

Kearny's jersey: unique

It's a tradition, and it's also expensive

THERE ARE SOME things in football you associate with certain schools — the wishbone attack with Morse, the unbalanced line at Vista — and years ago, the color of the jersey.

Yale for instance, would wear only its blue, and Harvard wouldn't go near a football field unless clad in crimson. The filming of football games for coaching study brought about a change because it was too difficult in black and white film to tell one team from another.

It was decided that the visiting team would wear white and for the 1956 season, many schools, including Notre Dame, wore white jerseys for the first time in their history.

There is still, however, one school that you can always tell by its jersey, be it maroon or white, and that's Kearny High.

The Kearny sleeve and shoulder stripes, called a



Bud Maloney PREPS NOTEPAD

beautiful jersey by some, an aberration or a horror by others, is, if nothing else, distinctive. It is *Kearny*.

"That jersey will be here as long as I am," says Tom Barnett, now in his eighth year as the Komet football coach. "I'd hate to be the coach that changed it. The kids would go out of their minds and I'm sure there would be lynching parties among the alumni."

Kearny's traditional jersey was designed by Birt Slater, the coach whom Barnett assisted for years and succeeded in 1977. "I think it was my second year, 1960, or maybe 1961, that I decided we needed something different, something to get us going," Slater recalls. "The salesmen thought I was kind of crazy. My idea was for a jersey a little bit like the Penn (U. of Pennsylvania) uniforms that had stripes on the sleeves."

"I figured if we wore it, we'd have to win with it. We got a lot of criticism at first, but we won a lot of games, and we didn't hear much after that. It was something to live with, it was very stimulating."

Slater had no trouble getting what he wanted from the manufacturers, but that isn't the case any more. Barnett says many companies won't make them. "We almost had to go to a different jersey. They're expensive, but we wanted to keep them and S.A. Team Sports gets them for us now."

"They cost us about \$42 to \$44 a jersey compared with \$25 to \$30 for a jersey with less design," Barnett says. "We bought a set of maroon jerseys two years ago so our maroons are in a little better condition than our whites at the moment."

"Actually, we have smaller squads at Kearny now and that helps our jersey situation. We only have about 32 kids in suit right now and I've got enough jerseys for 48 or 50 kids. We used to suit up about 44 or 46."

Naturally, some jerseys get battered or torn and have to be replaced. "We are to replace them five or six at a time," Barnett says. He loses a number here and there, but that's not a big problem. One thing is a bit of a problem, however. Kearny's more expensive uniforms have to come out of the same district financing as other schools. "You have to sacrifice someplace else if you want to keep the tradition," Barnett says.

S.A. Team Sports representative Pat Maddox says that Kearny and La Jolla have the most expensive jerseys his company is supplying to San Diego-area high schools.

"Kearny's stripes are of a different material than the mesh jersey itself," Maddox says. "The mesh jersey breathes and stretches, but the stripes couldn't be done with mesh. They're not a braid, they're a smooth material that is knitted into the jersey."

La Jolla's jersey is expensive because the Vikings, too, have sought something special. La Jolla has the school logo, a Viking head, set inside the sleeve stripe, and that took some doing. The material is the same as in

the Kearny stripes.

Maddox says that S.A. Team Sports stocks no jerseys as such — they all have to come from the manufacturers. As far as replacements go, he says, "The manufacturers have a policy that if you order less than five or six, you pay 100 percent more. That means if you order only one or two, you pay twice as much."

As a designer and seller of jerseys, Maddox thinks "distinctive" is probably the best word to describe the Kearny's. "I can see where some people wouldn't like it, but I think it's a beautiful jersey."

"I think it is very intimidating (which is what Slater had in mind). I can remember when I was at University High and we'd play Kearny at Mesa College. They'd march up the street from the school wearing capes, and then when they got to the field and took off the capes, you'd see those stripes. It was very intimidating."

If you see a lot of football and if you've seen a Kearny team play since 1961, you know what Maddox is saying. The impression those stripes make is indelible, and for a great many of those years, they were very intimidating as well.

MONEY MAKER — The Crawford-Lincoln Central League game, originally scheduled as an afternoon contest at Hoover on Friday, Nov. 9, has been rescheduled as a night game at Mesa College on the same date. The kickoff is now set for 7.

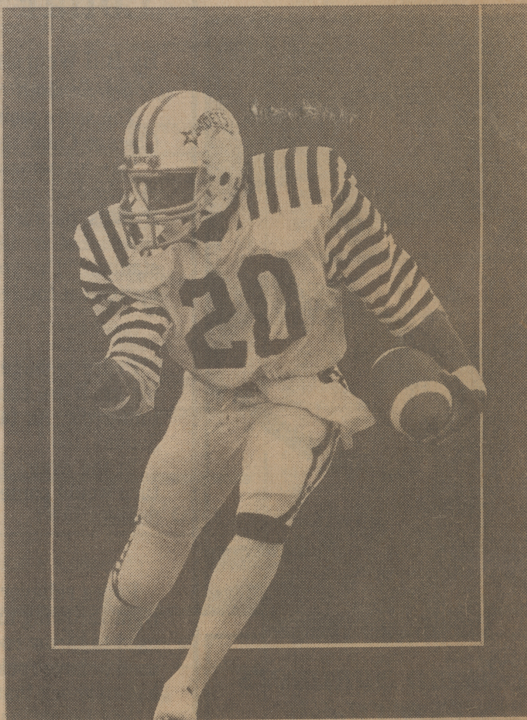
The two probably will be battling for a championship and/or San Diego CIF playoff berths, and with the Mesa field open, it's a chance to offer the public a good matchup and for the schools to make a few much-needed dollars.

TONIGHT'S GAMES — Lincoln will be in action this evening at Mesa College in what has become an annual Southeast San Diego neighborhood battle against Morse. The kickoff is at 8 with a near-capacity crowd expected.

Tonight's game will be the 18th between the two with Lincoln holding a 9-8 edge in the series. Morse won last year, Lincoln two years ago when the rivalry was revived after a four-year lapse.

There will be three other games played in San Diego tonight and a fourth in El Cajon where Christian and Marian collide in Valley Stadium at 7:30.

Rivaling the Lincoln-Morse contest in intensity will be an encounter between Clairemont and Mira Mesa on the Mira Mesa field at 8. In additional 8 o'clock games, No. 1 ranked Sweetwater will play at Madison, and La Jolla will be at San Diego High.



THE FAMED KEARNY JERSEY