

# THE OPERA WEREN'T OVER

**The curtains were closed,  
the fat lady was singing.  
But the Opera weren't over.**

The 1982 Collegiate football season had two of the most bizarre, exciting and unusual finishes in history. These two games illustrate the game is *never* over until the referees say it is. These two games were heart-breaking for the losers, but ecstasy for the winners.

The first game was between undefeated and untied S.M.U. with the longest winning streak in college football against Texas Tech. The S.M.U. Mustangs were behind as the Red Raiders from Lubbock were giving their home fans a real treat. Tech had just scored with 4 seconds left assuring them of a "sure" victory against the number one team in the country. But wait! Tech still must kick-off. "Let's kick it short so they can't run it back," the coaching staff decides. The ball is kicked short and hard on the ground. S.M.U. maintains they practiced the incredible play that was to follow. The ball is bobbled and fumbled at the 10 yard line. Texas Tech's entire team converges on the fumble as victory was to be theirs. But wait! The ball is snatched up at the last second and legally passed to a real fast Mustang who is on the run at the five yard sideline. He gallops 95 yards untouched into the end zone and as they say, "snatched victory from the jaws of defeat."

The very next week Stanford played the California Bears in a similar situation. Stanford's brilliant QB John Elway had passed for 330 yards and two TD's, while Mark Harmon had kicked two field goals. The second was a 35-yarder with four seconds left that put Stanford on top 20-19 and apparently into the Hall of Fame Bowl game against Vanderbilt. But wait! Hold everything, including your trombone. The Stanford coaches elected to squib the kick short to prevent the kick-off return. Then, the unbelievable happened.

Cal's Kevin Moen picked up the short kick on his own 45 yard line and proceeded to play rugby. They lateraled and pitched back, anything to keep the ball alive. After 5 such laterals, Moen finally got the ball back. Now time had been expired for 13 seconds and the Stanford band, cheer leaders and fans thought they were going to a bowl game and were deliriously and happily celebrating on the field and in the end zone! Well, Moen kept going and weaving through trombones and trumpets. He finally made it to the end zone. The refs raised their hands, the famous Cal cannon exploded and the Golden Bears were counting their blessings and their victory.

Joe Kapp, who in his first year as a football coach for any team, led California to a 7-4 record and stated, "The Bear just would not quit. The Bear would not die." It seems trite, but motivating nonetheless. I don't know Coach Kapp personally, but if I read between the lines

correctly, he must be a great motivator. And I'll guarantee anyone, a great strength program with lots of motivation can win lots of ball games.

Basketball, of course, has it's moments. Take the Los Angeles Lakers for example. Trailing by 2 points with only 3 seconds left, the Lakers are at the free throw line. They only have one shot, which if made, brings them to within only one point. This did not seem like the way to win the game. How could they take the ball away in 3 seconds and win? So the Lakers fake an attempt at the free throw line and everybody steps across the line. The refs decide to execute a jump ball and L.A. gets the tip and scores. Thus, the two points is good enough to put the ball into overtime and naturally L.A. wins. After a month of protests, the final 3 seconds may be played over this Spring. The opera still ain't over.

The Utah Jazz against the Kansas City Kings on December 20th almost achieved the impossible. The Jazz are ahead by two points with one second left. They also have the ball out of bounds at mid-court. How could the Jazz possibly lose? All they have to do is throw the ball to anyone, including the opposition, at the Jazz basket. But wait! The Jazz throw it on the Kings side of the court and the Kings get it on the run and throw the ball towards the basket. I was there. I couldn't believe it! The ball hit the rim and bounced out. Had it gone in the 3 point bucket would have won the game for Kansas City. The Jazz even called a time out to think about it.

The super successful teams and coaches are the ones who plan in the greatest detail. They are masters of the clock at the end of games. Balance between strategy, strength, size and speed are essential ingredients to winning. Plan and work, work and plan and the fat lady will be singing your song at the end.