

They overlooked Pete Kmetovic

By Bernie McCarty

Stanford introduced the modern T-formation to college football in 1940 and galloped through an unbeaten campaign climaxed by a 21-13 victory over Nebraska in the Rose Bowl. The spectacular 1940 Indian backfield featured quarterback Frankie Albert, fullback Norm Standlee, halfback Hugh Gallerneau, all recipients of All-America recognition, and junior halfback Pete Kmetovic who received no national attention at all.

In this researcher's opinion, Kmetovic ranks among the most underrated backfield performers of all time. In the two pages allotted for this essay all the usual writer's frills will be eliminated. Any inclusion of adjectives merely means a slip of the fingers between typewriter and martini glass. Ye'll just present the bare facts and you, dear reader, can render your judgement concerning the stature Kmetovic deserves in college football lore.

Sept. 28, 27-0 over San Francisco. Kmetovic scored two TD's on a 59-yard punt return and four-yard run. He intercepted a pass deep in Indian territory to stop one USF drive.

Oct. 5, 13-0 over Oregon. Kmetovic ran three yards for the first score.

Oct. 12, 7-6 over Santa Clara. Stanford drove 41 yards to its lone TD. The big play of the march was Kmetovic's 20-yard sweep with a pitchout. The Indians managed only four first downs in the game.

Oct. 19, 26-14 over Washington State. One of Kmetovic's best games. WSU led 7-0 in the first quarter. Kmetovic reversed 52 yards off tackle to the 10, setting up the tying TD. He also ran 19 yards to the one to set up another tallie, and had other dashes of 15, 13, 11 and 10 yards. Despite twice losing ground, he rushed nine times for either 86 or 113 net yards, depending on which source one believes.

Oct. 26, 21-7 over Southern California. The score was tied 7-7 until the final 9 minutes when Stanford scored two TD's. It was literally all Kmetovic in the first TD advance. He returned a punt 21 yards, then scored on a 60-yard pass from Albert. Kmetovic was injured twice in the game.

Nov. 2, 20-14 over UCLA. Kmetovic ran 33 yards to the five to set up the first 23, and his 24-yard pass reception set up the third tallie. He rushed 11 times for 81 yards.

Nov. 9, 20-10 over Washington. A big showdown for the Coast title and Kmetovic was the hero of Stanford's rally. Washington, undefeated in the league at the time, led 10-0 in the third period. Kmetovic took a 55-yard pass from Albert for the first TD, cutting the Huskie edge to 10-7 entering the fourth quarter. He clinched the victory by racing 45 yards with a pass theft for the third Indian TD. He also made another key defensive play, knocking down a pass intended for a wide-open receiver in the endzone.

Nov. 16, 28-14 over Oregon State. Another top all-around effort by Kmetovic. He contributed a 13-yard run to Stanford's initial TD drive. The score was knotted 7-7 at halftime. Kmetovic broke loose for 33 yards around left end

in Stanford's 51-yard drive to snap the deadlock in the third period. And he had much to do with Stanford's next two scores as the Indians tallied three TD's within nine minutes of the third stanza. Kmetovic recovered a fumble at Oregon State's 33 to launch what proved to be the winning drive, and he had a nine-yard gain in the assault. And he intercepted a pass to start the final Indian scoring advance, at which point he was pooped and retired. He rushed nine times for 72 yards.

Nov. 30, 13-7 over California. Kmetovic ran wide 19 yards to the one, and scored the first Stanford TD on the next play. He was 13 for 68 rushing.

Rose Bowl, 21-13 over Nebraska. This was Kmetovic's finest hour. Twice Nebraska took the lead, and Stanford came back each time to gain a 14-13 advantage at intermission. Kmetovic escaped for 29 and 10-yard runs to spark the first Indian scoring drive. Pass receptions of 39 and 14 Yards led a

march to the Nebraska one in the third period. The advance was halted, but it set up the clincher as the Cornhuskers were forced to punt out of a hole. On a designed play Kmetovic accepted the kick at Nebraska's 40, ran laterally across the field setting up a wall of blockers, then dashed to the endzone to seal the triumph. Kmetovic had his best day from scrimmage, rushing 14 times for either 129 or 135 yards (again confusion exists concerning Stanford's stats). And he was credited with strong pass defense at the end.

Kmetovic rates above even the great Tom Harmon as the most explosive player of 1940. He repeatedly broke loose on runs from scrimmage, pass catches, and kick and interception returns. And he excelled on defense. So why did he fail to even make somebody's All-America third team?

This writer believes All-America teams have merit and usually list a season's leading performers. For

every All-American chosen, however, there is another player of equal ability who is overlooked. Perhaps Pete Kmetovic was the most overlooked gridder of them all.