

Kearney nips Reds, 14-7

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

Bishop Kearney's football season began with practices beneath the burning August sun.

It finished under the lights at the University of Rochester's Fauver Stadium on Saturday, Nov. 11, when the Fighting Kings captured the Section 5 Class A crown with a 14-7 win over Newark (7-3).

Kearney finished the year with a 7-1-1 record.

The Kings, competing as an independent team this fall, had to travel to such cities as Gloversville (near Albany) and Buffalo to find games. They scored wins over Ithaca, Gloversville, Canisius, Palmyra-Macedon, Penn Yan, and Hornell (in the sectional semifinals). They also tied Batavia and lost to Midlakes — two teams that fell in the opening rounds of sectional play.

"It's been a long season," observed head coach Nick Teta.

Learning process

"Who was supposed to fill that hole?" Teta asked firmly.

A Kearney player, dressed in a patchwork uniform on the practice field, stepped forward and explained why he moved the way he did, leaving a hole for an "opposing" running back — actually another Kearney player — to dash through.

Teta listened carefully to the explanation, pointed out the mistake the player made, and said to run the play again.

The runner was stuffed at the line this time.

The play was part of the Kings' practice last Wednesday, just four days prior to the title game against Newark. The Kearney defense was working against teammates who were simulating Newark's offense.

"A lot of people think you just show up to the game and play," Teta explained. "It's a learning process. You gotta do the recognition work so you recognize what they're doing."

Evenly matched

Against Newark, the Kings were facing an opponent very much like themselves. On defense, both teams were physically small, so they had to rely on aggressiveness to down opponents.

On offense, Newark and Kearney relied primarily on the running game. Throughout the season, the Kings handed the ball to Rene Ingoglia and Lamin Massaquoi, who combined to average more than 200 yards a game. Ingoglia entered the title game with more than 1,200 yards rushing.

Newark countered with Kurt Clements, who in the sectional semifinal against Midlakes ran for a playoff record 242 yards. Clements entered the title game with 1,251 yards on the ground.

The Reds also possessed a potent passing attack. Quarterback Nester Hernandez, who inherited the starting job in the last game of the regular season, came into the game 18-for-27 passing (228 yards) in just two games.

Kearney and Newark had scrimmaged earlier in the season. Teta said the two teams essentially played to a stand-off.

The Class A title game began with a light drizzle falling. Kearney won the toss and opted to receive the kickoff.

Ingoglia took the kickoff at the Kearney 20 and raced down field before he was tackled at Newark's 36-yard line.

Although Kearney started its first three offensive series at the Newark 36-, 37- and 36-yard lines — and even drove to the Reds' 12 — the Kings couldn't score.

Newark, meanwhile, was kept pinned deep in its own end of the field. The Reds' first-quarter possessions started on their own one-, 12- and 11-yard lines.

But the first quarter ended scoreless.

Harsh memories

At 2 p.m. the day of the game, parents of Kearney players served up a spaghetti lunch for the team.

"We do this every home game," explained Dario Armanini, the father of Kings' quarterback David Armanini and president of the Kearney Booster's Club.

When the football players finished their meal, they headed to a classroom for a last-minute review of the game plan.

In between diagramming plays on the chalkboard, the coaches reminded the players of the 12-6 loss to Midlakes on Sept. 30.

BK players were also reminded of sectional losses the last two years: the 1987 title game against Canandaigua (21-7), and a semifinal loss in 1988 to Greece Arcadia (3-0). A number of players on this year's team suffered through those losses.

"This is it," Carlisi said, addressing the seniors especially. "There is no tomorrow."

Short celebration

Kearney began the second quarter with the ball at Newark's 14-yard line, but turned it over on downs.

The Kings' defense then held Newark, and Kearney began its next possession at Newark's 46-yard line.

After Ingoglia and Massaquoi alternated carries, Kearney moved the ball to the Newark 14. Teta called a time out.

"I told them to keep their heads, just to run the plays the way they knew how," Teta later said.

On the next play, Armanini pitched to Massaquoi. The left side of the Kearney line cut down the Newark defenders, and Massaquoi dashed into the end zone untouched. Keith Osier kicked the extra point, and Kearney led 7-0 with 4:40 left in the half.

The Kearney celebration was short lived, however.

After the Kings held the Reds on Newark's next possession, Kearney's offense took over the ball at its own 32.

But Armanini fumbled the ball on the first play, and Newark recovered ball at the Kearney 33.

On Newark's first play, Kearney defensive end Bert Richardson burst into the backfield and sacked Hernandez. The ball squirted loose, and players from both teams scrambled after it. Newark recovered the ball on its own 48.

Teta told his players to fall back into their prevent defense, believing that the Reds would pass facing second and long.

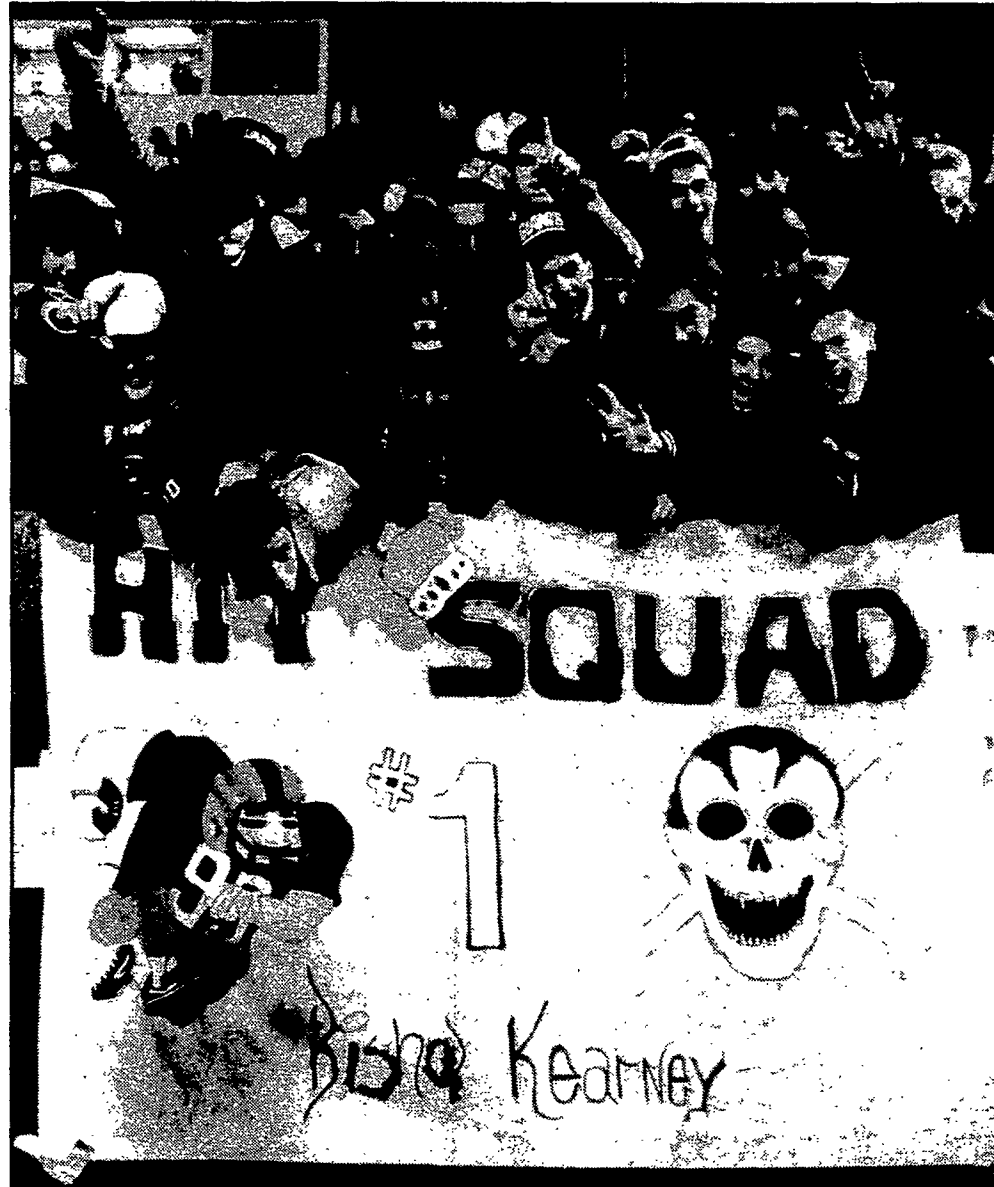
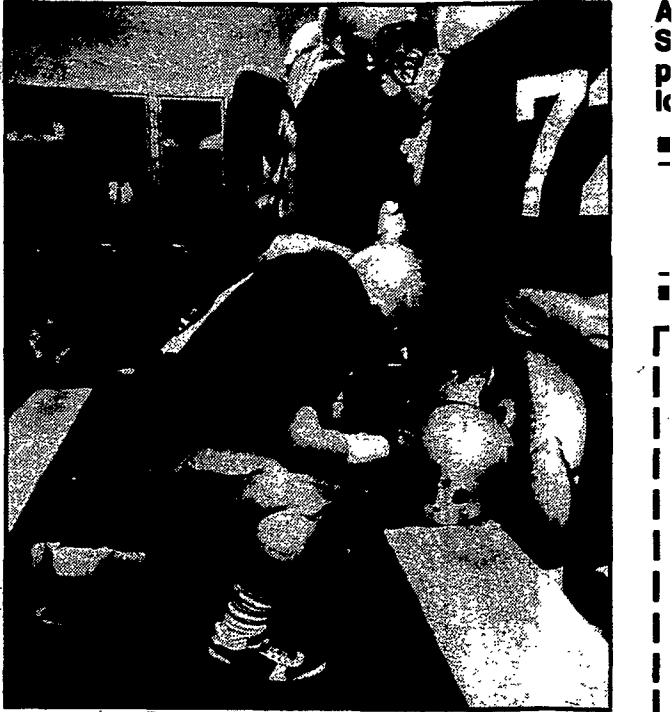
Instead, Clements took the ball on a draw play, and rumbled down to BK's 30-yard line. On the next play, Hernandez tossed a short pass over the middle to Clements, who wove through the Kings' defense for the touchdown. The kick was good, and the score was knotted 7-7.

The half ended with the score tied.

Pep talk

"Who's their best player?" Teta asked his dejected players at the half.

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Kearney fans, some of whom created the "Hit Squad" sign, celebrate Lamin Massaquoi's second-quarter touchdown that gave the Kings an early lead.

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