yards, while Vernon set a Valley record with 39 career field goals.

Tulsa also had three first team offensive players, headed by wide receiver Rickey Watts. Watts caught 34 passes for 740 yards, and his 21.5-yard per catch average was the best in the conference. Watts was joined on the first



team offense by senior tackle Doug Panfil and junior center Steve Nicholson.

WSU player picked

The rest of the offensive team includes tight end Hugh Fletcher of Southern Illinois; linemen Jack Matia of Drake, Barry Bales of Wichita State and Bryon Honore of Southern Illinois; running backs Bernell Quinn of Southern Illinois and Bo Robinson of West Texas State.

Quinn won the MVC rushing title with 939 yards, despite missing the last two games with an injury, while Robinson finished his college career with 3,542 yards rushing, a conference career record.

Bales, Robinson and Vernon are all repeaters from the 1977 all-conference team.

Smith repeats

The defensive line is made up of Tulsa sophomore Don Blackmon, New Mexico State junior Dan Plantz and seniors Gary Gamen of Indiana State, David Glover of Drake and Willie Smith of Wichita State, a repeater from last year. The linebackers are Brian An-

derson of Wichita State and Dusty Furr of New Mexico State.

The defensive backfield includes Indiana State sophomore John Allman and Tulsa junior Lovie Smith and seniors Curtis Lofton of West Texas State and Ron Geels of Southern Illinois.

Tulsa punter Eddie Hare, who led the Valley with a 43.1 average and set a conference record with a career punting average of 41.9 in three seasons with the Hurricane, made the team for a second consecutive year.

Overall, the all-conference team includes 15 seniors, seven juniors and two sophomores.

Name, School	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
High Filchr, SI	TE	6-3	230	Sr.
Jiff Evans, NM	WR	5-10	179	Jr.
Ricky Watts, TI	WR	6-1	200	Sr.
Stiv Nelson, TI	C	6-0	230	Jr.
Doug Panfil, TI	OL	6-5	241	Sr.
Jack Matia, Drake	OL	6-7	279	Sr.
Bryon Bales, WSU	OL	6-4	225	Sr.
Bryon Honr, SIU	OL	5-10	235	Jr.
Dvd Spriggs, N	QB	6-1	210	Sr.
Brnell Quinn, SI	RB	5-8	195	Jr.
B Robinson, WTS	RB	6-2	217	Sr.
Skip Vernon, NM	K	5-10	174	Sr.
Defense				
Don Blackmon, T	DL	6-3	225	So.
Will Smith, WS	DL	6-3	225	Sr.
Jiff Evans, ISU	DL	6-2	212	Sr.
Dvd Glover, Drake	DL	6-0	238	Sr.
Dn Plantz, NM	DL	6-3	213	Jr.
Brn Andrsn, WS	LB	6-0	210	Jr.
Dsty Furr, NM	LB	6-1	216	Sr.
Lov Smith, TI	DB	6-2	195	Jr.
Crts Lftrn, WT	DB	6-0	180	Sr.
Jhn Allman, IS	DB	6-0	179	So.
Ron Geels, SIU	DB	5-11	190	Sr.
Eddie Hare, TI	P	6-5	200	Sr.

Florida fires grid coach Doug Dickey

GAINESVILLE, Fla. (UPI) — Arkansas' Lou Holtz, Clemson's Charlie Pell and Kentucky's Fran Curci head speculation Thursday over who will replace Doug Dickey as Florida's head football coach.

Dickey got his "Dear Doug" letter from University President Robert Q. Marston at 6:15 p.m. Wednesday. He was fired after nine years coaching the Gators.

"The central fact is that I have become persuaded that a change in coaches at this time is more likely to improve the health of the university than would be the case should you be continued," Marston said in the letter.

Dickey's dismissal despite a respectable 58-42-2 record and four bowl appearances had been rumored for weeks and reported as fact in several news-

papers around the state in the last two days. Dickey's biggest problem was his inability to bring Florida its first Southeastern Conference championship in history.

Dickey will be paid about \$150,000 for the remaining three years of his contract, officials said, the bulk of it coming from alumni contributions.

Dickey declined to comment at length on the dismissal, promising he will have more to say after his 4-6 Gators wind up the season against Miami Saturday.

But he did say, "I'm disappointed that we are at this point," then added, "This university is deserving of the best and I am hopeful that this university and the players will have the best."

Former referee sues the NBA

PHILADELPHIA (UPI) — A former professional basketball referee Wednesday filed a suit in federal court against the National Basketball Association, charging the league damaged his reputation and ended his career.

Mark Schlafman of Swampscott, Mass., alleged that the NBA "shamed, discredited, embarrassed and humiliated" him by labeling him an incompetent referee. He sought \$850,000 in damages.

According to the suit, the NBA, headquartered in New York, "caused to be published and uttered" the fact that the plaintiff was the lowest rated of all

NBA officials. At the time of the merger between the NBA and the American Basketball Association in 1976, Schlafman was an ABA referee. A total of 35 referees were employed by the two leagues during the 1975-76 season. When the merger reduced the number to 26, Schlafman's job was terminated, the suit said.

In addition to the damages, the suit asked the court to declare the NBA-ABA merger unlawful under the Sherman Anti-Trust Act.

The plaintiff is represented by Attorney Richie Phillips, lawyer for NBA referees and baseball umpires.

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