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Mike Pfeifer is under the care of UK trainers Al Green (left) and Sue Stanley (right) after the offensive tackle went down in the second half with a season-ending knee injury. For more information on last Saturday's wild affair between Alabama and Kentucky, please see page 4.

**UK**

## Wildcats' running game impressed Alabama's Derrick Thomas; shocked at UK's first score

By Brett Hait

Prior to Saturday's game with Alabama, Kentucky ranked last, dead last, in rushing in the Southeastern Conference.

Mention that to Crimson Tide star linebacker Derrick Thomas, however, and you will likely get a puzzled look.

"They have a great running game," Thomas said of the Wildcats after 'Bama's heartstopping 31-27 victory over UK at Commonwealth Stadium.

After the performance put on by Kentucky tailbacks Alfred Rawls, Al Baker and Ivy Joe Hunter, Thomas' analysis is understandable. Rawls, in particular, enjoyed a spectacular day, rambling for 132 yards on 13 carries, including a 57-yard jaunt.

Even though Kentucky offensive lineman Mike Pfeifer went down with a knee injury, the rest of the front wall opened just enough daylight for UK to enjoy its best day on the ground in the 1988 season.

But after the game, Thomas, Alabama coach Bill Curry and others credited the hard-driving style of the Wildcat backs and blamed the Crimson Tide's missed tackles for the reason Kentucky was able to roll up 298 yards rushing against a strong Tide defense.

"I don't think they (UK) were that physical," Thomas said. "They had good running backs. The offensive line was good, but they weren't as dominant as I had expected."

Along with Rawls' 57-yard run, Baker added a 42-yard touchdown dash that he capped with a dive into the end zone. Almost before Alabama knew what had hit it, the Wildcats had taken a seemingly commanding 17-0 halftime advantage.

However, the deficit could have been prevented, Thomas said.

"The situation would never have gotten to where it was if we had just tackled better," he said. "We could have stopped any one of those long runs within 10 yards, but those were missed tackles."

The play of Alabama's offense will be given credit for coming back and beating Kentucky, but it may have been clutch performances by the Crimson Tide defense that eventually reversed the momentum.

Thomas admitted that the Tide was somewhat frustrated when UK receiver Ray Gover caught a tipped pass thrown from John Bolden and went in for a 37-yard touchdown.

"That pass play that they scored that first touchdown on was unbelievable," said

Thomas, a 6-4, 230-pound senior from Miami. "The man tipped the ball and the other man caught it and ran it in. That's the kind of thing you see on the ESPN highlights."

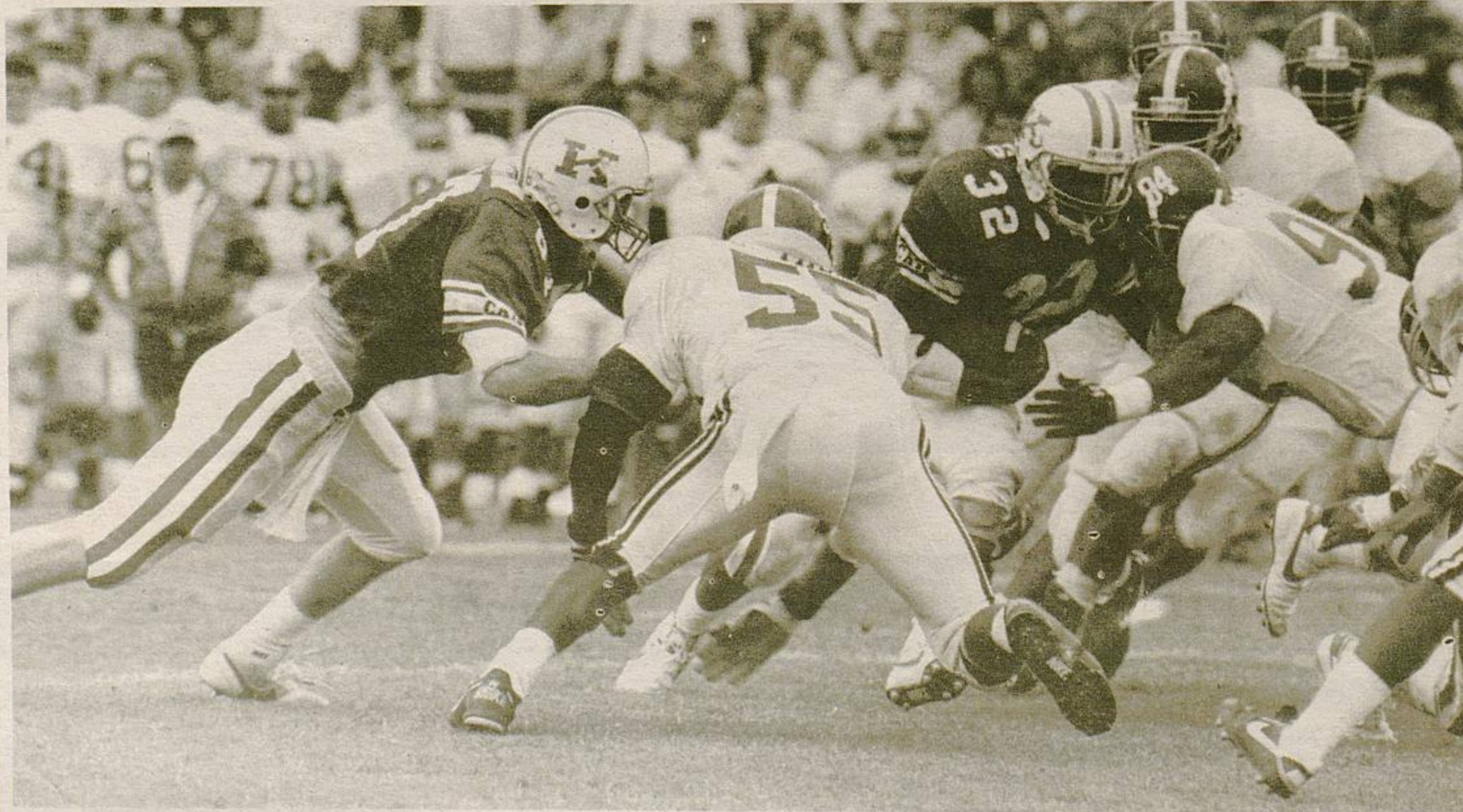
But 'Bama's defense, led by Thomas' game-high 11 tackles, tightened its belt and went to work.

Late in the first half, with UK ahead 17-0 and driving for another touchdown, Alabama dodged a bullet when defensive back Lee Ozmint picked off a Glenn Fohr pass at the Tide goal line.

"The biggest play was right before halftime, when Lee Ozmint intercepted that ball, because it would have been a different situation if they had scored before the half," Thomas said. "And we would have been chasing from way back. I think that was the biggest play of the game."

The inability to score on that drive may have taken the wind out of Kentucky's sails. The Wildcats were able to get into the end zone only once more, and the Tide defense held its ground on UK's last possession, forcing a punt.

That set up Alabama's winning drive, capped when quarterback Vince Sutton hit Gene Newberry for a three-yard scoring pass.



(55) Thomas says UK's runners are good, but lack of 'Bama's tackling helped matters