

A MAN OF STATURE

Goode's numbers crunching has helped Super Bowl teams

By SAM FARMER
Times Staff Writer

Through five games, the Kansas City Chiefs have the most prolific offense in franchise history. They have scored a league-high 85 points in the fourth quarter, more than the total points of 11 teams. Part of that success is due to Trent Green, who has a quarterback rating of 115.0, best in the league. Part is due to running back Priest Holmes, who leads the league with 803 yards from scrimmage.

And part is due to Bud Goode, a 79-year-old retired TV executive from Studio City who has 10 cats and a passion for gardening.

"Bud is phenomenal," said Lynn Stiles, Kansas City's vice president of football operations. "His intelligence is off the Richter scale."

For the last 40 years, Goode has used his extensive mathematics background to collect, analyze and interpret football statistics, anything to give paying clients the slightest edge. And those clients pay handsomely; he works for two NFL teams, the Chiefs and Philadelphia Eagles, and they pay about \$20,000 a season for his services.

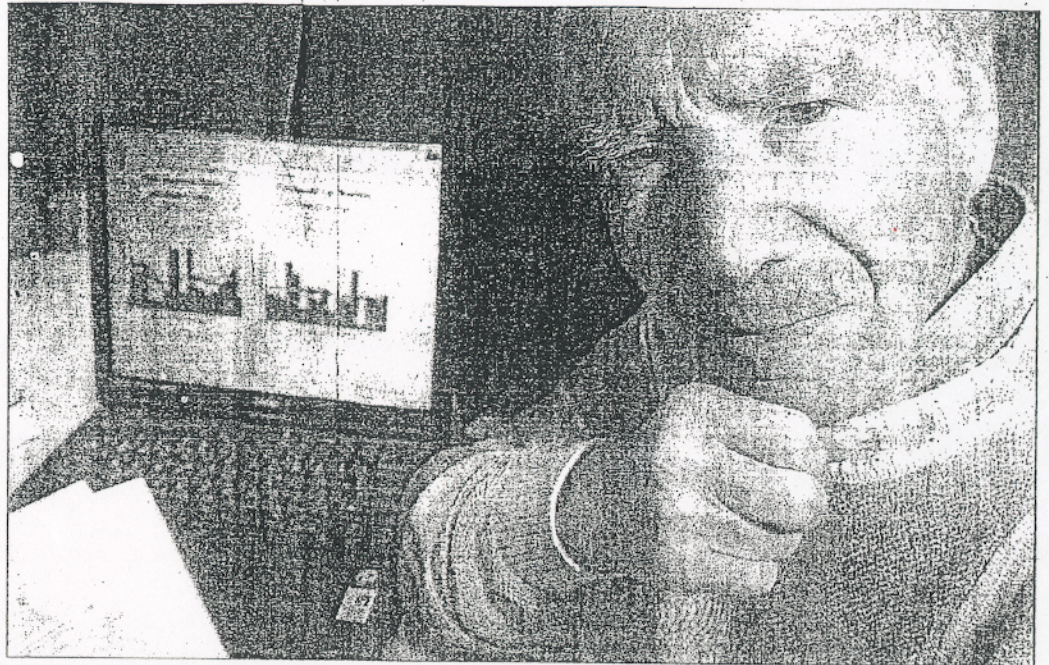
Goode (pronounced Goody) and his five business partners crunch every conceivable statistic to determine which have the greatest bearing on victories and losses, and what, specifically, teams need to do to improve.

"We use the same kind of math that Einstein used for the fourth dimension," Goode said. "The stuff that we do would have required a supercomputer 15 years ago. Ten years ago, it would have taken a mainframe. Now, we can do it on a laptop."

Goode, who studied psychology and statistics at Occidental College and studied psychometrics in graduate school at USC, worked on "The Art Linkletter Show" from 1957 through '71. He started analyzing football games in 1960 when Hy Friedman, then the head writer for Groucho Marx, was starting a computerized service bureau and asked Goode to help promote it. Goode offered to predict the winner of the Rose Bowl by studying the statistics of both teams.

The media took notice, and what started as a lark turned into a second career.

Goode, who is staunchly opposed to gambling, got national attention in January 1974, when



RINGO H.W. CHIU / For The Times

SMOOTH OPERATOR: Statistical analyst Bud Goode counts Chiefs and Eagles among clients this year.

Sports Illustrated asked him to use his system to pick a Super Bowl winner between Minnesota and Miami. Tex Maule, the magazine's top pro football writer, picked the Vikings and wrote an article defending his choice. Goode correctly chose the Dolphins.

"I just love the intellectual challenge," said Goode, who has had 20 NFL teams as clients at one time or another, 10 of which reached the Super Bowl with him on the payroll.

One of Goode's partners is Bill Sanders, who has a doctorate in physical chemistry and says he gets more enjoyment out of reading line-by-line statistical accounts of football games than watching the games on TV.

"I look at football the way a theoretical scientist would," said Sanders, 50. "I try to understand the big picture by looking at what's going on at the small level."

A fraction of the information they cull is available on their Web site (www.budgoodesports.com); teams that subscribe to his service get far more detailed breakdowns in a password-protected area.

The Chiefs download about 60 pages of statistics every week, and Coach Dick Vermeil, who has used the service since his days with the

Eagles in the 1970s, devours the information and incorporates it into his coaching.

"It fits Dick's philosophy," said Mike White, Kansas City's director of football administration, and a former coach of the Oakland Raiders. "Dick is a statistics nut. He's always looking for documentation of something he already knows."

Some Bud-isms:

- In general, each running play more than your opponent is worth one point on the scoreboard.

- Once every five games, something — a fumble, an interception, a kickoff or a punt — is returned for a touchdown.

- Because 3% to 5% of pass attempts are intercepted, teams that throw 50 times a game are very likely to have at least one pass intercepted per game.

- Passing for 300 yards is a vastly overrated accomplishment. More often than not, a quarterback who reaches that milestone winds up losing.

Three years ago, when Vermeil was coaching the St. Louis Rams and Kurt Warner was an anonymous fill-in for the injured Green, Goode punched in the numbers after two weeks and discovered a motherboard of a trend: Warner's

yards-per-pass-attempt numbers were through the roof. He was averaging about 12 yards per attempt — which factors in incomplete passes and sacks — while the league average was roughly half that.

Goode called Vermeil and told him, "You're not only going to the Super Bowl, you're going to win it."

The Rams did wind up winning it, of course, but they were coming off a 4-12 season. So Goode's message wasn't taken too seriously.

"We thought he belonged in a straitjacket," confessed Stiles, who has worked alongside Vermeil in Philadelphia, St. Louis and Kansas City. "But there's obviously value in what he puts together."

Goode doesn't profess to know the coaching nuances of the game — whether, say, one receiver runs better routes than another, or which play would work best against a certain defensive front.

"When I first started, Chuck Knox told me, 'Bud, never make the mistake of telling anyone you know anything about football — because you don't,'" Goode recalled with a laugh. "And he was right."

But Knox has been out of coaching for years, and Goode is still around.

What are the odds?

PRO FOOTBALL

It Adds Up

Bud Goode, 79, uses extensive statistical analysis to help his paying clients in the NFL. D4

T.J. Simers.....D2
Soccer.....D19
Day in Sports.....D20
Horse racing.....D21