



# FROM THE Grandstand

By Gordon Nelson

## Chicago Bears are on the air

Forget the NFL players' strike. The Chicago Bears WILL be playing the San Francisco 49ers Sunday afternoon.

No, not in Candlestick Park in cosmopolitan San Francisco, but in the studio of KSTT radio in Davenport. Walter Payton will be there; Joe Montana will be there; just about everyone but Brent Musberger will be there — not in person, but on 3x5 individual player's statistics cards.

The game KSTT will be broadcasting at 4 p.m. Sunday will be a re-creation of what might have been, a game designed by nighttime disc jockey Keith Avallone and to be replete with crowd noise, a marching band and even commercial time outs.

"IT WILL BE an authentic re-creation of what could have been if they had played," Avelonne said this morning. "The names will be familiar, and I guarantee the players will play the way they are supposed to."

That means, of course, the Bears could be in trouble against the defending Super Bowl champions. But then, the 49ers are 0-2 also.

That's all included in the updated version to Avelonne's yet unnamed game that had been four years and several prototypes in development. "I guess it started when I was a kid in Sparta, Wis.," he admitted this morning. "We used to have leagues, draft players, make trades and play whole seasons."

He still does, in fact, and currently has cards of the 1959 Chicago Cardinals spread across his dining room table in Davenport.

"Every time I see a new football game in a store, I buy it and see how it is played," he said. "They all seem to have weaknesses, little inaccuracies."

So Avallone has adopted the strong concepts of several games and created his own. It's played with individual player cards already weighted according to past playing statistics (or projected performances as in the case of rookie Bear quarterback Jim McMahon, who hasn't seen enough NFL action yet to make conclusive statistics).

**THE COACHES** (KSTT newsmen Bob Sanders and Jack Gaber) will select from five offensive plays — inside and outside runs or long, medium or short passes — and determine which player will be the ball-carrier, passer and-or receiver. Those choices will be written on a note card.

The defense then will choose from its options, and depending on the caliber of players at the key positions, a gain or loss will be recorded. There also are options for penalties, fumbles, etc.

The note card and resulting play then will be shuttled from the game table to the studio where announcers John Cloghessy and Thom Cornelis will recreate the action. Ambient crowd noise, complete with air horns and boos, will be available on cartridge tapes.

The actual broadcast began only as a joke, Avellone mentioning some of the re-creations that took place during last year's baseball strike. He didn't think there would be many doing football games, because of the complexity of coming up with so many new players' cards for each team. Turnover in football is much greater than in baseball.

"THIS IS KIND of a novelty," admitted Avallone, who really didn't think it would continue for more than a couple of weeks, even if the strike does. "But there probably will be some interest."

The way most NFL football fans live and die in front of the tube every Sunday, he may be surprised.

And somehow it seems fitting that the Bears will be involved in a "no-name game."

In late September of 1982, the NFL players went on strike, much to the disappointment of pro football fans everywhere. I was working my first full-time radio job, at KSTT radio in Davenport, Iowa, and at our weekly promotional meeting, I suggested using my as-yet-un-named football game to "fill in" for the just-cancelled Bears-49ers game. My thought was to maybe do it at a pizza place or car dealership, and have call-in updates on the radio. But the idea quickly grew to something even bigger, a live re-creation of the game, on the air, complete with sound effects, with the play-by-play action called by our own sports director and the sports anchor for one of the local TV stations! We got a lot of coverage, on TV and in the local newspapers. At left is a clipping from the September 23rd, 1982 edition of the Quad-City Times. The official "Chicago Bear Report" weekly newspaper even joined in, see clipping below.

### Despite Strike, Bears Still Lose

Maybe it's good there's a strike in the National Football League.

The staff of radio station KSTT-AM in Davenport, IA, played a simulated football game on Sunday, pitting the Bears against San Francisco. The final result: 49ers 17, Bears 7.

The contest combined the concepts of Strat-o-Matic and other similar games. It was designed by a disc jockey at the station. Nearly 150 people had a tailgate party in the station's parking lot while the game's radio broadcast was in progress.

The Bears made many mistakes in the contest, including a fumble on the opening kickoff which was returned for a San Francisco touchdown. The 49ers scored all their points in the first half. The Bears finally got on the board in the third quarter when Vince Evans connected with Matt Suhey on an 11-yard touchdown pass.

The Bears were held to just 52 yards rushing. Walter Payton had 27 of them on 15 carries. Suhey led Chicago receivers with seven catches for 41 yards. San Francisco quarterback Joe Montana completed 16 of 28 passes for 203 yards and one touchdown.