

sideline

TODAY IN SPORTS

Support pours in for successful Packers

MILWAUKEE (AP) — Wisconsin postal workers are showing off their Packer pride.

Outgoing mail from the Wausau Post Office has a message saying, "GO PACK GO. TO THE SUPERBOWL."

Mail at the Oshkosh Post Office is marked "GB PACKERS NFC CENTRAL DIV CHAMPS."

Jerry Clishe, operations support specialist at the Wausau Post Office processing plant, called the special stamps "a tool for a little community pride."

The Oshkosh message is mainly sprayed on metered mail, said Greg Robinson, the plant manager there.

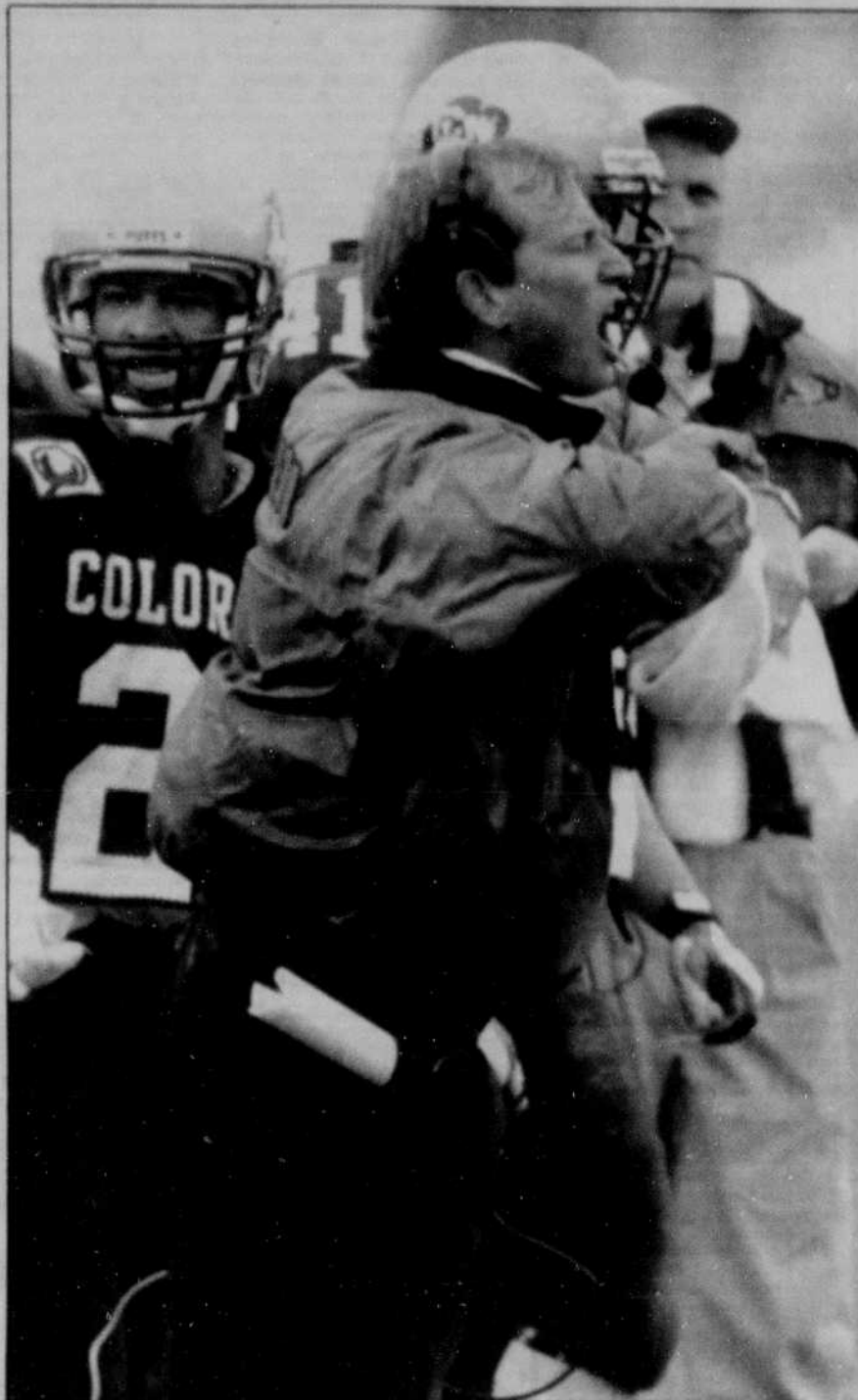
"We're doing this in fun, but at the same time, we're establishing ourselves as part of the community itself," Robinson said.

Montana to toss Super Bowl coin

TEMPE, Ariz. (AP) — Three-time Super Bowl MVP Joe Montana will handle the coin toss for the Super Bowl on Jan. 28.

Joining Montana for the pregame ceremony at Sun Devil Stadium will be the 25 MVPs from the other Super Bowls, including two-time winner Bart Starr.

Montana quarterbacked the San Francisco 49ers to four Super Bowl titles from 1982-90 and was selected the game's MVP in 1982, 1985 and 1990. He ended his 16-year NFL career in 1995 after two seasons with the Kansas City Chiefs and is now a television football analyst for NBC Sports.



In his first year as head coach, Colorado Rick Neuheisel guided his team to a 10-2 record and a No. 5 nationally ranking in the AP Top 25 poll.

No more of those darn shellackings

Being in a journalist's line of work, I have to deal with many people everyday. From athletes to coaches to other journalists. In the process, I must be careful about what I say or how I say it because of a tiny word called "ethics."

It has been argued that this holds true to the coaching profession as well; in terms of running up the score. Bobby Bowden, the head coach of Florida State's football team, has taken much criticism over the years for this very thing. Each year his Seminoles take the field on a given weekend to absolutely humiliate Poe Dunk U by some 50 points or more. And after the game, Bowden tells the media it was a good win but his team must work harder.

Although it's true that all teams have room to improve, it's not necessary for a team to take its frustrations out on a sub-par opponent. The only reason why any program — the Colorado Buffaloes for instance — would make an effort to turn a convincing win into a blowout is to improve its ranking in the national polls.

I won't argue that this isn't necessary during the regular season, because it is, for the enjoyment of the sportswriters across the nation who vote each Saturday night for the AP Top 25 poll. However, I would argue that there is no place for this during bowl games, especially this season with only one game deciding the national championship.

So what happened in this year's Cotton Bowl Classic? Colorado head coach Rick Neuheisel decides that a fake punt play would be the icing on the cake of a 32-6 rout, which ended at 38-6.

In a game that had absolutely no relevance except for pride and recruiting there was no reason for this. Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti and many of the his players felt this way after the game.

"I'm not upset about the fake punt," Bellotti said. "I think in coaching you do whatever you think you need to do to win; other people try to do other things. When you're ahead 32-6 I don't know why you're throwing the ball."

Tight end Josh Wilcox was a little more blunt about Neuheisel's play calling.

"I would love to talk to my dad and see what he says [about the play call]," Wilcox said. "I'm pretty sure he

OPINION



Mark
McTyre

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Hall of fame snubs Niekro, Sutton and Perez

■ **BASEBALL:** Not one of this year's 35 candidates was elected to Cooperstown

NEW YORK (AP) — Phil Niekro, Don Sutton and Tony Perez all put up good career numbers, no doubt.

Not the great ones needed for the Hall of Fame, however.

For the first time in 25 years, no player was elected to the shrine Monday as members of the Baseball Writers Association of America shut out all 35 candidates.

"I think it's getting harder and harder every year to get into the Hall of Fame," Perez said from Puerto Rico. "The baseball Hall of Fame is hard to get into right now. You have to have really super numbers or whatever; you've got to be Babe Ruth or Hank Aaron."

Only seven times ever — and not since 1971 — since the original selection in 1936 has the BBWAA failed to elect anyone. But with 75 percent support needed, Niekro was listed on

just 68.3 percent of the ballots, followed by Perez with 65.7 percent and Sutton at 63.8 percent.

While all three players had impressive totals, the knock on them has been that they were very good for two decades, rather than being great for at least 10 years. Instead of voting with sentiment, the BBWAA toughened the Hall standards and again left out Niekro and Sutton, whose 300 wins once were regarded as automatic for election.

Niekro, on the ballot for the fourth time, got 321 votes, 32 short of the 353 needed for election. The knuckleballer had a career record of 318-274.

"I really have nothing to say," Niekro said in Atlanta.

Perez, on the ballot for the fifth time, was listed on 309 of the record total of 470 ballots. He had 1,652 RBI lifetime, 16th best in modern history.

"It's disappointing," Perez said. "I don't know what will happen next year. I can go down. You never know."

Sutton, on the ballot for the third time, got 300 votes. He was

324-256 lifetime.

"He pitched a lot of games for me, won a lot of ballgames for me," Sutton's former manager, Tom Lasorda, said Monday. "You talk about durability, the guy never missed an assignment. He was a winner. I'll tell you, he belongs in the Hall of Fame."

No eligible pitcher with more wins than either Sutton or Niekro has been left out of the Hall. No eligible player with more RBI than Perez has been blanked.

But Niekro never won a Cy Young Award in his 24 years, and neither did Sutton during his 23 seasons. Perez, who hit 379 homers, never led the league in home runs or RBI in 23 years.

And, as some voters have said, those career totals have not improved since those players retired. As in, if the numbers weren't good enough the first time those players were eligible, why should they be now?

In fact, the last time a player was elected by the BBWAA beyond his first year of eligibili-

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— **Tony Perez**
Former Cincinnati Red

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ty was 1992, when Rollie Fingers made it on his second try.

"The absence of an electee this year emphasizes the exclusivity of membership in the Baseball Hall of Fame," said Hall of Fame president Donald Marr.

There is still a chance, though, someone will be enshrined during Hall of Fame induction ceremonies Aug. 4 in Cooperstown, N.Y. The festivities are held whether or not there is a new member.

The Veterans Committee, which considers players no

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ON THE TUBE

January 9

■ **4:30 p.m. ESPN** — NCAA Basketball, Illinois at Michigan

■ **5 p.m. TNT** — NBA Basketball, San Antonio at Houston

■ **6:30 p.m. ESPN** — NCAA Basketball, Kentucky at Mississippi St.

■ **7 p.m. USA** — Boxing, heavyweights, Larry Holmes (62-5-0) vs. Curt Shepard (13-2-0), at Galveston, Texas