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5
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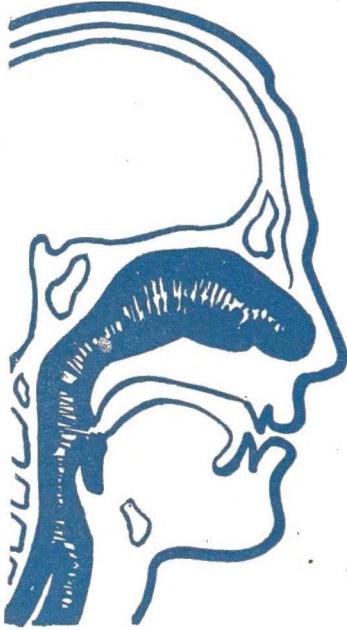
LINE by WILL KEEFE

HARD-FIST HERITAGE by

JOHN CLEMONS—Plus—FIGHT—HOCKEY Etc.

SMASHING ACTION STORIES





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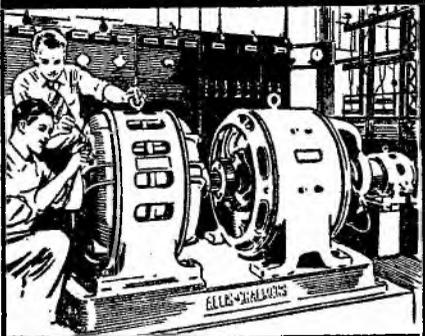
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COMPLETE SPORTS

ACTION STORIES



Vol. 3, No. 1

★ ★ 5 SMASHING NOVELETTES ★ ★

January, 1941

FOOTBALL

THE FIGHTING FULLBACK
by Harold Rogers

PAGE

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He was the famed spark plug of the Bison attack and the stone wall of their defense, he was the guy who never went around the opposition if he could go through them or over them . . . Big Zack knew he must make All-American and the Rose Bowl—or else!

FOOTBALL

A FOOL FOR TOUCHDOWNS
by David Brandt

28

Maybe the Pigskin Professor couldn't pull triple-threat men out of a hat, maybe his line would score all his touchdowns and his back-field do all his blocking—but he'd put a winning team on the field, he'd send out eleven of the toughest, roughest giants in gridiron history!

BASEBALL

THE BIG-LEAGUE BUSHERS
by Roe Richmond

50

Blazing line drives might put Poly Marue's Lakewood Pioneers back in the league-blazing line drives, and a brilliant fireballer out on the mound, and a fighting heart behind first base!

FOOTBALL

THE KID WHO COULD ONLY KICK
by Johnny Lawson

65

To smash through to touchdown after touchdown, while thousands roared their acclaim—this had been Jogger Haight's lifelong goal, and his educated toe could only keep him from reaching it!

HOCKEY

BLONDE BULLET
by Giles A. Lutz

92

Cyclone Couture, the toughest puck-pusher in the big leagues, versus the Blonde Bullet, and ice-wise defenseman brought up on brain-busting blocks!

•
PLUS

★ ★ 3 EXCITING SHORT STORIES ★ ★

FIGHT

HARD-FIST HERITAGE . . . by John Clemons 19

No, Madison Square Garden was never like this, this hardly was the heavyweight championship of the world—but Tom Arnold knew the payoff was still in uppercuts and right crosses, the smart money still down on dynamite fists!

FOOTBALL

HIT THAT LINE! by Will Keefe 81

Football is child's play, Culpepper Darius Higby claimed—you just took the pigskin, and smacked the other team out of your way, and put the ball down beyond their goal line!

FOOTBALL

SUBSTITUTE FOR AN ALL-AMERICAN by Cosmo Bennett 102

A blond cannonball would flash into the breach his interference was ripping open, and Roy Wener would know what it felt like to substitute for an All-American!



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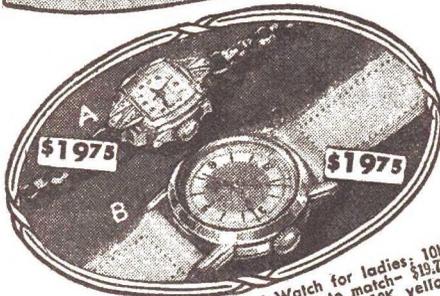
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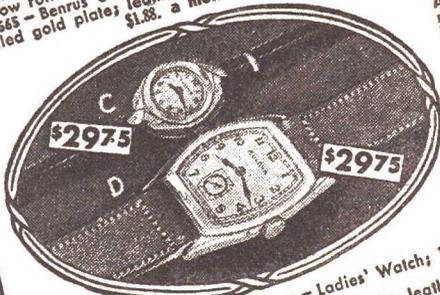
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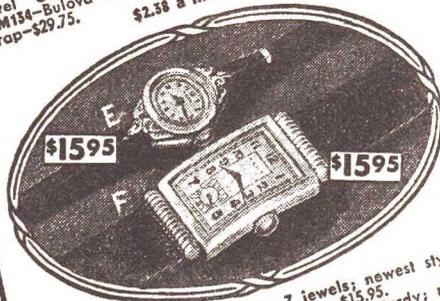
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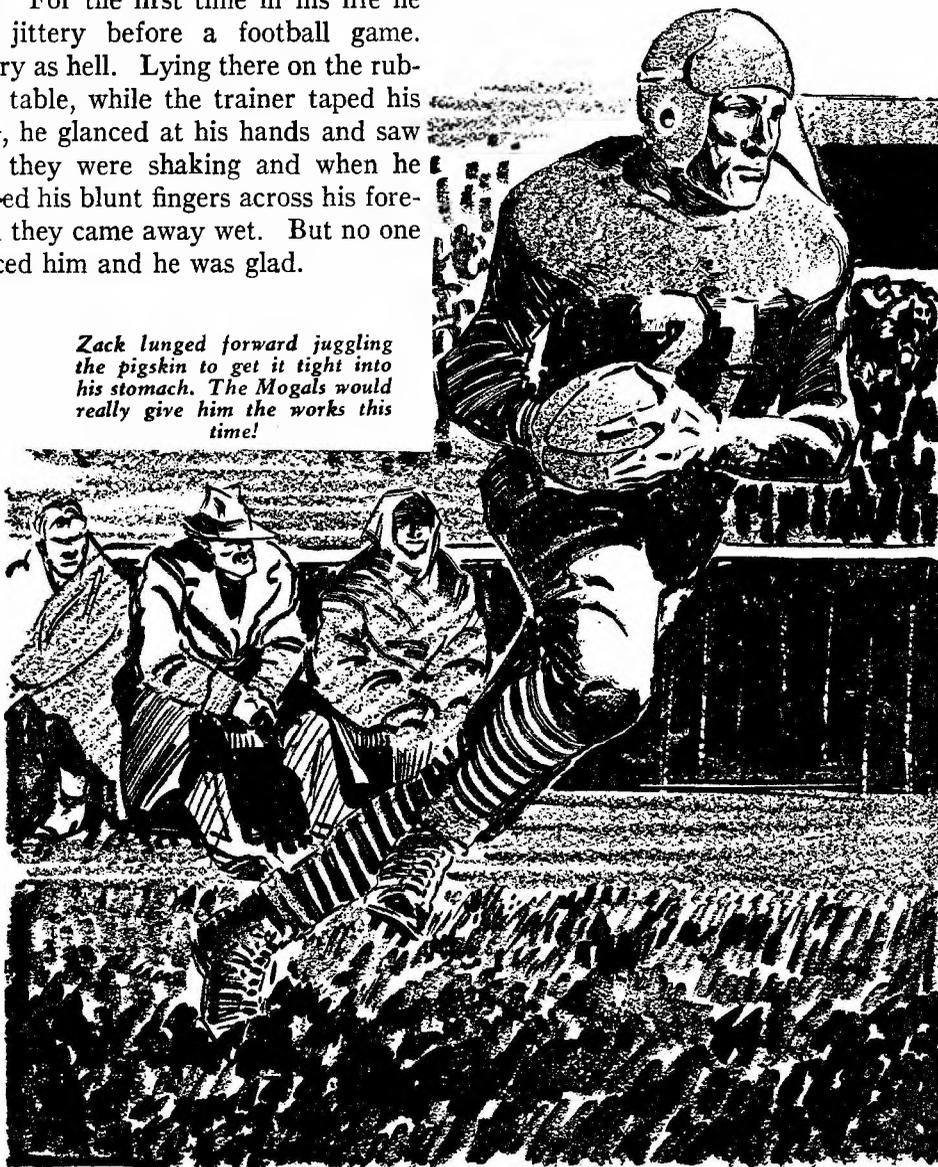
THE FIGHTING FULLBACK

THE cleat scar that followed the angle of big Zack Lieber's jaw stood out like a white furrow in the blue-black stubble that covered his face. For the first time in his life he was jittery before a football game. Jittery as hell. Lying there on the rubbing table, while the trainer taped his knee, he glanced at his hands and saw that they were shaking and when he rubbed his blunt fingers across his forehead they came away wet. But no one noticed him and he was glad.

void of feelings.

More than that, he was the product of a score of sports writers' imaginations. He was the spark plug of the

Zack lunged forward juggling the pigskin to get it tight into his stomach. The Mogals would really give him the works this time!



It was funny, damned funny for big Zack to be jittery. He wasn't supposed to have nerves like the rest of the collegiate players. He was the stolid coal miner from Pennsylvania, the guy de-

Bison attack and the stone wall of their defense. He was the guy who never went around a player or a half dozen players if he could go through them or over them.

SMASHING FEATURE-LENGTH NOVELETTE OF AN UNDEFEATED ONE-MAN TEAM.

by HAROLD ROGERS

Author of "All-American Cannonball," etc.

Trotting out there for the Rose Bowl kick-off, Big Zack knew he had the eyes of the entire country on him—for he was the famed spark plug of the great Bison attack and the stone wall of their solid defense, he was the guy who never went around the opposition if he could go through them or over them!



Filling the fullback slot for nearly sixty minutes of every game, he had carried the little mountain college through two undefeated seasons and now out to California for the Rose

Bowl. Single handed he had done that, or so the sports writers and fans said. Big Zack said nothing, but behind his murky blue eyes he did plenty of thinking.

OF A PIGSKIN COLOSSUS WHO HAD TO MAKE ALL-AMERICAN AND ROSE BOWL!

Without listening, Zack heard the trainer say, "If this wasn't your last game I'd say you couldn't play. It's hard telling what will happen if you tear those ligaments any more."

Zack scowled at the ceiling. If he could have stayed off the leg—

"I'll tape it tight and take a look at it during the half. I don't like to do it, but we can't let the boys down," the trainer continued. "This means everything to them."

A crooked grin twisted Zack's flat face. Nobody seemed to think it meant anything to him. That was what made it so damned funny. He shut his teeth hard and swallowed a dry laugh when the trainer tugged on the tape. Even that hurt and when he was out there driving and pivoting every step he took would feel like a red hot knife blade was being twisted in his knee, but no one seemed to think of that either, and here again Zack let it ride.

YOU couldn't get something for nothing. Football had taken him out of the coal mines and he was eternally grateful for that. It was making it possible for him to go to college. Coach Lehman had seen him play in high school and wangled an athletic scholarship for him. With a college diploma he might be able to get a job coaching in a high school or small college, and possibly teach a little American history, the story of the country that had given his parents, a couple of poor immigrants from Europe, a chance to earn a decent livelihood and raise their family in what they considered to be the greatest country in the world. And while big Zack's loyalty followed the same child-like simplicity there was nothing simple about him. In his academic work he was a straight "A" student.

"I suppose you saw the sport page this morning, the one with your picture hanging in the Pacific Mogals' dressing

room with the caption

**STOP LEIBER AND
YOU STOP THE BISONS!**

Zack nodded. Pictures like that had appeared in other dressing rooms, but so far they hadn't stopped him; that was, on the playing field they hadn't, but they had stopped him from getting the kind of a job he wanted. Oh, he had received pro offers by the handful, but that wasn't what he wanted. He was tired of being Exhibit A. Give him some small college town with its ivy-covered buildings and tree lined streets and he would be fixed for life.

His mind switched back to the scene in his hotel room earlier in the morning. Soon after breakfast there had been a knock at his door and at his bidding three scholarly-looking men had entered and introduced themselves as members of the board of regents of a small western college.

Word by word Zack recalled their conversation. "We are looking for a football coach and history teacher," the spokesman of the trio had said.

Only by making a supreme effort had Zack been able to keep the jubilation out of his voice and shout, "I'm just your man!"

"We've been checking your record and we are very much pleased with part of it," but the speaker had paused and tugged at his goatee, "there is a little matter that we aren't quite so pleased with. Frankly it's the reputation that you have for being, shall we say, unnecessarily rough on the gridiron. We try to emphasize sportsmanship at our school, not just the desire to win. In other words we wouldn't want our boys taught the kind of football you have a reputation of playing. We probably would never have considered you but certain members of our alumni association who are athletically minded above all else prevailed upon us to accord you an interview. That's why

we are here and of course to see the game. If, after watching you play, we decide that the reporters have given you an unnecessary amount of adverse publicity, we shall be most happy to have you present your application for consideration. Though it is only fair to warn you—”

Big Zack had walked out of the hotel smiling. This chance that was being offered him had warmed him deeper than the California sun. He'd be good all right, so good that he'd make a cock-eyed liar out of every sports writer who had ever given him space.

BUT lying there on the rubbing table some of the confidence had oozed from him like water wrung from a sponge. Supposing he forgot himself and cracked a couple of the Mogals wide open. His chances at the job would go glimmering like a kite without a tail. But hell, he couldn't afford to forget.

He was still thinking those thoughts when he slipped into his shoulder pads and heard Reggie McLean, their safety, telling anyone who cared to listen, “Just let me get my hands on a punt and I'm going to run back across their goal line and right into Hollywood.”

Big Zack smiled. Reggie was just talking to keep up his courage. They'd played some big games before, but nothing like the Rose Bowl.

The door opened and Coach Lehman came in with his lips snapped in a grim white line across his face. Still standing close to the door he let his glance travel over the entire squad. In the room that had gone suddenly silent, the players sat there motionless, waiting for him to speak. From outside the blare of band music came filtering down into the dressing room.

Coach Lehman rubbed the palms of his hands together and wet his lips. “Two years ago our school or team weren't known outside of the state.

Today the eyes of the entire country are on you. You know that the odds are against you, that the school you are playing is larger and better known than you are. They are the Pacific Coast Champions and have been several times before. Well, you are the Eastern Champions, everyone of you, even if this is your first trip out here. If you play like you have in the past there is nothing to worry about, but if anyone of you lays down on the job, our chances are gone, because we don't have a multitude of reserve strength.”

His voice took on a sharper edge. “This afternoon is your big chance. You know just how much winning the Rose Bowl can mean to you and to the school.”

Big Zack Lieber shuddered. He knew how much it could mean to him if he played the right kind of a game. He felt sorry for the coach. If they did happen to come through with a win there were a couple of schools ready to bid for him and he had a wife and three kids to support. His salary now was chicken feed compared to what he would get at either of them.

Yeah, well Big Zack wanted a job. Not any kind of a job but the one that was being offered him. “And I'm going to get it,” he told himself, just to make sure that he understood.

“You've got about fifteen minutes to warm up in,” Coach Lehman said. “Let's go and remember this is for keeps.”

At the door he caught Zack by the arm and held him back so that they walked out toward the field together.

“You're really the one I'm counting on,” Coach Lehman said. “Play like you always do and the rest of the boys will fall in line. If we can just get the jump on them the rest won't be so hard, but if we have to come out from behind —”

“Sure” Zack said. “We'll take them,

Coach." He tried to make his voice sound reassuring. It was really Coach Lehman who had given him his chance.

As soon as he could he broke away and joined the rest of the squad running through signal formations. A couple of plays and the coach called him to join the Mogal captain and the officials out in the center of the field for the toss.

Feeling stiff and awkward beneath the protecting pads of his suit he trotted out into the open. The Bison cheering section spotted him first and cut loose with a Locomotive with his name tacked on the end of it.

HE wondered if the members of the interviewing committee heard them and what they were thinking. He stared resentfully up toward the press box. It was their fault that he had the reputation he did.

He wanted to shout up to them that it wasn't fair. Just because he tackled harder and could crack a line wide open with his wedge shaped body they'd branded him with a reputation that had about two thirds of the world believing that he deliberately played a brand of football that wasn't on the up and up. Now they were all watching for it. Let an opposing player get hurt and boos would rattle down on him like thunder. Before neither the boos nor the cheers had mattered. They were just so much meaningless steam, but today—

A coin was flipped up into the air and Zack called, "Heads!"

It came heads and the referee asked, "What will you take?"

"We'll kick," Zack said shortly. Then he was trotting back into position, watching Cal Bordman fix the ball for Hank Larkin to kick.

The roar of the crowd thundered out from all sides of the big stadium as the ball left Hank's toe and went twisting end over end back to the Mogal's five

yard line, where Jeb Hawley, the celebrated Mogal flash, took it on a dead run, over his right shoulder, and headed straight down the field behind a fast forming interference. The front wall of the Bison and the Mogals were dropping each other all over the field.

Still Jeb Hawley came down fast behind a three man interference. Zack had a glimpse of Reggie McLean coming up alongside of him and he knew what Reggie expected of him. He was to dive in and dump the interference like ten pins, literally fling them back in Jeb's face while Reggie came and made a nice clean tackle. That's the they had been doing it and it had always been all right with Zack. Now it wasn't.

A quick glance and big Zack had doped out the situation. The interference was formed heavy to the inside, keeping their ball carrier in between themselves and the side line. Driving hard, Zack faked a lunge at them, then side-stepped deftly across in front of them and hooked Jeb from his unprotected flank and in the cradle of his arms carried him to the ground. It was the longest way around and he might have missed completely, but from the side lines it ought to look good.

Trotting back into formation Reggie growled, "What's the idea? Why didn't you soften those babies up a bit. Unless you jolt them up a bit they'll be riding over us like a ten ton truck."

Zack grinned at Reggie. "I'm trying to keep them good natured!"

The next few minutes were sweet. On the next three plays the Mogals tried the line twice and an end run for a total gain of two yards which left them still on their own thirty-eight yard line, and never once was Zack forced into making a tackle. Dropping back into punt formation, the Mogals angled one for the sidelines, but Reggie was too fast and picked it up on his own five yard line before it went out of bounds. With

big Zack leading the interference he scooted the length of the field for the first counter just like he had wanted to do, while the crowd twisted and shouted itself into pandemonium.

WALKING back for the try for the extra point, Zack Leiber chuckled to himself. That dash ought to make him look even better. With his shoulders he had brushed two would-be tacklers aside and then down by the goal line he had blocked the safety man off without ever touching him while Reggie raced across the white stripe into pay territory standing up. Smooth, clean football, that was what it was, not the bruising, spine jarring brand that big Zack had been used to playing.

Again they went into formation and Reggie elected to try a place kick for the extra point. The entire Mogal team drove in hard, trying to block the kick, but the Bison's forward wall held like it was molded steel and the try was good. Bison—7, Mogals—0.

Until now big Zack had forgotten all about his leg, but suddenly he realized that it was giving him hell and he was limping. That long dash down the field ahead of Reggie had put a terrific strain on it. He looked longingly toward the bench and hoped that Coach Lehman would notice and take him out for a little rest, only Lehman wasn't built that way. He'd come up the hard way and now that he had his little red wagon hitched to a star he was going to ride it to the limit. For the first time in his football career big Zack felt a smoldering glow of resentment sweeping over him. Why should he be the goat?

The Mogals elected to receive again and were lining up. Hank's kick was a high end over end boot and the ends were down there to drop the receiver almost in his tracks. Then things began to happen. In three quick thrusts

through the center of the line the Mogals picked up a first down. Two of those times it was big Zack who finally stopped the play, but not until they had garnered more than their share of the yardage.

An end sweep and a long forward pass off from a lateral put the Mogals within scoring distance and the west coast fans were beginning to clamor, "We want a touchdown! We want a touchdown!"

"Bust them up in there, Zack," Reggie pounded the big fullback between the shoulders. "Rip through that line and spill them before they get started."

But the Mogals were hot and weren't to be denied. They threw everything they had into the attack. Twice big Zack spilled the interference so his own backs could get a clear shot at the ball carrier, and once he filtered in through, himself, and made a shoe string tackle. But he wasn't roughing it up. All of the time he kept remembering what it was that he had to do. Between plays he kept watching the stands trying to locate the inspection committee—that was the way he had come to think of them—but in the big stadium that was next to impossible.

But he did not have much time to look. The Mogals sent a smashing power play off tackle. It got through the line, picking up power as it came. Before he thought, Zack found himself driving into the breach. Head down he plowed into the interference. He felt his shoulder hit something hard, then he saw a pair of driving scarlet-clad legs and he wrapped his arms tight around them, driving hard with his own legs at the same time.

TOGETHER they went down in a heap. Then one by one they untangled themselves—all of them except the ball carrier. He still laid exactly where Zack had dumped him. His

face had gone pasty and his eyes held a glassy stare. Zack stepped forward, but two trainers came running out from the Mogal bench and pushed him to one side.

"Just knocked the wind out of him," one of the trainers grunted.

Just the same it was a lousy break the way Zack looked at it. Scuffing dirt with his cleats he went back into the huddle with the rest of his teammates. He felt angry that it had had to happen when he made the tackle. Also, it was the first injury of the game. It wasn't much, but it would be enough to start the chatter that he was on the rampage. He'd never had thoughts like that before. Now they chewed away at the back part of his brain and brought back the odd sense of nervousness that he had experienced back in the dressing room.

"Why in hell do I always have to be the fall guy?" he asked himself.

With time back in, the next play started out to be what looked like a spinner and suddenly developed into one of those deceptive formations that tangle up the best of defenses. Shifting behind his own line Zack lost sight of the ball, but some sixth sense warned him to move over to the left and he met the play coming smack at him. It had been designed to suck the defense over to the strong side of the line while the play itself was actually around the weak side.

There was only one thing to do. Blast the interference wide open and slam the ball carrier down, then Zack remembered the injured player on the last play. In other games he would have tried to handle the matter single handed. Now he dived in and spilled the interference, hoping desperately that Reggie could come up to make the tackle and all of the time he knew that it was a vain hope. Along with the rest of the backfield Reggie had gone over

to the other side of the line.

As the roar went up from the Mogal side of the stadium that told that the play had been a counter, Cal Bordman called: "Better luck next time, Zack, but I thought you had him."

There was deep bitter disappointment in Bordman's voice as if he had never questioned that Zack could make a tackle no matter how difficult.

The rest of the squad dropped into their places to try to break up the play for the extra point with a resigned attitude as if it were already made. Big Zack kept his eyes diverted from them. He was afraid of what they might see. But once again it seemed damned unfair. Why was he the one who had to diagnose the play? If it had been Reggie, or Bordman, or anyone of the rest of the team they wouldn't have been expected to break up the play single handed, but because it was him—

Still swallowing down a feeling of resentment, Zack didn't realize what was happening until he heard the thud of a toe against the ball and with a sickening feeling in the pit of the stomach he saw that he had been caught flat footed. Over his head the ball sailed through the uprights and he had never made an attempt to knife through and block it.

WITH the score 7-7 the first quarter ended. This time the Bison were going to receive. With the ball in their possession the Bison suddenly found themselves battering at a stone wall. The Mogals seemed to have an air tight pass defense and smeared end runs before they ever got under way. There was only one thing left to do and that was pound the line and earn their yards the hard way.

Time after time big Zack drove forward in quick thrusts over the center or off tackle, but he wasn't getting down and really plowing. Where before he had a season's average of better than

four yards for every power play, now he was picking up less than two.

"What's the matter, your leg hurting you?" Reggie came up with concern written all over his face.

Zack had almost forgotten it, but now he suddenly remembered that his right pin was taped from his ankle almost to his thigh. Before there had been too many other things to think about.

"Some," he said and walked away from Reggie, rubbing the back of his grimy hand across his eyes.

Big Zack knew that the coach had been right. The only way to do was turn on the steam and get the jump on the Mogals. It meant shoot the works with everything that he had, leg or no leg, but he couldn't do that and still play the brand of ball that the inspection committee was expecting him to play, and he half suspected, half hoped, that he wouldn't.

The first ten minutes of the second quarter was slow line play with the Mogals more than holding their own at first and then gradually taking the initiative. Then with the half sweeping into the final moments they took the ball and in a series of business like rushes, worked the ball to the Bison twenty where Jeb Hawley booted a field goal as the period ended, Mogal-10, Bison-7.

Back in the dressing room big Zack Leiber sat miserably alone and no one made any effort to address him. When he looked at Coach Lehman, the football mentor's eyes were expressionless, but there were bitter hard little lines running down from the corners of his mouth as though Zack alone was responsible for the situation.

The trainer came over and looked at Zack's knee. "Looks as good as it did when you went out, except for a little more swelling. Hurt much?"

Zack shook his head. He knew they all looked to him, that they expected him to deliver when the chips were all

running out. The others might fail, but he couldn't. He was the super man that the papers and gossip had built up. Until it was well under way he had never realized what a powerful weapon ballyhoo could be and just how much damage it could do. Now thoughts were in a bitter turmoil.

During the rest Coach Lehman didn't give the entire team a pep talk, but instead went from man to man giving a few words of quiet instruction. Zack was the last man where he stopped.

"Like I told you at the beginning of the game, Zack, whether we win or lose depends on you and by the looks of things we'll lose, because you don't seem to give a damn. I know your knee is hurting, but hell man, you're laying down on the job. Maybe you don't know how much this game means to some of us." The coach's voice was edged with fear, and his eyes were glittering like those of a kid who has seen something in the dark.

FROM outside, the roar of the crowd told that the Mogals had come back on the field. Biting his lip Zack listened to it. He knew that the coach felt he was letting him down, and he knew just how much the coach had befriended him, but in four long years he felt that he had paid that debt. He also thought of those three men sitting out there watching him and then it hit him square between the eyes. He was still young. He would get other chances, maybe. But Coach Lehman was getting to the place where he would soon be on the down grade. This was his big chance and if he didn't get it— That was what was scaring him. There was only one man between him and that chance, Zack Leiber, and there was nothing he could do about it.

"Take it easy, Coach," Zack said and was surprised that there wasn't a tremor in his own voice. "I'll wrap your

game up for you.”

Climbing up off the bench he called to the team, “Let’s go, gang, and get the job done.”

But all the way out to the field and while they were lining up to receive, a voice kept hammering in his ears, “Why you big dumb palooka. You’ve let yourself fall for the old college-try sob story. You’ve had your chance. Once you turn in your suit you’ll be the forgotten man of the age.”

But his course was clear now. He had given his word. The nice looking game that he had been playing for the benefit of inexperienced eyes was a thing of the past. There were just thirty minutes of college football left for him and in that time—

He watched the kick coming back to Reggie McLean and clenched his hands grimly. By the time Reggie had the ball cradled in his arms the Mogals were swarming down, but by that time Zack was driving forward to meet them. With his shoulder he literally blasted the first man from his feet and drove him back into the path of the rushing Mogals. Without slackening his pace, Zack drove hard to the right and cut down another tackler with a low dive and at the same time swung his feet to crack another out of Reggie’s way.

When the whistle blew, Reggie had carried the ball back to their thirty-five yard stripe and the first man Zack had thrown the block into was still stretched out on the ground. Both teams stared curiously at Zack as he climbed to his feet but it was Reggie who came up to him with the question.

“Are you going to keep on playing like that? Power football I mean?”

The little quarterback’s words jolted Zack clear to the marrow. “What do you think?” he snarled.

“That’s all we want to know. You lead the way and we’ll follow you to hell and back.”

Big Zack wiped at his face with the sleeve of his sweater and stared at the ground. The throb in his leg was beginning to bring the sweat to his face and give him an all gone feeling in the pit of the stomach. He’d wrenched it plenty on that last block.

Back in the huddle Zack felt a new surge of confidence oozing from the rest of the team. He heard Reggie call his number for a drive directly over the center and felt his nerves go tense. If he didn’t go back on them now they would know he meant what he had just said and together they would give the coach his game.

THE ball smacked into Zack’s middle as he drove forward, head down and plowing. The Bison center had opened a hole but it wasn’t much and the Mogal full was coming in to plug it.

Big Zack slammed in hard. He felt hands claw at his shoulders and head but he kept his legs pumping and drove through. The rest of the backfield seeing that it was straight football surged in to cut him off.

Like a juggernaut gone wild, Zack struggled to keep his feet. He slammed a bare face with a wicked stiff arm and pivoted sharply to the right. Men were coming at him from all directions.

Keeping his head down he plowed forward. More hands were clawing at his hips and sliding down toward his ankles. Throwing himself forward he carried the tacklers for another two yards before they all went down in a heap and the play was over.

From the corner of his eye Zack had a glimpse of the linemen moving forward with the chain, and heard Reggie say, “Twelve yards on that one. Keep on plowing you old root hog.”

Twice more the ball went to Zack and he picked up another first down on the two tries. By that time the Mogals were awake to what was happening and

were no longer just trying to protect their lead. They came raging in on the third play to smash the steam roller attack that had been pushing them back on their heels.

On a fake spinner, Zack took the ball from center and handed it to Bordman coming around fast. Driving out toward the end Bordman heaved a long forward pass to the Bison right end who had been off with the snap of the ball. Before he hit the line to keep up the deception and suck in the defense, Big Zack saw that much. Knifing in past his own center, Zack hit the Mogal fullback in the middle and came up dumping the big Mogal down on his head.

He was out cold, but the play had worked and the Bison now had the ball down on the Mogal's nine yard line with goal to go.

With a new fullback in for the Mogals and play resumed, Zack knew what was going to happen and he sensed that the defensive Mogals also knew. He could see the set look in their faces. He was going to carry the ball and they were going to stop him.

Every step he took was a burning aching hell. From his thigh clear to his ankle his leg felt as if it were on fire. Bitterly he wondered what his private inspection committee was thinking or if they were still in the stadium, and then the bitterness gave way to blinding rage. Why, the poor dim wits, didn't they know he was just playing good hard football, the kind the public liked! He wasn't doing anything illegal. If they thought that college football was a game for sissies—

The ball came spiraling back and Zack set his teeth and charged. He felt the line bend and sway beneath his driving bulk, but it didn't give completely, then something hit him on the back of the neck like a load of bricks and he went down on his face.

Shaking the fog from his brain he climbed to his feet. "Now you are softening them up," Reggie yelled in his ear. "A couple more like that—"

"Shut up and give it to me," Zack snapped.

HE sensed rather than saw the ball coming back to him. Almost before it had touched the tips of his fingers he lunged forward, juggling the pigskin to get it tight into his stomach. They would really give him the works this time!

Coming in fast and low he saw a pair of scarlet clad shoulders blocking his path so he went up and over. Something seemed to hit him just below the knees to raise his feet higher than his head and it felt like something snapped in the back of his neck when the top of his head hit the ground with his weight full on it.

Eager hands were helping him up. Staggering to his feet he swayed back into the huddle. "Can you take it once more?" Reggie's question was more of a plea than anything else.

Zack spat out a chunk of sod that had lodged in his mouth, and nodded.

"Only a foot to go," someone said.

By the pain in his leg Zack knew that this was just about his last time. It felt like the damned tape had pulled loose and his knee was a red hot hinge with his lower leg swinging in all directions.

The Mogal line were all down on their knees and the back field had sucked in close to stop the one man avalanche. Seeing the set-up, Zack grinned, and it was a grin of sheer delight. To hell with the consequences. This was football and the way he loved to play it. Where had he ever picked up the idea that you could lily-dob and get a real thrill out of it? That might be all right for some guys, but he was Big Zack Leiber, the coal miner. There

was only one way for him to play the game, hard and dangerous as he had lived and always would live.

With a shout like a Sioux Indian he plucked the ball out of the air as it came back from the center and took two hard driving steps like a broad jumper ready to take off, then he lunged forward with his chin tucked down into his chest, the ball hugged in close where dynamite couldn't blow it loose.

Then things hit him from all sides. There was a clap of thunder in both ears and he felt the skin come off the end of his nose, but before everything went black he saw a white line sliding beneath him.

And that touchdown was the payoff. With the Bison holding the long end of a 13-10 score the Mogals suddenly found that to try and shave that lead was as hopeless as a man trying to level the Rockies with a shovel.

With the final whistle the place became a seething bedlam. Fans cheered themselves hoarse and bands playing the school's victory march added to the din.

Sprinting to get away from the mob that had surged out on the field the Bison players dove into the comparative security of their dressing room, but even there they had to face a constant flare of exploding flash bulbs as cameramen snapped away at the grimy happy warriors.

HIDDEN behind the curtains of a shower, Zack suddenly was aware of Reggie's voice high and exultant, "There, maybe that will convince a few skeptics like you. Before the game you asked if he was as tough as the newspapers said he was and you didn't believe it when we told you that he was. Well were we right or were we wrong? I tell you that old Zack is made of pig iron and ice water."

Popping his head out through the curtain Zack gulped and tried to duck back, but wasn't quite fast enough. It couldn't be and yet it was, the spokesman for the inspection committee, only now his tie was off to one side and his goatee was sticking straight out in front of his chin while his hat was shoved far to the back of his head. If he had had dignity before it was all gone now.

Spying Zack he yelped. "There you are young fellow. You're responsible for taking five years off my life, but you're welcome to them. That last half was the greatest playing I've ever seen. Yessiree! And I'm telling you it took a man to play it. Any man who can play that kind of ball can play the game of life without fear or favor and he can teach boys to play it too."

"Then you mean—"

"I mean that your contract is waiting for you to sign. And everything those newspapers said is on the level. If anything they under-rated you, the sissies."

"I Talked with God"

(Yes I did—Actually and literally.)

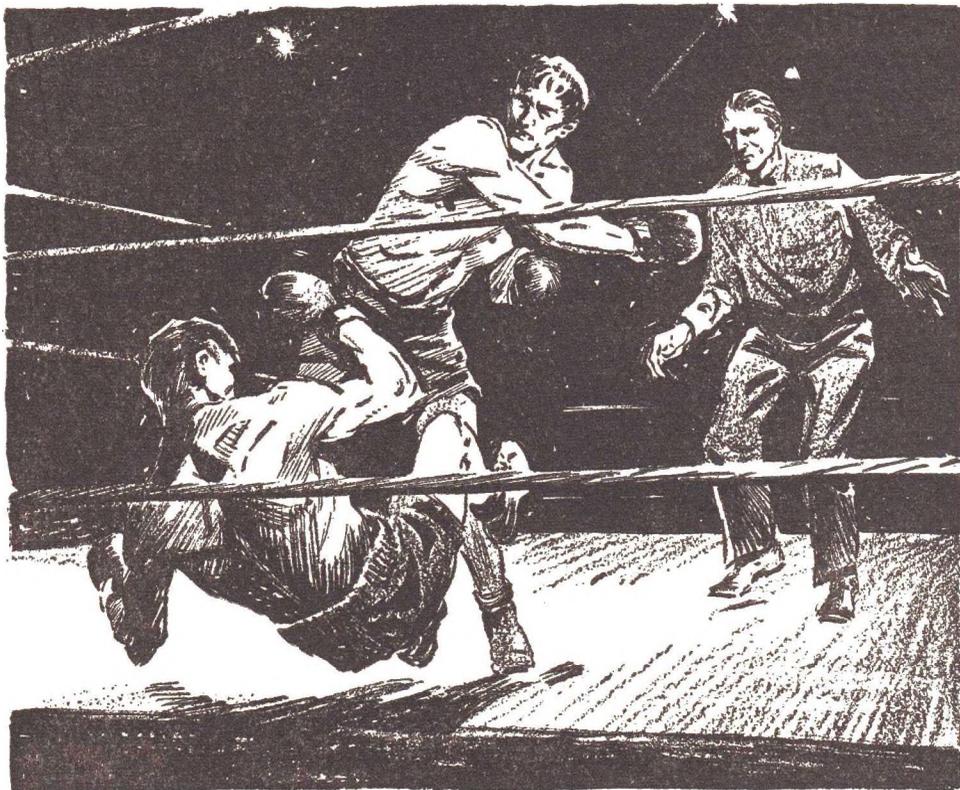
and, as a result of that little talk with God some ten years ago, a strange new Power came into my life. After 43 years of horrible, sickening, dismal failure, this strange Power brought to me a sense of overwhelming victory, and I have been overcoming every undesirable condition of my life ever since. What a change it was. Now—I have credit at more than one bank, I own a beautiful home, own a newspaper and a large office building, and my wife and family are amply provided for after I leave for shores unknown. In addition to these material benefits, I have a sweet peace in my life. I am happy as happy can be. No circumstance ever upsets me, for I have learned how to draw upon the invisible God-Law, under any and all circumstances.

You too may find and use the same staggering Power of the God-Law that I use. It can bring to you too, whatever things are right and proper for you to have. Do you believe this? It won't cost much to find out — just a penny post-card or a letter, addressed to Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Department 140, Moscow, Idaho, will bring you the story of the most fascinating success of the century. And the same Power I use is here for your use too. I'll be glad to tell you about it. All information about this experience will be sent you free, of course. The address again—Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Department 140, Moscow, Idaho. Advt. Copyright 1939 Frank B. Robinson.

HARD-FIST HERITAGE

by JOHN CLEMONS

Author of "The Punching Fool," etc.



Harney was down, but he was strong and fresh. He took a nine count and got up sailing into his opponent!

*Dynamite fists got Tom Arnold this crummy gymnasium job—
dynamite fists would get him a fight in Madison Square Garden!*

THE black boy waded in with his eyes closed, his teeth gritted, his face shades paler than its normal ebon tones. The white boy saw him coming. But instead of getting out of the way he just stood there, wide eyes hypnotized, his face the color of dirty chalk. There was a swift, aimless flurry of gloves. The white boy closed his eyes, said "oof, oof, oof" and sat down on the canvas very abruptly. He looked more bewildered than hurt. With a sickly grin he acknowledged the advice of his low-talking manager. He

got up and charged into the black boy. The performance was exactly duplicated, except that this time the black boy was the bewildered recipient of the sit-down strike.

There were no cheers. There were no jeers. There were only the taut, low-talking managers and perhaps a dozen or so spectators. This was not Madison Square Garden. It was a little old crummy gymnasium where fighters trained. These boys were no flashy performers. They were in the ring for the first time. Their respective managers

claimed to see possibilities in them. And stranger things can happen in a ring that is really a square.

All the time the boys were moving about in the ring after their own queer fashion, another youngster was shadow-boxing in the background under the empty gallery. He was not in gym clothes. But in contrast to the boys in the ring he swayed and feinted with grace and precision. It was this youngster Eddie Ahearn was watching. His experienced eye had detected Talent.

EDDIE had managed the lightweight champ, Bud Harris, until the champ got too old to defend his title and laid it on the shelf. A lot of boys had been reaching for that shelf; but in nearly a year of trying, none had been able to get more than a slippery hold on it. Eddie had been haunting gymnasiums in search of a kid he could groom for the vacated title. He wasn't interested in a large stable. He wanted one good boy. Eddie liked the game for itself. He was that rare figure in the field of professional sports: he was a sportsman.

The kid's face was pleasant. His eyes looked keen as blades. His legs were thin but Eddie liked that in a kid still growing. And he liked the way the wide shoulders came down to a narrow waist.

He went over to the boy. He nodded his head in the direction of the ring. "Pretty good, eh?" he said.

The kid gave a derisive exclamation. "Look," he said excitedly. "If the black boy would hold his hands like this—" he took a stance—"and the white boy would only do this—"

Eddie Ahearn, who had been better than a good hand in his own time, put up his hands and put his left foot forward; he tucked his chin under his shoulder. "Show me," he said.

The kid feinted with his head. His

body moved, but his feet never left the floor. His left flicked out. It looked like it was going down; but instead it shot straight out. It knocked down Eddie's guard before he was aware of its direction. The boy moved in with it. His right found Eddie's jaw. But so swiftly and so subtly that Eddie had not yet finished getting out of the way of the left. There was a loud crack in Eddie's ears. The next thing he knew the kid was helping him to his feet, abject with apologies. Eddie rubbed his chin and laughed.

"You must have been born with gloves on!" he exclaimed. "How would you like to get in the game?"

For an instant the kid betrayed an eager front. Then his big shoulders sagged. "I *hate* it," he said flatly.

To Eddie that sounded as silly as a deacon at a drunken party. He looked his surprise. Obviously the boy was a natural. And someone had taught him more than the simple rudiments—Eddie was not being knocked down by some casual bum.

"What do you do?" Eddie asked.

The boy fidgeted. "Just looking for a job," he said.

"I know a lot of people," Eddie said slowly, his mind at work. "I'll see that you get a job." He was unaware of the kid's thanks as they moved toward the exit; he was still thinking.

Outside, in a better light, Eddie could see that the boy was slightly seedy. He could stand new clothes; and a thick steak wouldn't hurt him. Eddie felt a tug at the heart; anybody who could box like that had no business being shabby. Eddie was puzzled: he felt sure the boy was holding back something.

"Where did you learn to box?" he asked him.

The kid was a long time answering. Then it came out; slowly, softly, as if it raked up painful memories. "My

father was a fighter. He taught me. His name was Tom Arnold, same as mine. He fought under the name of Gatlin' Gun Thomas. . . ."

IT WAS enough for Eddie Ahearn. It explained everything. Eddie remembered Gatlin' Gun's last fight. It was long ago. With some bruiser from the Coast. His name was forgotten. The Gunner was a coming champ. He was coasting in to an easy victory by the decision route. Or he could knock the ham out. He turned his head for some signal from his corner. *Bam!* The tramp came to sudden life. It was a terrific wallop. With his head turned at an acute angle it broke the Gunner's neck . . .

It was the next afternoon that Eddie drove down to the side street where the kid lived with some relatives. He had been busy all morning getting the boy the kind of job that would further his own plans. Ahearn told Tom nothing. He put him in his car and they drove off. And now they were in a wide, clean lobby. Quiet, well-behaved youngsters were all around; reading, playing chess and checkers. Pictures and mottos of great men were on the wall.

"This is the Sixth Street Settlement," Eddie told him. "It's for the benefit of underprivileged children. This is where you're going to work." Eddie took him to the gymnasium.

The kids were noisy here. They were dashing around with a basketball that was too big for them. And the rules, if they knew any, were thrown in the discard; they were having fun.

"You work here," Eddie told him. Tom grinned. Eddie continued, "You have to teach them . . . boxing . . ."

Tom's breath made a whistling sound through his teeth. His face grew dark; his brows knit. His big shoulders seemed to shake. He turned suddenly and walked away. Eddie caught up

with him. . . .

"So you see what this job is," Eddie was saying in his gentle tones. "It's not professional boxing; it's sport! You show the kids how to defend themselves. They don't want to become prizefighters. Now the Settlement has the idea, someone is going to teach them!"

Eddie might have added that they got the idea because he gave it to them. And that a fellow named Ahearn was donating a monthly check.

It was dark when he wiped the sweat from his brow and called it a day. But he had Tom's consent. His plan was under way. . . .

It was six weeks later. Eddie was watching Tom at work in the gym. He was marveling at the boy's improvement. Tom's wide shoulders had filled out with new muscle. His chest was bigger. He was lean. His legs were springy, sinewy. His long arms moved with assurance. He seemed to have inherited his father's fighting brain; his movements were a natural reaction to a specific cause.

The kids padded up to the triple thickness of mat that Tom ruled. They were smiling, happy, their small fists encased in huge "pillows,"—the biggest gloves. They couldn't get hurt. Tom showed them how to jab, how to duck, how to lead. All the things his father had instilled in him as a child. With the bigger boys he boxed.

Ahearn smiled with deep satisfaction. It was soon time for the next move in his plan. . . .

It was a week later. Aided by Eddie, Tom was staging a tournament for the kids, at the request of old Donnigan, resident manager of the Settlement. It was Eddie who had prompted the manager, as it was Eddie who was donating the cups.

The kids boxed with the big gloves. The rounds were only of one-minute

duration. The "bouts" went three rounds with a minute's rest in between. The entertainment was strictly for the youngsters, but as soon as the scheduled bouts were over there was going to be an unscheduled bout that Tom didn't know about. Only Ahearn and old Donnigan knew. One other principal knew too; but he was getting paid.

The regular bouts over, Donnigan climbed into the ring.

"Now boys," he said in his slow, quiet way. "We have a little surprise for you. You will now see an exhibition of real skill in the art of self-defense, between Danny Gallen, whom you have all heard of, and your own instructor, Tom Arnold. That's all."

THAT'S all! Danny Gallen was stepping high among the classy lightweights! Tom was no professional!

The kids were clamoring. Danny Gallen was in the ring. A professional in every look, every movement, every line of his young, hard, trained body. Tom had no intention of boxing him. But the laughing kids pushed him into the ring. Tom felt a surge of panic. He turned to leap out. But now there were boxing gloves on his hands. Not the big ones. Eddie was lacing them; talking in his low, encouraging voice. "You can't let the kids down," he was saying.

And there was old Donnigan, grinning in his thin skin like an animated, amiable ghost. White-haired, benevolent, he was enjoying the thing. His business was making men out of boys.

Eddie gripped Tom's wide shoulder and whispered words in his ear. Then Tom found himself staring into the bored face of Danny Gallen; found himself shaking hands with him; stepping away, sparring. Then a fistful of gloves exploded in Tom's face.

The explosions continued all through the round. And all through the second

round. And all through the third. There was comparatively little pain. They came so fast there was no time to feel the hurt.

Now it was very quiet. Tom found himself sitting on a stool. "The round must be over," he thought. "Or maybe the fight." He wondered about the quiet, what had happened to squelch the noisy kids. Then he knew. He was getting licked.

Eddie was massaging his legs. Old Donnigan had an anxious look on his face, as if the joke had backfired. Eddie said a few words to the old fellow that seemed to relieve him. Donnigan smiled. Tom had his senses back now. He leaned over Eddie. "What did you tell Mr. Donnigan?" he asked.

Eddie's grin lacked full assurance. "I told him you'd take care of Gallen this round," he said. "It's the fourth."

The last round!

Tom gripped the ropes. He looked out at the sea of young, unsmiling faces. The hope he once put into those faces was dead. He looked across at the bored face of the professional in the opposite corner. Gallen was being pampered by a couple of clucking trainers. New sweat broke out on Tom. Under the blood and bruises the pale face became paler. His nostrils quivered; he shook in every fiber. "Hurry up with the bell!" he snapped in a hoarse whisper. "Do I have to sit here all night?"

Eddie dropped his hands. He began to grin slowly. His eyes grew very wide and shiny. The kid was his father's son!

Tom got off his stool and advanced with mechanical care. Gallen tripped out lightly, met Tom in the center of the ring, and posed for the benefit of the admiring audience. His hair was smooth, plastered down, unruffled. He was having a pleasant, if boresome evening. All at once Tom started to fight. He pumped both hands to that glossy

head. Sweat splattered the ringsiders. He knocked down the startled Gallen's guard with a swish of his left forearm, pivoted on one toe and crashed a tremendous haymaker to the side of Gallen's head. Gallen staggered back into the ropes. He was badly rattled, between surprise and pain. His seconds screamed orders in his ears. The kids howled. Eddie danced with glee. Old Donnigan nodded his white head and grinned.

Tom slipped in and sunk his left into Gallen's middle. Instinct worked for Gallen. He grabbed the left though it bent him in two. He hung on and went into a clinch. Tom shook him off. But already the experienced professional's head had cleared. He would not be caught off guard again. He shoved Tom away and began to box.

HIS straight left flicked out. Tom moved his head. The left went over his shoulder. They exchanged rights. Gallen stepped around. He was showing respect for his opponent. Tom dropped his hands low, went after the professional. The second his hands went down Gallen jabbed, then hooked the jab. But Tom had purposely done it. He took the jab and let the hook curve around his body as he stepped in close. Too late Gallen realized he had walked into a trap. Tom lowered his head on his opponent's shoulder, let go with a barrage of lefts and rights to the middle. Gallen backed up, but Tom was on top of him. He switched his attack to the head. Gallen covered up as he reeled back. Only the top of his head was a target. Tom cracked down on it with the force of a mallet. Gallen dropped. Tom slid into a neutral corner. The referee began the count. The kids went wild. Their idol was coming through.

At the count of six Gallen got to one knee and looked up. His eyes were

glazed. Blood was running from his nose. His face was puffed and bruised. And his glossy hair was mussed. At seven he dragged himself to the ropes. At eight he pulled himself up. And as the referee stopped swinging his arm and motioned for Tom to come in, Gallen suddenly reeled without being struck, crashed to the canvas out cold.

After that night there was no question of what Tom Arnold's future would be. The game was in his blood like dope. He was not happy unless he was in the ring. His flying gloves were devastating. His fists pumped so fast the sports writers could never agree, after a fight, if it was his left or his right or a series of blows that had stretched an opponent on the canvas. It was seldom a question of whether he would win. The question always seemed to be: "What round?" The rise of Tom Arnold was making fistic history.

It came down finally, at the end of a year, to an elimination tournament ordered by the fistic fathers with the vacant throne the prize at stake. And after several more months it came down to the finals. The next battle was to decide the man to hold the lightweight crown. In one corner would be Tom Arnold, Gattlin' Gun the second, the man who couldn't lose. In the opposite corner would be a young, clean, college-bred youngster of more than ordinary ability named Harvey Day; a boy who had never lost.

Day had a manager who was not so clean. But he had a brain. With this brain he might have become President, if the rest of him could measure up. William Patrick Burke was the name, and it was his brain that had whipped all opposition for Day. It was Burke the wise money was betting on to capture the championship for Day.

Burke started out by confusing everyone as usual. He insisted that the final be held at the Downtown Arena.

The Downtown was in an old and dilapidated neighborhood. It did not seat as many as half a dozen other available fight clubs. Burke said he had a sentimental attachment for the old place and felt it was lucky. After all arguments had been exhausted Burke finally had his way. The contracts were signed.

Then strange things began to be rumored about in sporting circles. Things hatched in the wily brain of William Patrick Burke. It seemed that the old Downtown used to be known by a different name. In those days it was a beer hall one night, a dance hall another night, and perhaps a fight arena if there was some money to be made. Its historic past was too confusing for busy sports writers to bother about. The change of name had been made so long ago it would take too much labor to dig it up, if the records showed it at all.

Besides, Burke had the dope on the end of his tongue.

"The Downtown Arena used to be known as the Sycamore Gardens," he told the sports writers. "The police closed up the place when a man was killed during a bout there. It reopened later under the new name."

"I suppose you can tell us the name of the fighter who was killed?" he was asked.

"Sure," said Burke, and he smiled. "The man who was killed was Gattlin' Gun Thomas the *first* . . ."

AS Burke had expected, the story gathered momentum. Then a sweeper at the Arena saw the ghost of the dead fighter hanging around the ring on a dark night! He ran for his life. Burke emerged from the sheet that made him a ghost and laughed till the tears came to his little eyes. From then on the dark arena became a mecca for the curious.

Burke was too smart to push his luck. His trap was sprung. The ghost of the

old Gunner was haunting the place. He knew how devastating an effect that would have on the taut nerves of Tom Arnold in training.

Then another thing was confided by Burke to a smart sports reporter. "How do you suppose I could remember how the Gattlin' Gun died?" he demanded. "I gave you the dope to the second and the punch. I told you who was at ringside."

"You were at ringside," the reporter ventured.

Burke was thoughtful. "Yes," he admitted. "I was at ringside."

"If I could only find out what happened to Bill Patrick, the man who killed Thomas," the reporter went on. "I'd have a perfect story."

Burke was thoughtful again; he remembered the fight was only a few days away. Then he smiled his beefy smile. "You've got your perfect story," he said. "I'm Bill Patrick . . ."

William Patrick Burke—was Bill Patrick! Young Thomas was going to fight in the ring where his father had died. His opponent was backed by the man who had killed his father. It was a field day for the sports writers.

Then came fight night.

"The streets are filled to overflowing," the radio reporter was broadcasting. "Extra police are keeping the crowd in line. Half the city seems to have turned out to witness the making of a champion. Opinion seems to be divided whether this bout is between young Gattlin' Gun Thomas and Harvey Day, or whether it's between the young Gunner and the mind of Bill Patrick. The mob is getting bigger. Let's take it inside!"

The old Arena was packed to the rafters. The crowd paid little attention to the preliminaries. They were noisy until the main event was announced. Then Harvey came down the aisle in a green robe. A minute later Tom fol-

lowed in a purple robe with "Sixth Street Settlement" embroidered on the back. When they took their seats, Burke passed the word around: The Gunner was sitting in his father's old corner! Burke had fooled the kid into taking it.

Eddie Ahearn was anxious-eyed. Old Donnigan looked as if it were he who was going into the ring. Some kids from the Settlement let out a cheer for their idol. Tom sat like a wooden man. A ghost was in the ring tonight.

The bell rang.

Harvey came out fighting. He was strong and aggressive. Tom was not himself. Burke's work had got in good. Harvey forced the pace. It was clinch and break so far as Tom was concerned. Far from his usual way of fighting. As Tom became more and more dull, Harvey became over-anxious. He missed easy chances. The round ended with the referee pulling them out of a clinch.

"You'll be all right in a minute," Eddie told his boy. "All the more reason why you should clout this guy if Burke is the man who—" Eddie stopped. There was a look on Tom's face which said, "Don't say it!"

THE crowd tensed when the bell rang.

Harvey was stronger, gaining confidence. But he was over-anxious again. His whistling right failed to land. Tom was dull again, listless, as if his mind were elsewhere and his heart not in it. They fought close to Day's corner. All at once there was a penetrating whisper. Burke, at work again. The whispering continued as they struggled to the center. Suddenly, while in a clinch, Tom turned his head and looked back to his corner! Harvey whizzed his right. It missed as Tom turned back. But the fight was young. Hell; the Gunner was bound to get clipped if he looked back to his corner! The crowd remembered it was how his father got it! Burke

laughed softly.

When the round ended Tom went to the wrong corner. "Your corner is signalling you," Burke grinned. He turned Tom around before Eddie could run across. "Your corner is signalling you," Burke whispered as a parting shot. Eddie grabbed his boy and led him back.

Burke grinned at his fighter who was being rubbed by a sallow-faced Greek. "Don't fight," Burke whispered in Harvey's ear. The boxer was startled. "Just clinch," Burke explained. "When I whisper to 'im he'll look back to his corner . . . for a signal. When he turns his head—clip 'im!" Harvey's eyes grew wide. When he was in college they hadn't played it that way. But he was quite used to Burke by now.

"You're better already," Eddie was telling his boy. But he couldn't keep his voice right.

Tom came out slowly. Harvey began a long-range bombardment at once. He had no trouble reaching his man. Whetted by success, he broke through and began pounding Tom's middle. Burke was yelling at him but he couldn't hear. Then Tom clinched, and Harvey remembered his instructions. Sure enough there came Burke's penetrating whisper. Tom turned dazed eyes to his corner, looking for a signal.

Clip!

Harvey connected with a hard right. Tom flew back, hit the ropes, slid on one shoulder, stopped in a neutral corner. Was his neck broken? ringsider asked. But Tom got up without taking a count. He had never been on the floor before or he would have taken advantage of the few seconds rest.

Eddie whispered to old Donnigan, "Maybe the knockdown will wake him up."

But Tom didn't wake up. He saw the ghost of his father that Bill Burke had put in his mind.

Instinct was again too much for Harvey. He forgot his instructions, went after Tom with both hands swinging. Tom took it like a stoic. When the round ended he was still on his feet. But his face was puffed and a mass of bruises. He was bleeding from the mouth and nose. His right eye was swollen and almost closed. A cut over his left eye was blinding him with blood.

Again Burke bawled his man out. Why waste time on exercise when the fight could be won from the corner? Harvey promised to remember, though he thought Burke much too cautious.

When the round started he began bulling Tom around the ring. Again he kept Tom too busy to hear Burke's whisper and look to his corner for a signal. They wrestled around the ring till they were back in Harvey's corner.

"Clinch!" Burke hissed.

HARVEY clinched. Before the referee could part them Tom heard the sinister whisper, turned his head to his corner. *Smack!* Harvey uncorked a beautiful right. It crashed flush on the averted jaw. Tom was hurled across the ring. He slammed into the ropes and fell across the upper strand, hanging on. His eyes were closed. His mouth was drooling blood. He was gasping for air.

Harvey tore across the ring after him. He was insane with the nearness of victory; drunk with the thought of the championship within his grasp. He piled on Tom's back but the referee pulled him off. The referee pushed Harvey away and whirled Tom around to face his opponent. Harvey came sliding in for the kill. Burke's instructions were forgotten in his excitement. He was deaf to the roar of the crowd. He piled in, Tom reeled away. Harvey was after him like a bloodhound. But before he could uncork his right, the bell ended the round.

"What the hell's the matter with

you?" Burke demanded when Harvey got back to his corner. "A man with a college education ought to be able to remember a few simple instructions!"

"What if I kill him?" Harvey argued. "I've got the championship in the bag anyway."

"Maybe. Remember, this kid's got a punch. The fight ain't over yet. You follow instructions and it'll be over right! You can't hit hard enough to kill anyone. And if you do—it'll be an accident."

Tom's corner was shrouded in gloom. They couldn't make him understand. They taped his cuts, stopped the flow of blood. It seemed to make little difference to Tom. He didn't feel pain; he felt haunted.

All around the arena people were asking how long the Gunner could take it, how much longer it could last. And were secretly wondering: what if Harvey Day would break the Gunner's neck . . .

The bell sounded. Tom came out like a mechanical man. The sultry whisper of Bill Burke cut into his conscious thoughts. "Your corner is signalling you . . ." It was more like a memory in Tom's ears, more like the ghost of words in another world. Tom stopped. He turned his head to look at his corner! Harvey's right crashed into the averted face! Tom reeled away and crashed to the canvas in Harvey's corner. He was on his face. Not a muscle quivered.

Instead of the roar that usually attends a knockdown, there was a mournful hush. Expectant; solemn; laden with dread. It brought dignity to the fallen figure.

The referee began to count. Tom couldn't hear him. What he heard was the ghost of those words: "Your corner is signalling you . . ."

He opened his puffed eyes. He heard the referee now, but the ghostly whisper

was stronger still. Tom picked up the count at five. It went to six before he realized he was in Burke's corner. That it was Burke who was whispering, "Your corner is signalling . . ." There was derision in the soft tones. Triumph too. The count was eight before Tom woke to the realization Burke's words were a trap. And that this trap had snared and killed his father! Burke was giving himself away! It had been through no accident that his father had turned his head that fatal night long ago!

Tom got up at the count of nine. To the crowd it was a miracle. But Tom felt hounded. He took a deep breath and spat blood.

Harvey figured he had nothing to fear now. The Gunner was all but gone. Harvey waded in wide open. Tom slipped Harvey's rush. He turned, caught Harvey off balance, took him by surprise. He lowered his head and went to work. He unleashed his famous windmill attack. He pumped rights and lefts into Harvey's unprotected middle. He switched and filled Harvey's eyes with gloves. He seemed to take strength from the air. Or else he had not been as far gone as the ringsiders thought. He let fly with both guns. Backed Harvey around the ring, never giving him a chance to recover from his first surprise, never giving him a chance to cover up or get set. The crowd was on its feet, hoarsely shouting, mad with surprise and excitement. Harvey was staggering around like a blind man in a snowstorm. His eyes were puffed to mere slits. He was gasping, his open mouth dripping blood. Burke's brains had finally created a backfire. It had ignited a spark from the old cannon. Burke's man was bouncing on the canvas.

HARVEY was down. But he was strong, fresh in comparison to his

opponent. He took a nine count and got up. Blinded by fury, goaded by pride, Harvey sailed in in his usual open style. He forgot to box when he lost his head. Tom met him head on. They slugged toe to toe. Tom didn't give an inch. He never lessened his whirlwind flurry. The terrific pace was new to Harvey. The crowd was on its feet waiting for someone to drop. The noise was deafening.

"They're back in the center of the ring," the excited announcer was screaming. "Burke is on the apron of the ring, hanging on the ropes, screeching instructions to his boy. He better get down before he gets hurt.

"Lefts and rights are bouncing off Harvey Day so fast it's hard to keep track of them. He's weakening fast. They're battling in Day's corner now. Day's knees are buckling. Tom Arnold is showing no mercy. It's the most amazing rally ever seen in ring warfare! Day rallies briefly. He ducks a flurry of lefts and throws a wild punch! The Gunner ducks and shoots a terrific right that catches Day flush on the button, bounces off and cracks Bill Burke on the head! A screwball punch! An amateur wallop the Gunner picked up off the floor! But Day is down! Burke is down too! Pandemonium folks! But Burke had no business hanging on the ropes! He fell into the ringside seats!

"It looks like Day is out for keeps. The count is . . . six, seven, eight, nine, and out!

"The bout's over! We have a new lightweight champ! Tom Arnold! Son of the famous Gattlin' Gun Thomas who met death in this same ring years ago . . . Hello! What's this! Wait a minute folks. Something's happened. The police are carrying Bill Burke into the ring. They're working over him. Stand by, folks, it's serious. Looks like Burke cracked his head when he fell off the ropes. He's dead of a broken neck . . ."

A FOOL FOR TOUCHDOWNS



The Pigskin Professor didn't know football, he just knew he had to put a winning team on roughest giants in

THE Professor was sitting by the jungle camp fire sampling a portion of mulligan stew when two men, their shadowy outlines quite visible, approached the circle of light. The Professor didn't even bother to look up. He held a tin cup in one hand and in the other a silver mounted pencil with

which he was busy scribbling notes in a book resting on his skinny knees. His three companions, however, sprang to their feet in alarm.

"Railroad bulls," one of them muttered. He was a huge man with a body that towered like an oil derrick. A cinnamon red beard camouflaged his

MEET THE PIGSKIN PROFESSOR AND THE FIGHTING HORDE HE MADE INTO THE TOUGHEST

by **DAVID BRANDT**

Author of "The Pigskin Powerhouse," "The Touchdown Hero," etc.



Short Pants twisted to his feet, went another ten yards before he was brought down again!

didn't know a triple-threat from a referee—he the field, and he sent out eleven of the toughest, gridiron history!

youthful features. He stood tense as the two strangers stopped outside the circle of light.

"We're looking for a bird by the name of Randolph Wayne," the taller of the two called. He kept one hand inside his coat pocket.

The Professor looked up from his

notes. "Is something wrong?" he inquired. "That's me."

"I'm Carter, special railroad detail," the tall man said, taking his hand out of his pocket and stepping to the edge of the fire. "Got any credentials?"

"Just a minute, copper," the red bearded hobo interrupted, moving

TOUCHDOWN STEAM-ROLLER FOOTBALL HAS EVER KNOWN!—GREAT GRIDIRON NOVELETTE!

closer to the dick. He topped Carter by a good three inches. "The Professor ain't done nothin'. What's this, a pinch?" His head moved slightly as if giving a signal.

The other two hoboos drifted away from the fire. One of them picked up a rock.

The Professor seemed to sense the danger of impending trouble for the first time. Putting down the cup of mulligan and sliding his pencil and book into a pocket of his blue denim overalls, he got to his feet. "There's no need for alarm, Short Pants," he said to the red bearded giant. And peering up at the railroad detective added, "I don't quite understand what this is all about. I'm Professor Randolph Wayne, Doctor of Psychology, member of the faculty at Meredith College. I've been on special leave to do some research on a book I intend writing." He dug into his short mackinaw and pulled out a wallet which he extended for inspection.

"I hope you're right," Carter growled, holding the wallet close to the firelight.

The Professor's shoe button eyes seemed to shrink into their tight sockets. His pinched features, slightly reddish from an unaccustomed touch of too much sun, grew redder. "I'm not accustomed to having my word doubted," he said stiffly.

Carter, finished with his inspection of the wallet, passed it back. "Looks like our chase is over," he said with unmistakable relief in his voice. "We've been on your trail over a month. Some jasper in New York has been tearing his hair out trying to find you. Our orders when we found you were to say that a guy by the name of Jonathan Traft kicked the bucket."

The Professor's five foot six seemed to actually shrink on hearing the bland statement. "Why, that must be the Uncle Jonathan that always suffered from indigestion," he cried in utter amaze-

ment. "Uncle Jonathan never liked our side of the family."

"Look," the railroad dick said impatiently, "there's a train due at the Junction in twenty minutes. Are you coming, or do we drag you?"

SHORT PANTS suddenly clamped steel fingers over Carter's wrist. "The Professor ain't goin' nowhere 'less he wants to," he warned.

Wayne sighed. "No trouble now, Short Pants," he said firmly. "Please release the gentleman's wrist. It cost me ten dollars and court fees the last time somebody stopped us."

The red bearded giant let go reluctantly. "If you say okay, Professor, okay."

"You saved yourself a sap over the head," Carter grunted, moving his wrist carefully. He nodded to his companion who had stepped behind Short Pants, a sap dangling by a strap from his fingers. The weapon was tucked out of sight once more.

Wayne cracked his soft moss of whiskers into a grin. "You've been invaluable to me, Short Pants," he said warmly. "I won't forget it."

Now that the prospect of a fight had been averted, the big hobo fidgeted from one foot to the other. "Aw, it was nothin'," he protested. "Every time I opened my yawp, you wrote somethin' in your book. But 'member, if you ever get in a jam, just pass word to any braky. I'll be there."

Wayne nodded and then said solemnly, "I'll bet they don't know how to make mulligan in New York."

Joshua Crane, senior partner of Crane, Levy & Crane, Attorneys at Law, was ready to weep with joy when Wayne walked into his New York office. Crane was fiftyish, bald, and had two hundred and five blood pressure. The harrowing search of the past month had added twenty points to the score.

"So you're Professor Wayne," he

said, pulling out a chair for his visitor. "Mighty glad to see you." His bulbous nose wrinkled as he looked Wayne over. "You look more like twenty three than thirty three to me."

Wayne's sun-burned, peeled face was very solemn as he sat down. A shave, a bath, a new suit, and a hair cut had done wonders. He looked like a little boy who had grown up too fast.

"Your ah, manhunt interrupted a very enjoyable experience," he said, placing one razor creased trouser leg over the other. "I was given to understand that my Uncle Jonathan, lately deceased, was the object of bringing me here."

The thick roll of fat hanging from Crane's double chin quivered as he nodded. "Most lamentable, Professor Wayne. He ran out of gasoline flying at two thousand feet." The lawyer picked up an imposing looking document from the desk. "This is your late Uncle's last will and testament in which he bequeaths all his worldly goods to you." Crane paused. "He, ah, had no other living kin."

Wayne read the document through twice. "This sounds quite confusing," he confessed. "I am at a loss for words."

Crane cleared his throat. "Your Uncle was a generous man. He liked women and fast horses too much. The total assets are, namely: one professional football team, known as 'The Packers,' a stadium with a hundred thousand dollar mortgage on it, and sundry creditors whose claims amount to, roughly speaking, thirty-five thousand dollars." The lawyer sighed. "Your Uncle did not believe in incorporating his venture. He had a lot of strange ideas."

The professor sat very still for a moment. Then very slowly he got to his feet and started for the door.

"What's wrong?" Crane asked anxiously.

"I think," the Professor said, "I'll

take up where I left off. I suddenly have a desire to taste mulligan."

CRANE bounced with amazing agility from behind his desk. "Now don't be hasty," he pleaded. "I realize this has been quite a shock, but you mustn't take it too hard."

The Professor tried to swallow his prominent Adam's apple. "I was happy before I met you," he said.

The lawyer dragged him back to the chair. "Let's talk this over," he protested. "Professional football is one of the biggest money makers in sports today and growing bigger every year. A franchise is worth a small fortune in itself. And remember, not many young men have a crackerjack team and a brand new stadium dumped into their laps."

"Don't forget that hundred and thirty-five thousand dollar headache," Wayne reminded. He was silent for a moment. "From what hole," he inquired, "am I supposed to dig this amazing legacy of mine?"

The Packers were playing a night game at Traft Stadium. Fourteen hundred people occupied the twenty-five thousand seats and watched the home team taking their third straight licking at the hands of the Pennsylvania Cougars. It was fourth quarter, and the Packers were on the tail end of a 13-0 score.

In a box on the fifty yard line, Professor Wayne watched a slim hipped Packer quarterback fake beautifully on a spinner and skirt the left side of the Cougar line. He was thrown for a two yard loss. Wayne turned in disgust to his fat companion.

"There's a lad that could go places if he had some help," the Professor said. He encircled No. 34 with a pencil on the program lineup: Marty Ryan, Q. B., Pittsburgh, '38. Then he gave his companion a rueful look. "Seems to me as

if the ghosts of a hundred thousand dollar mortgage are occupying most of the seats tonight," he observed.

Joshua Crane mopped his red face with a silk handkerchief. "I can't understand it," he said worriedly. "Two weeks ago the Packers were at the top of the Eastern League."

"That was two weeks ago."

"There's been a little trouble," the lawyer admitted. "The coach tore up his contract last week."

"I think," the Professor said, "I shall pack my bags again."

"You can't," Crane wailed. "You promised. What do I know about running a football team?"

"That makes two of us."

"But I've got a wife and two kids I haven't seen in a month," the lawyer pleaded. "If you walk out on me now, I'll have to administer the estate until the court decides what's to be done."

Wayne made no reply. His attention was on the game again. The Packers had possession of the ball on their own fifteen yard stripe. Ryan was back in kick formation waiting. The pass from center was low. And the front wall that was supposed to have held the Cougars in check seemed to crumble without making too much effort to stem the invaders. Ryan managed to get off a hurried kick just as three Cougar linemen smothered him. The pigskin, turning end over end, hit the thirty yard stripe and bounced crazily to the sidelines where it rolled out of bounds.

The Professor had his eye on the players, not the ball. He saw Ryan throw a fist into the lanky Packer center's face. Before further trouble started, however, team mates separated the two men. The Professor circled No. 62 on the program lineup: Joe Sloan, c., Alabama '37.

"Hmmm," he said.

Several minutes later the final whistle blasted.

A FIST fight was in progress in the Packers locker room when Crane and the Professor walked in. Nobody paid any attention to the new arrivals. Nobody made any move to stop the fight.

A slim hipped figure still wearing a jersey with a big 34 on the back was pounding away at his lanky antagonist, whose face was already sporting several welts and a cut over one eye. The smaller man seemed to be getting the best of the fight. His square, heavy features were unmarked with the exception of a split lip.

"I think," Wayne muttered, "something should be done about this."

He shook off Crane's hand and pushing through the circle of spectators, stepped into the brawl. His entrance was badly timed. He got a fist in the eye and saw stars. But disregarding the numbness in the region of his eye and the yells from the onlookers, he ducked away from further damage. And then seeing his opportunity, stuck a foot between a pair of long thin legs and shoved. The fight ended abruptly as Ryan's opponent crashed to the floor where he lay stunned for the moment. The quarterback stepped away, frankly astonished by the sudden interruption.

"That will be enough!" Wayne snapped with an unaccustomed hardness in his voice.

Nobody moved. But he could feel hostile eyes boring into him. He turned to Ryan.

"Who's in charge here?"

The quarterback moved his broad shoulders in a gesture of disgust and jerked a thumb at a short grey haired man just pushing through the encircling players. The man's blue eyes flickered curiously over Wayne.

"Who the devil are you?" he asked.

Wayne looked for Crane and saw the lawyer hovering anxiously on the fringe of the circle. Then he took a deep breath.

"I'm your new boss," he said.

There was a deep murmur followed by complete silence. The grey haired man looked Wayne over a moment then said, "I'm Kenyon. I suppose you're Professor Wayne, Mr. Traft's nephew. I've been sort of running things around here. From the way things have been going, you didn't get here any too soon." He seemed relieved by Wayne's presence.

"What's this all about?" Wayne demanded, glancing at Ryan.

The quarterback glared at his late sparring mate who had picked himself off the floor. Then he brushed a hand across his split lip.

"These guys are beefing because they got dough coming for this week. They wanted to take a powder tonight." Ryan's heavy jaw quivered with anger. "Bunch of quitters!"

An angry muttering arose from the others. Wayne raised his hand for silence.

"Is this true, Crane?" he inquired.

The lawyer popped up cautiously from between two players. "That's right," he admitted. "Gate receipts have been very poor. What money has been taken in has gone to satisfy the creditors."

Wayne pulled a checkbook and pen from his pocket. And using Ryan's back for a support, he filled in a pink slip for twelve hundred dollars. Ripping out the check, he handed it to Crane. The lawyer looked at it incredulously.

"I hope this is enough," Wayne said. "See that the payroll is brought up to date." He glanced ruefully at the stub he had filled in. His balance was now exactly seventeen dollars and forty-two cents.

Kenyon's face was a broad grin. "I guess you mean business all right, Professor."

"What I need," Wayne said solemnly, "is a good doctor. To examine my

head." He looked at Crane and raised a thin eyebrow. Then he walked quickly towards the door.

The lawyer came rushing outside after him. "What are you going to do?" he asked anxiously.

The Professor's face had a very determined expression on it. "For the first time in my life," he replied, "I'm going out and get drunk."

THE Professor woke up the following morning with an aching head and some ideas. He found Crane at the stadium waiting nervously in the late Jonathan Traft's private office.

"I was afraid something had happened," the lawyer greeted.

"It did. If I were in my right mind, I wouldn't be here."

Crane pushed some papers towards Wayne. "Sign these," he begged. "You'll make my wife a happy woman."

Wayne picked them up. "This is what you might consider in the nature of an experiment," he said. "Otherwise I would have no earthly reason to assume my late Uncle's obligations."

The lawyer's blood pressure started dropping to normal once Wayne had signed the papers. "I hope you understand the exact state of affairs," he said. "You've been over everything important now. I'm leaving for New York at once." He hesitated. "I hope you don't encounter further trouble until I return."

Wayne sighed. "I'm afraid you don't know me very well, Crane." He took a bottle of aspirin from his pocket and looked at it somewhat skeptically.

The brakeman on a southbound train about to pull out of the local yards was wondering what the well dressed young man was doing there. He was still wondering when he found himself in possession of a folded banknote with an engraving of Abraham Lincoln peeping up at him from its exposed face.

"I'd like to have you pass the word

along the road that the Professor is looking for Short Pants," the young man said. "He can find me at Traft Stadium."

A caller was waiting for Wayne in his Uncle Jonathan's office. She had blonde hair, blue eyes, and an impudent grin. Wayne also noticed that she rolled her stockings.

"I guess you must be Professor Wayne," she said. "I've been waiting an hour and nobody but bill collectors have been here."

"I'm Wayne," the new owner of the Packers admitted. "I'm not interested in magazine subscriptions, and I don't believe in birth control. Good day."

The girl blithely ignored the hint. "I'm Merry Andrews. I just got fired off the City Blade. The managing ed claimed it wasn't good policy for me to write everything I dug out of the sewer. I saw Joe Kenyon. He said an angel had just descended from heaven. I want a job."

The Professor sighed. "I just bought the Brooklyn Bridge, Miss Andrews. And besides, you'd look funny wearing a football suit. See me next Christmas."

Merry never moved. "You look like a nice young man, but I don't think you know much about this racket, Professor," she said. "This isn't college stuff. It's strictly big dough and the hell with little Junior. Anything goes. What you need is somebody to help you make some money in a hurry and somebody to stall off the wolves howling at the gates. You also need plenty of publicity. Kenyon's all right for office boy routine, but he's getting old. The attendance at the last three home games was forty one hundred and five of which thirty eight hundred and forty six were paying customers. You need more customers. And most important, you need me."

Wayne stared at her. "I think," he uttered, "I should have gone to bed last night. Serves me right."

Merry grinned. "Does my salary become effective as of an hour ago?"

The Professor groaned. "Short Pants, wherever you are, please hurry."

MERRY didn't give her new boss a chance to catch his breath. She upset the local football world and wisely hid in a cyclone cellar until the Professor had a chance to cool off. She made sporting page headlines in every Eastern League city. The City Blade, however, made the most noise. Somebody, it seemed, had forgotten to use a blue pencil.

*PACKERS CLAIM PRO TITLE
IN BAG
PREDICT CLEAN SWEEP OF
REMAINING GAMES*

*"It's a mathematical certainty,"
Professor Randolph Wayne, new
owner of the Packers and nephew
of the late Jonathan Traft, de-
clared in a statement issued last
night.*

*He seemed quite undisturbed by
the storm clouds gathering over
Traft Stadium. Nor did the fact
that the Packers face an acute
financial famine bother him a single
whit.*

*"Now that I have taken over
complete control, nothing can stop
us," the Professor further de-
clared.*

*It is quite evident that Jonathan
Traft's nephew has come to Packer
City well heeled with plenty of
bankroll and a sufficient number of
rabbit feet. The Professor also
claims that he is a Doctor of
Psychology. Can it be assumed
that he is also a Doctor of
Miracles?*

The Packers let out a mighty howl when they read the story. The Professor grabbed for the nearest tele-

phone. The managing editor of the City Blade wasn't surprised to hear from him.

"Sorry," he said, "but you can't sue us for libel, Wayne. The story was written by your own press agent, Merry Andrews. That gal is plenty smart—too much for her own good. Just a friendly warning." There was a slight pause. "Can we quote you, Professor, as stating it was merely a publicity stunt?"

"Quotations," Wayne said, "are sometimes worse than a hangover. I'm quite accustomed, however, to the firing mechanism of a gun. Especially after someone else has loaded it."

He took a deep breath before slamming down the telephone receiver. The snowball had started rolling from the top of the mountain.

The team was gathered in open rebellion when the Professor came down the field towards them.

"I understood that a light practice was scheduled for this morning," he said, his eyes flickering from one sullen face to the other.

"The boys are a little sore over that piece in the Blade," Ryan said, stepping out of the group.

"Hmm," Wayne said.

"We've had a pretty heavy schedule," Joe Kenyon said, coming around from the rear of the group. "The boys ain't made of iron. I'm afraid you're expecting an awful lot, Professor Wayne, especially since we haven't a coach."

The Professor never really got mad—just annoyed. And he had been annoyed ever since his taste for mulligan had been cut short.

"We've got four more games to play," he declared. "And we're going to win them if I have to put a brand new team into those uniforms. Now, if there's anybody that has objections, I know of several W.P.A. jobs available.

A strong back and a weak mind are the only requirements."

Nobody moved.

"Attaboy, Professor," a cool feminine voice spoke up from behind him.

WAYNE twisted his head slightly. The five foot four of her was attired in a smart grey suit. "I've been looking for you, Andrews." Wayne's voice was very gentle.

She looked at him mockingly. "Merry's the name," she said. "And you've got no idea how busy I've been building up gate receipts."

Wayne raised one eyebrow. Then removing his coat and tie he placed them carefully on the ground. "Go away and don't bother me," he said. "And Andrews, you can have your job back. Raise whatever your salary is five dollars." He turned to Kenyon who had been listening with a sardonic twist to his wide mouth. "Could I have a football, please."

A red bearded giant arrived in Packer City on Thursday night. Friday morning Wayne received a telephone call from police headquarters.

"We picked up a tramp by the name of Short Pants trying to climb over the stadium gate," the desk sergeant explained. "Claims he's a friend of yours, Professor Wayne."

"That's right," Wayne said. "I've been expecting him. And Sergeant, I've got four box seats for the Pirate game on Sunday that aren't for sale."

"I'll send him down in a patrol car," the desk sergeant said. "I'm off Sunday."

Wayne was studying a number of weird looking diagrams when a policeman escorted Short Pants into the office.

"I got here as soon as I could," Short Pants said. "I been delayed." He looked curiously at the papers on the desk. "Are you writin' another book,

Professor?"

Wayne leaned back in his chair. "What," he asked, "do you know about football?"

Short Pants grinned. "I seen a swell pitcher show once."

The Professor sighed.

Merry came into the office. She gave Wayne's visitor a quick once over. "Business must be worse than I thought."

The Professor raised one eyebrow. "Did anybody," he inquired, "ever think of taking you over his knee?" He made a gesture towards Short Pants. "This may turn out to be our new backfield, Andrews. Take it out and feed it well. I'd suggest a steak, some apple pie, and a shave."

"Hey, wait a minute," Short Pants cried.

Merry grasped him firmly by the arm. "Come on, Frank Merriwell, before the Professor lays another egg."

Kenyon came busting into the office several minutes later.

"There's the devil to pay, Professor," he said excitedly. "The Pirates stole two of our backfield men. Mr. Traft lost them at poker. The Pirates had them on option. They walked out on us last night. And the rest of the team is seething. There's going to be trouble."

Wayne frowned. "I want the entire squad assembled in an hour, Kenyon. I've got a few things I'd like to get off my chest."

He was curled up on a chair in deep thought when Merry and Short Pants returned thirty minutes later, minus a shave.

"I've been doing a lot of listening for a change," Merry said, her eyes shining with excitement. "I've got a marvelous idea."

Randolph Wayne groaned. "Uncle Jonathan should never have run out of gasoline."

KENYON had the entire team on the field waiting for Wayne. He could sense a spirit of unrest as his eyes moved slowly over the group. They came to rest on Ryan.

Wayne called him over. "I've got a special job," he explained. "That is if you haven't packed your bags, too."

Ryan shook his head. "I've got my eye on a farm in Jersey. I'm sticking as long as I get my pay envelope every week."

"I'd die for Alma Mater," Wayne murmured.

Ryan flushed.

"All right, here's what I want you to do . . ." Wayne continued.

The Professor kept the rest of the team waiting twenty minutes. Then he gave them his attention.

"The rats seem to be deserting the ship," he observed. "But before they bore any more holes, I intend to finish the game schedule." He paused. "I'm releasing every one of you from your contract. You're free to go as you please. But keep one thought in mind, gentlemen: I intend to have a team on this field Sunday night to play the Pirates!"

"You can't pull backfield men out of a hat," Sloan, the lanky center, drawled. "But I'd like to hang around anyway."

"Hmm," Wayne said. He looked over the others. "All right, you chaps. I'd like to see a little kicking and passing. Then I've got several new plays I'm going to try out."

With the exception of Ryan, Wayne had discovered an alarming lack of good kickers. And with the loss of two backfield men, the Pitt star would carry the burden of booting.

Wayne's attention was riveted all at once on a mammoth figure retrieving a kick that had rolled far down the field. It was Jancuski, the two hundred and twenty pound tackle from Nebraska. He had picked up the pigskin and in-

stead of tossing it to a nearby teammate booted it back up the field. It was a long, spiralling punt that traveled over fifty yards.

Wayne waited until the tackle had lumbered up the field.

"Where'd you learn to kick like that?" he asked.

The huge lineman fidgeted uncomfortably. "Aw, that was an accident," he said. "I ain't fast enough for the backfield. 'Sides, the coach at Nebraska figured I was better in the line."

"I hope I discover more accidents like that," the Professor said.

Sixty hoboes descended upon Packer City Sunday morning. They came from all directions. And they seemed to be heading in one direction—Traft Stadium. The local citizenry sent frantic calls to the Police Department. But there was no trouble. The Professor had posted a fifty thousand dollar bond. He had anticipated what would happen.

And the Sunday papers carried front page sporting news. Merry Andrews had capitalized on her screwball idea and was leaving nothing to chance.

PACKERS TO INAUGURATE
HOBO NIGHT!
HALF PRICE ADMISSION TO
THOSE WHO DRESS FOR
OCCASION
FIFTEEN PER CENT OF GATE
FOR RED CROSS

Twenty five thousand people jammed into Traft Stadium that night for the Pirate game. The Professor sat on the Packers bench enjoying his third helping of mulligan stew. Over fires in a corner of the field, a group of the itinerant wanderers were busy stirring huge kettles. The local citizenry were accorded the privilege of sampling mulligan for the modest price of ten cents.

The crowd let out a mighty roar when the Packer team trotted out on the field.

Short Pants, with Merry's help, had done a good job. Eleven of the toughest, roughest looking players, wearing uniforms of all descriptions from ragged dirty sweaters and old pants stuffed with padding to second hand football pants and bright colored sweat shirts—these were the famous Bindle Stiff Clowns whom Wayne had engaged for a definite purpose. Of the regular Packers team, there was no sign. They were still in the locker room—at Wayne's orders.

AFTER a short limbering up practice, the substitute Packers came over to the bench. With them was Short Pants looking like a strange animal from another planet. His uniform was striped yellow, black, and red. He wore a nose guard brace, attached to his bright green helmet.

"I want a show," The Professor explained. "I don't expect miracles as far as keeping the Pirates from scoring, but just do your best."

The leaders of the Clowns, a short stocky fellow with a broad scarred face, nodded. "You'll get your money's worth," he said. "We ain't used to big league stuff, but we ain't no lilies either."

"I ain't feelin' so good," Short Pants complained.

"Never mind," Wayne consoled him. "Just try and remember what Ryan was teaching you."

The crowd was buzzing with excitement. They were still trying to figure out what this was all about. Then the Pirates came out onto the field. They were big, rangy, and tough looking. As they went through the preliminary warmup, they shouted jibes and insults at the Clowns. It was all a big joke to them. But they weren't kicking. Twenty-five thousand paying customers weren't hay.

The Packer-Clowns won the toss and

ected to receive. Trotting back to their positions, the Clown captain whispered something to Short Pants, who started to shake his head vigorously. The stocky Clown gave him a boot in the pants. Short Pants grabbed him around the waist and threw him over his head. The crowd roared with laughter.

One Ton Hanley, the Pirate fullback, kicked off. It was a long, end over end boot. Baby Face, the Clown captain, took it on the twelve yard stripe. He took three steps and shoved the ball into the hands of Short Pants. The red bearded giant stood paralyzed in his tracks for a moment. A swarm of Pirates were bearing down on him. Baby Face hurled himself at one of them, dumping him hard. Then Short Pants woke up. His long legs picked up speed as he started up the field. A Pirate tackle dove at him. Short Pants brought down one open ham-hand on his head. The tackle smashed into the ground and lay there. Short Pants made no attempt to avoid two more Pirate linemen converging on him. He hugged the ball close to his stomach and drove right between them. He hit hard. The force behind the drive split them like an axe halving a solid wedge of wood. The invaders were sent flying to either side of him. Other Pirates found themselves being flattened by Packer Clowns. Short Pants was finally brought down on the thirty five yard stripe by three men. The crowd yelled wildly.

On the Packer bench the Professor grinned at Kenyon.

The Pirates lined up grim faced. This crazy aggregation was plenty tough. The tackle Short Pants had pole-axed was still groggy.

BABY FACE took the ball on the first play. He wheeled and started racing towards his own goal. He ran five yards, got mixed up in his own feet

and tumbled head over heels. The Pirates had smashed hard, vindictively, through the forward Packer wall and bore down on him. But Baby Face, raising to a sitting position, tossed the ball to a backfield team-mate waiting for it far to the left sideline. It settled into his arms, and he whirled towards the Pirate goal. A Pirate started past where Short Pants was standing near the line of scrimmage, somewhat confused by the speed of the play. The giant reached out, caught him by the seat of the pants and set him on the ground. The Pirate leaped to his feet and took a swing at Short Pants. The Packer back with the ball deliberately ran out of bounds on the thirty seven yard marker, placed the ball on the ground and wiggled his fingers at the two Pirates all set to make a killing. Then he dashed towards Short Pants who was mixing it with several Pirate linemen. It took five minutes to restore order. The crowd kept yelling for blood. This was crazy football, and they loved it. The Packer-Clowns were penalized fifteen yards for roughing, and the game continued.

They did everything but play football for the entire first half. Short Pants piled up sixty yards for penalties. But the system of play completely demoralized the Pirates. And the miracle of it was that they were held scoreless for the entire half.

During the intermission, the Clowns took themselves off the field. They sported split lips, twisted knees, and other sundry bruises. They also earned the money the Professor paid them. Short Pants had a dandy black eye and a wide grin on his face.

In the locker room, Wayne raised one eyebrow as he looked over the regular Packers. They had been locked in during the entire first half—at his orders. And they were seething with rage.

“Does anyone,” Wayne inquired,

"have any objections to playing a little football for the next thirty minutes?"

"Are Carson and Williams playing for the Pirates?" Ryan asked. They had been the two deserters.

Wayne nodded.

"That's good enough for me," Ryan said grimly.

Merry was waiting for the Professor outside.

"The mulligan's run out," she said. "And the Pirates are fit to be tied."

The Professor sighed. "I think," he said, "things are about to happen. And Andrews, get a piece of beefsteak for Short Pants. He'll need that eye before the game is over."

The Pirates kicked off to open the third quarter. Ryan took it on the five yard stripe. He moved exactly ten steps. A swarm of Pirates smashed through his interference and smothered him. The crowd howled with delight.

On the Packers' bench, Wayne swallowed an aspirin and scribbled some hasty notes on a piece of paper. The teams lined up. Jancuski was back in kicking position instead of Ryan. The ball was snapped back. Jancuski fumbled, tried desperately to boot out of danger. The pigskin struck the outstretched hands of a charging Pirate tackle and bounced back over the goal. There was a mad scramble for it. The referee dug under a pile of arms and legs.

A wild yell went up from the stands when he finally straightened up, shooting his hands over his head in the familiar touchdown sign. The Pirates converted for the extra point.

From the bench, Kenyon looked up at the jammed stands and shook his head. "Tough break," he muttered glumly.

THE Professor glanced down the bench to where Short Pants was sitting, one hand holding a piece of beefsteak over his blackened eye.

"Accidents will happen," he murmured.

Kenyon stared a moment. He hadn't quite been able to figure out his new boss.

The Pirates kicked off again. This time Ryan took it on his ten yard stripe. He judged the tumbling pigskin a moment and then signalled for a fair catch. The crowd booed.

There was a quick huddle. Then the ball was snapped to Jancuski. The gargantuan fullback lowered his head and rammed through center. He made six yards with three Pirates hanging onto him. Ryan swept right end on the next play, making three more. The Pirates played a close defense. It was logical to figure that Jancuski would try the line again for a first down.

Ryan glanced over at the Packers bench as the team came out of the huddle. The Professor moved his head slightly.

Ryan barked the signals and took the ball from center. He feinted towards the right side of the line, made a half turn, and tossed the pigskin to Jancuski who had scampered back to the goal stripe. The crowd screamed its delight as his powerful foot booted the ball far down the field. It struck the ground on the Pirate forty yard stripe, bounced, and rolled crazily towards the sidelines, going out of bounds on the ten yard line. Not a human hand touched it. Smart football now, after that wild first half, and the crowd was beginning to realize it.

Wayne grinned happily and scratched fresh notes in his little book. It seemed as if his knowledge of psychology was meeting football technique on a neutral ground. Kenyon slapped him gleefully on the back. The Professor groaned. Every bone and muscle in his body was stiff, and he ached all over. For five days he had been learning the principles of football.

The play tossed a monkey wrench into the Pirate steam roller. One Ton

Hanley kicked out of danger on the first play. Ryan took the ball on his own forty five and behind an armor of interference romped to the Pirate twenty nine where he was finally spilled.

Jancuski brought the crowd to its feet on the first play. From a difficult angle on the thirty five he place kicked for a field goal.

The aches in Wayne's body were paying dividends. The new style of play had the Pirates running in circles. The fireworks continued into the fourth quarter with the Packers trailing 7-3. It was a novel sight to watch two hundred and twenty pounds of man moun-tain punishing the pigskin. Jancuski, on second down, booted a magnificent spiralling punt from his own twenty to the Pirate ten where Hanley made the catch. He got set for a romp up the field, but a hundred and sixty five pounds of concentrated dynamite flashed through his interference and dumped him hard. Ryan was grinning as he helped the towering Pirate to his feet.

"With the Professor's compliments," he said.

Wayne looked very smug, watching the play from the bench. His hunch in taking Ryan from the booting department and using him to cover the kicking was getting results.

The Packers had a field day. The Pirates were forced to kick after three futile tries to smash the home team's line. The Packers took Hanley's fourth down kick on the midfield stripe. Jancuski immediately booted a beauty to the Pirate coffin corner. The invaders with their backs to the wall opened up an aerial attack. Ryan intercepted Hanley's short pass and twisted and dodged his way to the fifteen yard stripe. Ryan made three yards on a spinner. Jancuski added four more precious yards through center, got a knee in the stomach, and had an ankle twisted.

THE Packers called time out. The team doctor rushed onto the field with Wayne tagging at his heels. Jancuski, who was sitting on the ground, tried to stand. He fell back with a groan.

Wayne sighed. The mammoth full-back was through for the night.

He went back to the bench, beckoned to Short Pants. The giant red beard, munching on a piece of the raw steak he had removed from his eye, came over.

"I'm not looking for brains," the Professor said. "But I'd like to borrow a little of that lazy power of yours. Now, here's what I want you to do"

Short Pants was grinning as he trotted out to report to the referee. His assignment had been very simple.

The whistle blew and the teams lined up on the eight yard line. Ryan glanced over at the Packers bench. The Professor was twirling his pencil. On the play, Ryan took the ball and tried to crash center. He was stopped for no gain. Short Pants, the minute the play went into motion, moved back out of the way and stood still. Two Pirate tackles bore in and smashed him flat.

Short Pants got up, still grinning. "That wasn't nice," he said. "But I ain't gonna get sore."

Ryan looked over at the Pirate backs. The two ex-Packers, Carson and Williams, had just reported to the referee.

"Get out of the way," he warned them. "This is Short Pants' birthday. He's coming through for six points."

The Pirates didn't believe him. They were quick to recognize that Short Pants didn't know much about football and his knowledge hadn't been geared to fit the Packer machine. After a quick huddle, the Packer line spread, the two ends moving far out. The Pirates shifted to meet the anticipated play. Short Pants dug in. Ryan got the ball and shoved it into his hands. Short Pants went through center. No

power could have stopped him. He carried four Pirates over the goal stripe with him.

"All we need now is a one point frosting for the cake," Ryan called cheerfully, shoving a Pirate linemen off his back. He got to his feet and slapped Short Pants on the shoulder. "You'll do," he said.

"Aw, there was nothin' to it," the big hobo said. But he looked pleased. He squinted at Ryan with his black eye which was beginning to turn purplish. "This is more fun than a pitcher show."

Ryan converted for the extra point.

On the Packers bench, Kenyon muttered, "I'da never believed it if I hadn't seen it with me own eyes."

"Just another accident," Wayne murmured.

Short Pants was replaced by another substitute. He received a big ovation from the crowd. And at the far end of the field, some sixty odd hoboes were yelling themselves hoarse.

The Packers wound up their clock to the tinkling chimes of 10-7.

The Professor had a visitor in Uncle Jonathan's office following the game. He was a little gnome of a man with a brown derby supported by donkey ears. He carried a gold mounted malacca cane.

"My name's Tracy," he said. "I enjoyed your three ring circus immensely, but the show is over."

The Professor frowned and his shoe button eyes grew very bright. "It's open season on bill collectors," he said.

Tracy's slightly mummified features were a frozen chunk of lemon ice. "I'm a big man in this town," he snapped. "I knew your Uncle very well. About a hundred thousand dollars worth."

THE Professor lifted one eyebrow. "I think," he said, "We've met before. You're listed, I believe, among certain unfortunate liabilities."

"Your humor," Tracy fumed, "has me rolling in the aisles. I've been in Florida for my health, or I would have been here sooner. There are several other small debts which amount to, roughly, around fourteen thousand more." The gnome grinned, revealing two upper front teeth of solid gold. "I've never made a bad investment yet. I've already started action for receivership. You see, I've always had an overpowering desire to own a football team. As the biggest creditor, I don't think I'll have any trouble."

"You should never pick up the marbles until they're out of the ring," Wayne said. "I'm tired. I'm also getting a bit annoyed. Good bye, Tracy." His voice was very gentle, but there was no mistaking the menace in it.

The gnome shook the malacca cane at Wayne. "I'll have you singing for your supper before I'm through," he threatened.

Merry busted in several minutes after he had gone. "I just ran into a little squirt," she said. "Jasper Tracy. He controls everything in Packer City that isn't nailed down."

"And about to include a stadium with a hundred thousand dollar mortgage and a swell football team," Wayne said gloomily.

Merry eyed him a moment then grabbed him by the arm. "An army can't fight on an empty stomach," she declared. "You're taking me to dinner. I'm a swell dancer, too."

Wayne groaned. "I think I'm going to have a dandy case of the screaming meemies before morning."

Crane had returned to Packer City. Merry and the Professor got him out of bed two o'clock Monday morning.

"How much money have you got?" Wayne demanded.

The lawyer woke up in a hurry. "Have you gone crazy, or are you drunk?"

"That," Wayne said, "is beside the point. I need five thousand dollars."

Crane placed a fat hand to his head. "I knew I shouldn't have eaten apple pie after that lobster," he groaned.

Merry and Wayne let him go back to bed at three thirty. They left with a five thousand dollar check.

A great many things happened during the next two weeks. Tracy started court action as he promised. Crane choked him off short with yards of red tape. Wayne paid off all outstanding debts and formed a corporation, installing Merry Andrews as president. After some thought, he made Short Pants vice president. Crane was appointed secretary-treasurer. He made himself general manager with Kenyon as assistant. And he gave five shares of stock to every member of the Packers as a bonus.

"We are emerging from behind the eight ball," the Professor told Merry.

She grinned back impudently. "I think we ought to make a habit of going out to dinner."

The Packers played the next two games away from home. They won both. And Wayne's mathematical certainty blossomed into a fight for first place in the league.

Short Pants was beginning to get out of the habit of using his fists when carrying the ball. He jumped his scoring tally another six points and played an entire quarter in each game. Ryan was a hard, merciless teacher. But Short Pants caught on fast.

THE Packers came off the road on a Friday afternoon. They had a single game left on the schedule against the Pennsylvania Cougars who were in first place by a few percentage points. A win by either team would clinch the title and pave the way for an inter-sectional tilt with the Pacific Coast Pro League. The championship tilt was scheduled for Saturday night.

Wayne was worried. Tracy had been too quiet. There was trouble brewing. He could sense it. And he had been literally living, sleeping, and eating football the past two weeks. He had studied books on the subject, systems, field strategy from all angles. And from this helter skelter mass of information had evolved his own system of pitting psychology against the ball. It had worked. Up to now. And with Merry splashing gobs of publicity in the right places, Packer City went football mad. It looked like a complete advance sell-out for the Cougar game.

The Professor was busy drawing circles on a piece of paper when Tracy walked into Uncle Jonathan's office. He was still wearing the brown derby and carrying his gold mounted malacca cane. Wayne placed an x next to a circle and looked up.

"I thought you went back to Florida," he said.

Tracy leaned on the malacca cane looking very smug. "There's a little matter of interest due on a certain mortgage payable by tomorrow noon, my dear Professor. A matter of six thousand dollars. I like to do business on a cash basis."

"Would you like the money now?" Wayne inquired.

"Oh, I'm not finished yet," Tracy said affably. "According to the contract your Uncle drew up, there is a slight amortization payment of twenty thousand more."

The Professor sat very still. "I wonder," he said, "if Napoleon was as calm at Waterloo. I'm afraid I didn't hear you correctly. The contract which my lawyer, Joshua Crane, has in his possession shows only the agreement to meet the interest charges."

Tracy gave a wheezing laugh. "I forgot to mention that the day before your Uncle ah—met with a slight accident, we drew up this new contract. No doubt he had it with him when he was flying

to New York. I assure you, my dear Professor, everything is in order. My lawyers have their instructions."

Wayne counted ten very slowly. He had found it an excellent policy in times of stress. Then he said, "I'll be at your office ten o'clock tomorrow morning."

Tracy chuckled "I hope you'll have the money. I'll be disappointed if you don't."

Wayne sat quietly a long time after the gnome had gone. That last remark disturbed him somewhat.

He sent for Crane and talked at great length. When he had finished, the lawyer was sweating freely.

"It's too dangerous," he protested. "Besides, the money can't be touched. If something should happen, there'd be the devil to pay."

"You get the money and leave the rest to me," Wayne said. "It'll be returned intact on Monday morning."

Crane groaned. "Our treasury consists of only nine thousand and forty one dollars and thirty two cents. I'll try and stall Tracy until we can get the rest."

"You don't know Tracy," the Professor said.

CRANE mopped off his face. "Maybe I should have given that five thousand to my wife after all. She's been yelling for mink. And she doesn't like football."

The lawyer went away mumbling under his breath.

Wayne spent the next hour looking for Short Pants. He found the red bearded hobo in a nearby barbership getting a shave.

"Aw, I wanted to surprise you," Short Pants said, grinning from under the lather. "I'm respectable now, you know."

"Hmm," the Professor said. "I'm wondering about that. I've got a little problem bothering me."

The following morning, Wayne, carrying a black satchel, entered Jasper Tracy's office. He cooled his heels for twenty minutes before the little gnome arrived.

"Sorry if I'm late," Tracy said. "I was delayed with a very special conference."

Wayne placed the satchel on a desk and opened it up. Inside were stacks of currency, mostly hundred dollar bills.

"Well!" Tracy exclaimed, "I see you're prepared to cover the note."

"Better count it," Wayne urged. He glanced at his wrist watch. It was ten twenty five.

"Everything seems to be correct," Tracy said several minutes later. He handed the Professor a signed receipt.

"I had this ready," he explained. "Saves time. I'm a busy man."

Wayne started for the door, glanced at his watch and turned back.

"By the way, there's one other thing I forgot to mention," Tracy said, his beady eyes very bright. "The General Electric & Gas Co. installed your excellent lighting system. I'm afraid your Uncle was a very poor business man. There's still an unpaid balance of twenty five hundred dollars. No doubt the invoice was mislaid. And there's also last month's light bill of five hundred more." The gnome paused. "I never heard of playing a football game in the dark. You see, I control the General Electric & Gas Co. The office is closed on Saturdays. Pity, isn't it?"

The Professor looked as if he was actually going to be sick. Before he could speak, however, there was a noise of someone opening a door in the outer office. Then two men came into Tracy's private domain. They were shabbily dressed with low-crowned snap brim hats pulled well over their eyes. The one held a gun in a scarred fist.

"Hoist!" he snarled.

The little gnome seemed to shrink

smaller. He made a move towards the black satchel. The other bandit, however, closed in fast and dealt him a crack across the face.

The Professor suddenly leaped towards the man with the gun. "You can't get away with this," he cried and grabbed at the hairy gun wrist. The bandit twisted free and brought the barrel of the gun down on Wayne's head. The Professor sagged and dropped to the floor.

TRACY was paralyzed with fear. The bandit with the gun motioned to the little gnome. "We're taking this bird with us, Mac," he growled to his companion. "We ain't leavin' no evidence here."

They left Wayne lying on the floor.

Ten minutes later Short Pants and Merry burst into the office. Wayne was sitting on the floor holding his head between his hands.

"You all right?" Merry asked anxiously. "We watched Tracy being taken away in a car from across the street."

Wayne groaned. "Your friends didn't have to be so realistic, Short Pants. I think I'm going to have a dandy headache."

"There's blood on your scalp," Merry cried. "Here, let me fix it."

Wayne pushed her away. "Never mind me. Get a block of tickets from Kenyon, if there are any left. Go down to the General Electric & Gas Co. and do your stuff. We're going to need plenty of light for the game tonight. Tracy tricked us and had the power shut off."

Merry nodded.

They left Tracy's office—Wayne for the stadium and a little first aid, Merry for the General Electric & Gas Co. plant. Short Pants had his own little job to do—about twenty six thousand dollars worth.

At seven thirty that night the stadium

lights were still off. And long lines of spectators were beginning to form at the gates. Wayne hadn't seen Merry or Short Pants since leaving Tracy's office. Despite his outwardly cool manner, he was practically a nervous wreck.

At a quarter to eight, Merry came bursting into Wayne's office. Although the current feeding the floodlights had been shut off, other electricity in the stadium was working. Perhaps a sardonic gesture by Tracy.

"I'm practically a case for the hospital," Wayne greeted. "And for Pete's sake, where are the lights?"

Merry, despite fresh makeup on her face, looked just about done in. "The general plant superintendent promised me they'd be on by now!"

"I think," Wayne said, "I'm going to be a sick man."

Before Merry could reply, Kenyon rushed into the office. "The lights just went on," he cried. "And just in time, too. The crowds were starting to get nasty."

"Amen," Wayne said fervently.

BY eight thirty the stadium was jammed to capacity. In the Packers' locker room, Wayne was giving last minute instructions to the team. He was worried although he managed to conceal it. Short Pants hadn't come in yet. He should have been back hours ago. Had something gone wrong? Wayne tried not to think about it.

A mighty roar went up from the crowd when the Packers trotted out on the field. They were wearing black silk suits with dazzling white dots. Their helmets were of similar color design.

Short Pants had come a long way in football knowledge in the past two weeks under Ryan's tutelage, and several plays had been built around the powerful ex-hobo. It looked, however, as if the game would have to be played without him.

The Packers won the toss and elected to kick. Jancuski, looking like one of the Gay Nineties Floradora girls in his skin tight suit, was back, waiting for the referee's whistle. At the blast, he moved forward slowly and then his right toe met the pigskin in a mighty surge of power. The ball, with a strong wind behind it, carried behind the Cougar goal stripe where the short, stocky full-back, Tommy Evans, took it and behind a screen of perfect interference started up the field. The Packer line closed in to make the tackle. But one by one they were picked off and taken out of the play. Evans advanced as far as the mid-field stripe before he was stopped. Ryan, who had been hanging back on the kick off, got him around the neck. Jancuski added his power. And between them Evans was dumped hard. When he got to his feet, he was limping.

The crowd screamed. They could sense that this game was for blood. On the Packer bench, the Professor grinned happily. He hadn't underestimated the Cougars. Kenyon had been scouting the Pennsylvania team for two weeks, studying their system of play. Hence, the reason for Ryan holding back.

The teams lined up. The Cougars went into a quick huddle, came out fast. The play was almost too fast for the crowd to follow. Hannis, Cougar quarterback, shifted to the right, took the ball, spun, and tossed a lateral to Evans who took it on a dead run and without breaking his stride tossed a pass to the Cougar right end. It clicked. The Cougar end leaping high into the air caught it with one hand and scuttled down the field. He shook off a Packer tackler, dodged another, and reversing his field picked up speed. Ryan bore down on him, made a desperate lunge for those flying legs, missed. The end went over the goal line standing up. Evans booted for the extra point. The crowd went wild. The Packers were

trailing 7-0 in the first two minutes of play!

The Cougars kicked off this time. Ryan took it on the five yard stripe and before he had taken ten steps, was dumped in his tracks. The entire Cougar team piled on.

Ryan came out of the tangle of arms and legs spitting blood from a smashed mouth and with fists swinging. It took half a dozen cops to break up the free for all that resulted. The ball was moved up to the twenty-five yard stripe on a fifteen yard penalty against the visitors.

Jancuski took the ball through center on the first play. He was stopped cold. Second down and ten to go! Ryan tried a short pass through the right side of the line. Thompson, Packer right end, grabbed it but was knocked off his feet. The play netted three yards.

Jancuski kicked on the next play. Evans back on his own twenty yard stripe took it and skirted for the sidelines. Three Packer linemen knocked him out of bounds on the thirty. The Packers were up against a tough team, and they knew it. And that stunning first play touchdown had given their morale an awful jolt. They went through the first quarter scoreless, but held the Cougar steam roller from further tally.

THE second period began with the Packers in possession of the ball on their own forty yard stripe, fourth down coming up.

Jancuski moved back into kick formation, hands outstretched, waiting for the ball. Ryan, crouching low a little to the left of the center was barking the signals. The ball was snapped. Instead of going to Jancuski, it was passed to Ryan who half spun and shoved it into the hands of Bobby Morris, Packer left end coming around fast. He tucked the ball into his stomach and spurred towards the right side of the

line. The clever blending of uniform colors was making it difficult for the Cougars to fathom the plays. And the speed with which it was executed momentarily confused the invaders. Morris swept the front line and with Jancuski and Ryan blocking, broke into the clear. At Nebraska he had been holder of two track records. It was now making itself evident as he stiff armed a Cougar back trying to cut him off and widened the gap between him and the stocky Evans who had cut over to break up the play.

He traveled the remaining forty-six yards to score. There was a momentary hush as the Packers lined up for try at the extra point. A groan went up as Cougar wingmen came in fast to block Ryan's kick.

When the half ended, the Cougars were leading 7-6. And Short Pants hadn't shown up as yet. Merry was waiting for Wayne outside the locker room as the team went out for the start of the third period.

"I've just come from Karp's Landing," she said. "Tracy and the others aren't there."

The Professor was startled. "Not there?" he echoed. Karp's Landing was a small boat house on Mountain Lake ten miles outside Packer City. Crane had made the arrangements for Tracy to be taken there until after the game.

The impudent grin was missing as Merry replied, "I don't give a hoot about Tracy. It's that twenty-six thousand that's got me worried."

"Get hold of Crane," Wayne said. "I hope he's a good lawyer."

The third quarter kept the crowd on the edge of their seats. The Packers took the kickoff and in a razzle dazzle of everything the Professor had taught them, stood the Cougars on their heads. They kicked when they should have passed, ran line plays when they should have kicked. Ryan completed two long

passes to Morris good for seventy yards.

With ten yards and goal to go, Jancuski, plunging through center, fumbled. The Cougars recovered. Evans booted out of danger, Jancuski taking the ball on his own thirty yard line. On the first play Ryan tried a sweep around right end. Four Cougars smacked him so hard that the ball bounced out of his arms. A Cougar man recovered.

The Packers held for three successive downs. On the fourth, Evans tried for a place kick from the thirty two yard line. It was a beautiful boot, sailing right between the posts for three points and shoving the Cougars ahead 10-6.

Wayne took an aspirin. His head still ached from the crack from the pseudo-bandit's gun.

The Packers seemed to have lost their punch. Jancuski had the ankle that had been twisted in the Pirate game wrenched again. He was limping badly but refused to leave the gridiron. The team played doggedly but without their usual fire. With two minutes remaining in the third quarter, Ryan intercepted a pass on his own forty yard stripe and weaving and stiff arming his way, brought the crowd to its feet as he raced to the Cougar twenty yard stripe before he was dropped by Hannis. The Packers called time out. Ryan looked over at the bench. Wayne was chewing on a pencil. The former Pitt star moved his head slightly.

WAYNE sighed. Then he felt Kenyon nudging him in the side. He looked around. Merry, Crane, and Short Pants were coming down the sidelines towards the bench. Short Pants was carrying a black satchel.

Wayne brightened.

"Well, I hope you're satisfied with your crazy monkeyshines," Crane snapped as he came up to the bench.

Wayne looked at the big ex-hobo.

"Where have you been?" he inquired.

Short Pants grinned sheepishly and handed the Professor the satchel. "In jail," he said.

"Miss Andrews found him," the lawyer said. "He hit a truck driving back from Karp's Landing this afternoon. That wasn't bad enough. He had to pick a fight with the truck driver."

"What happened to Tracy?" Wayne demanded.

Short Pants looked uncomfortable. "Aw, the boys are in a hurry to beat it. Smiles was afraid he'd conked you too hard and figured the job was gettin' too risky. I made them take Tracy along with 'em. I think they hopped a freight."

Wayne groaned. He handed Crane the black satchel. "Better put this where it will be safe." And turning to Short Pants added, "Get into a football uniform. We've got a game to win."

Then he called to the waterboy and whispered something in his ear. Grabbing up the tray of paper containers, the boy dashed out onto the field. Wayne saw him whisper something to Ryan.

When the referee's whistle blasted, Jancuski was sitting on the ground holding his ankle and groaning. It took the Packer's doctor five minutes to examine and tape it. By that time, Short Pants was back from the locker room ready for battle. He replaced a Packer halfback. Jancuski remained in the game. The stall had given Short Pants time to dress.

The crowd had barely settled back in their seats when Ryan skirted the left side of the line, trying to break through the Cougar forward wall. He was dumped at the line of scrimmage fifteen yards in from the sideline.

The Packers went into a huddle, came out fast. Short Pants got the ball, half turned and shoved it at Ryan who pivoted toward the right. Short Pants, cradling his arms close to his body, shot

through center bowling over two men and ploughing up to the Cougar secondary defense before he was dumped. Meanwhile, Ryan cut back fast to the thirty yard stripe and whirling, shot a long pass to Morris far out in the end zone. It came like a bullet. Morris got it, leaping into the air. But as he came down, he was hit by Hannis and Evans. The ball was knocked out of his hands.

The referee ruled the play incomplete. The Packers set up a howl, claiming interference with the receiver. For a minute, it looked as if another free-for-all would start. Ryan, however, glancing over at the Professor for instructions, saw Wayne switch the pencil he had been holding from one hand to the other. It was the signal the former Pitt star had been waiting for.

"Let's go, boys!" Ryan cried. "Time we taught these bums how to play football."

THE remark brought an angry snarl from the Cougars, but the Packers were already trotting back to their positions. The crowd, sensing a crisis, was silent as play resumed.

The Packer forward line spread out wide, leaving the center wall wide open. Ryan was calling signals from a thirty-degree angle position to the center. Short Pants at left half was almost opposite Bobby Morris. Kyle, right half was crouched opposite the Packer right end. Jancuski was back ten yards in a direct line with center, hands outstretched.

The ball was snapped—but to Ryan who shot to the left a few steps and started backing up. Short Pants came around right tackle and dove through the Cougar line. The two Packer ends were scooting for the end zone. The play was obviously a pass to either end. But Ryan, dodging a Cougar tackle, was holding back. Short Pants crashed through the Cougar secondary and

sprinting goalward suddenly yelled, "Let's go, Ryan!"

It drew the attack toward the big ex-hobo. Ryan heaved a high floater. Short Pants stopped dead in his tracks just short of the goal line. Evans and Hannis bore down on him. But Short Pants leaped into the air, got his hands on the ball, held for a second and then pushing it like a basketball, heaved the pigskin laterally to little Morris who was left momentarily uncovered at the goal stripe near the sidelines. Evans and Hannis struck Short Pants simultaneously, but too late. Morris snared the ball, fell over the zero stripe with a Cougar tackler hanging onto him.

The crowd voiced a mighty roar of approval. Wayne had a big grin on his face, and Merry was shouting herself into a case of tomorrow's whispers. It had taken Wayne a week to drum that play into Short Pants' head.

Jancuski converted for the extra point, shoving the Packers into the lead 13-10.

The whistle blasted ending the period.

The fourth quarter was football history. Both teams were fighting mad now. Twice the Cougars struck pay territory and each time they were held and forced to kick on fourth down. Short Pants smashed through the Cougar wall of defense time after time, paving the way for Ryan and Jancuski to make the tackles.

With six minutes to play, the Cougars made a desperate last stand offensive. From their own twenty-five yard line, following Jancuski's fifty-five yard boot, they plowed in three successive plays to the Packer thirty-eight. The Packers held for three downs. With fourth coming up, Evans, the Cougar back, retreated to kick. But instead of punting, Evans took a stab at a field goal. Evans booted from almost the midfield marker. He had a strong wind at his back. The ball hit one of the

uprights and bounced through.

Pandemonium broke out. Twenty-five thousand spectators yelled themselves hoarse. 13-13 and less than five minutes to play now!

The Cougars called time out.

They were holding a heated conference. Evans kept nodding at Short Pants who was resting on his back chewing a blade of grass.

The referee's whistle blew and the teams trotted into position for the kick-off. Evans was back, ready to kick, waiting for the signal.

HIS boot was at an angle. Jancuski grabbed it near the coffin corner. His short legs were working like pistons as he scampered along the sidelines. Five Cougar linemen hit him at the same time, throwing him out of bounds on the twenty-five. He didn't get up right away. A knee in the stomach had pounded the breath out of him.

Short Pants hauled him to his feet.

"I had a horse step on me once," he consoled.

Jancuski grinned feebly. He was still gasping for breath.

The next four minutes of play were the roughest the crowd had ever seen. Hannis was carried off the field on a stretcher with a broken ankle. Ryan had a rib cracked. Short Pants was roughed unmercifully. But he only laughed and taunted the Cougars, begging for more.

With the seconds fleeting, it looked as if the game was going to end in a deadlock. But with three minutes left to play, Evans tried a desperate long pass from his own thirty-yard stripe. Short Pants, coming from out of nowhere, snagged the ball, knocked aside the intended Cougar receiver and sprinted toward a touchdown.

A two-hundred-pound lineman dove for him, hooked fingers around the giant's legs. Short Pants hit the ground and with a mighty surge of power, did

a complete roll; the Cougar tackle tried to hang on. Short Pants twisted to his feet, went another ten yards before he was brought down again, with the ball resting on the Cougar twelve-yard stripe directly in line with the goal posts.

The crowd was tense and hushed as Jancuski dug a spot into the ground, preparing for the vital placement kick that would mean 3 points and victory. The Packer right half was kneeling now ready to hold the ball in position.

The Cougars, grim-faced, dug in to block the kick at any cost.

Ryan barked the signals slowly. He shifted and moved closer to the front wall. The ball was snapped back. Jancuski went through the motions of kicking, but with Short Pants cleaving a hole in front of him, Ryan dove through a cleft in the Cougar line. For a moment, there seemed to be a tangle of players and then Ryan broke from the center of it. He had three yards to the zero stripe and it looked as if he wouldn't make it. But Short Pants had somehow gotten behind him. And with a mighty shove literally pushed Ryan across the final marker. The try for the extra point was never made. A Cougar back took a swing at Short Pants. The big ex-hobo countered with a vicious left that landed solidly on the other's nose, smashing it flat. Wayne looked at the time left to play, chuckled, and made no effort to stop the remaining Packer players from rushing out onto the field from the bench to join the battle royal.

He was in Uncle Jonathan's office with Merry when an ambulance pulled up to the north stadium gate and more police reserves began pouring onto the field with clubs swinging.

And then into the office burst Jasper Tracy. His clothes were ripped to shreds and he was sporting a black eye.

"You'll pay for this, Wayne!" he

shouted, waving a small fist in the air.

The Professor lifted one eyebrow. "How," he inquired, "did you get back so soon?"

TRACY snatched up an inkwell from the desk and heaved it at Wayne. The Professor ducked. The inkwell went through a pane of glass. Wayne leaped from behind the desk, grabbed the little gnome around the waist, and hung him, kicking and squirming, by the seat of the pants from a clothes hook on the wall by the door.

Merry was watching, the impudent grin back on her face. She put her hands to her ears. Tracy was shouting, and the words he was using weren't gentlemanlike.

"I always count ten," Wayne said. "It keeps my blood pressure down."

And opening a desk drawer, he took out a pink slip which he stuffed into Tracy's pocket.

"You'll find this check made out for twenty-six thousand," he said. "It's no good until the bank opens Monday morning. And I'll have Miss Andrews stop by the electric company to pay my bill in full."

"You can't get away with this, I've been tricked," the little gnome screeched.

The Professor winked at Merry. "I didn't get that bump on the head by accident. I think that under the circumstances, I've been very generous. Besides, I've got an excellent lawyer."

And to make it more dramatic, Crane walked into the office. He took one look at Tracy fastened to the wall and almost choked on the cigar he wasn't supposed to be smoking.

"What's going on?" he gasped.

Merry grinned. "The Professor was about to invite me out to supper."

"Let me down!" Tracy yelled.

Wayne looked at him solemnly, then at Merry. "It's a date, Andrews."

THE END.

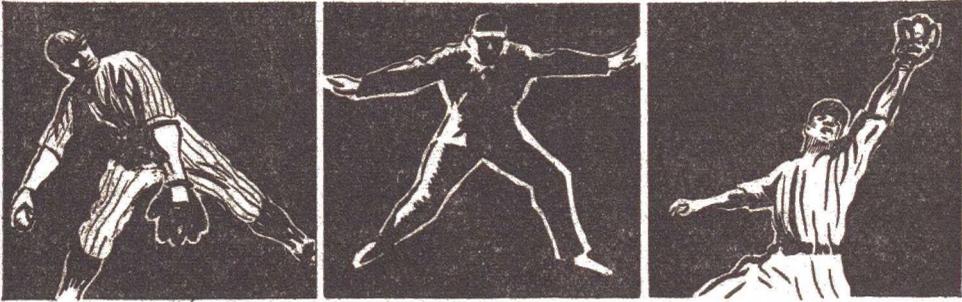
DIAMOND DYNAMITE IN A BIG FAST-ACTION FEATURE-LENGTH!

THE BIG-LEAGUE BUSHERS

by ROE RICHMOND

Author of "Coaches' Backfield Dream," etc.

Blazing line drives might put Poly Marue's Lakewood Pioneers back in the league—blazing line drives, and a brilliant fireballer out on the mound, and a fighting heart behind first base!



POLY MARUE leaned against the dugout rail and said: "I've run a ball club in this town for twenty years, and I ain't stoppin' now. Not if I have to buck all the big shots in Lakewood. The Pioneers put this burg on the map. The Pioneers are the oldest club in this section of the country. And they're goin' to represent Lakewood in the new league." Poly Marue's gargoyle face was wrinkled and twisted with feeling. His pale blue eyes popped, and his teeth protruded in a snarl. Facing portly Mayor Fairfax he was small and defiant.

"I know how you feel, Poly," wheezed the mayor. "We all appreciate what you and the Pioneers have done for Lakewood. We've always supported you well, haven't we? And we've been proud of you and your glorious record. But this new league's going to

be pretty fast, Poly. Real professional stuff. We don't figure any outfit of local semi-pro boys is good enough to represent Lakewood in the league. No offense, but—"

"Not good enough, huh?" cut in Poly Marue. "That's gratitude for you! For five years we been cleanin' up all the teams in the state, and knockin' off every road team that came along. Look at last year. Look at the clubs we beat. Philly Colored Giants, Brooklyn Royal Giants, House of David, Kentucky Colonels, Havana Red Sox, Cuban All Stars, Boston Tigers, and all the rest. And some of them teams ought to be playin' with the Big Time. So the Pioneers ain't good enough no more!"

"Some of your boys are getting pretty old, Poly," said Mayor Fairfax. "Old Sky Kelsey must be forty now. He can't cover much ground at first base.



Lefty Scoffield's getting along, too, slowing up a lot. Catcher Baylor's not so young and his arm is weakening. Jig Vance and Jo-Jo Riley don't keep training any too well. Truck Drury is awful clumsy and slow in right field. Courtney's temperamental and erratic. You—"

"Lemme tell *you* somethin'," said Poly Marue. "Old Sky Kelsey will hit with anybody in that league. Lefty Scoffield's still got perfect control and a smart head. Baylor's in good shape and they won't steal many bases off him either. Jig Vance and Joe Riley can get cockeyed drunk and still play beautiful ball. Truck Drury's sluggin' more than makes up for his slowness in the field. Courtney's temperament don't hurt him no more'n Garbo's does her. Court'll grab off balls in left that nobody else'd touch, and he can sure powder that pellet when he takes a cut at it."

"I'm sorry, Poly," the mayor said. "But you might as well know that the City Council and all our influential citizens are in favor of hiring in a professional team to represent Lakewood this summer."

"Professional, hell!" said Poly Marue. "Young college punks and broken-down minor leaguers. We got boys that starred in college right here. Look at Courtney, Scoffield, Jack Ordway, Steve Dorrance, Doc Wade. All college stars. Sky Kelsey and Franky Cross both been in the Big Show. Jig Vance and Jo-Jo Riley have played organized double-A ball. What more you want?"

"George K. Beasley," said Mayor Fairfax pompously, "has indicated his willingness to contribute thousands of dollars for the support of a professional team in Lakewood. We can't very well ignore such a generous offer, Marue."

"Sure, sure, sure!" Poly Marue said bitterly. "Why does he make that offer? Because that swell-headed kid of his thinks he's a pitcher, and he wants

to give him a chance to pitch."

"Junior Beasley does complain that you refused to give him a fair tryout to pitch for the Pioneers."

"He *can't* pitch!" yelled Poly Marue in fury.

"Junior has a most excellent college record," contradicted Mayor Fairfax. "I have looked over the clippings in his scrapbook."

"Scrapbook!" jeered Poly Marue. "Old George K. prob'ly paid for all those write-ups."

"I've no time to waste in useless arguing with you, Marue," the mayor said firmly. "I'll just warn you that we are all behind Mr. Beasley. He already has scouts rounding up players for us. You might as well disband the Pioneers at once. Lakewood isn't big enough for two ball clubs."

"You're damn right it isn't!" said Poly Marue. "We were here first, and we're stayin' here. Old Beasley's only been in town a year and he's got all you small-time suckers nibblin' out of his hand already. All you *influential citizens!* He's got more money than all the rest of you, so you get down and crawl. Well, Mr. Mayor, I've got some support in this town myself. From the more honest and less *influential* citizens maybe, but there's quite a bunch of them, Fairfax. I'm goin' to fight this thing to the last innin' and then some. If George Beasley brings a team in here they'll have to prove they're better'n my club is. They'll have to lick the Pioneers in a series of games before they ever get a franchise."

"I'm sorry you've taken this unpleasant attitude, Marue," Mayor Fairfax said stiffly. "You'll be sorry too. Your element cannot hope to oppose the best people of Lakewood. You haven't got a chance." Fat and sleek and dignified, the mayor turned away.

POLY MARUE grimaced and spat after him, his gargoyle face uglier

than ever. "We'll see about that," he muttered, turning his attention back to the playing field where the Pioneers were at batting practice.

They wore sober gray uniforms, not new but washed clean and neatly patched, lettered and numbered in blue, with blue caps and blue-and-white stockings. The Pioneers for the most part were a big rangy crew. They were all from Lakewood or nearby towns, for Poly Marue had always boasted a strictly local outfit. In regular batting order they were stepping up to take their three cuts at the ball and then lay one down.

Jo-Jo Riley, second baseman, was the lead-off hitter, short, square and compact, with a hard freckled face and a slit-eyed grin of menace. Joe Riley was tough and stocky and aggressive, a great all-round athlete. He worked in a mill and did some boxing in the ring. Now Riley chopped out three short singles and laid a nice bunt. He was the club's best base-runner.

Jack Ordway, the shortstop, was a veteran, a high school coach with the dark square-jawed face of a pugilist and a mild earnest manner. He clipped a hit-and-run shot between first and second, boosted a long high fly, blasted a harsh line drive, and dumped a perfect sacrifice.

Jig Vance played center, a dark rugged Adonis with curly black hair and a splendid body. He was powerful and muscular, brawny as a young blacksmith, and a long-range slugger. Lakewood was near the Canadian border, and Jig Vance had driven cars for a ring of bootleggers during prohibition. He whaled out three long drives over the outfield. Disdaining to bunt he belted another clout on his fourth swing, and laughed when Poly Marue scolded him.

Old Sky Kelsey, the first sacker, was bow-legged, leather-faced, hawk-beaked, and lop-eared. He had tried out in the American League and played

in the International, American Association and old New England Leagues. He was forever griping and mumbling curses, jawing with umpires, opponents, teammates, and fans. At bat he got all his power with a whiplash wrist action and great forearm muscles. A right-hand hitter he hooked balls past third base like bullets. He still had the best batting eye on the club. Kelsey was a lineman for the electric light department.

Al Courtney, left fielder, was just out of college, the youngest player on the team. Courtney was tall and slender and blond, the fastest of the Pioneers, a hard hitter who came through in the clutch and a swift fielder with a deadly throwing arm. Courtney had a lean boyish face, the grin of a kid, and dangerous green eyes. He took a free clean cut and lashed out ringing line drives.

TRUCK DRURY, the right gardener, looked like a big overgrown awkward farmer boy with a smiling red-cheeked face. He weighed well over two-hundred and swung the lightest bat on the rack, smiting prodigious blows with the toothpick. Drury's work afield left much to be desired, but he could sock the apple. He worked in his father's general store in a little village outside of Lakewood.

Captain Bo Baylor, the catcher, was tall and lanky for a backstop, smart and quick and aggressive, full of vitality and nervous energy. He handled his pitchers well and kept the infield alive and chattering. If his peg to second was weaker he wasn't admitting it to anyone. Bo Baylor was an erratic but ever-dangerous batter, a shrewd field-general and an inspired leader. He operated a gasoline station in the city.

Steve Dorrance at third base was another high school coach, a serious sober chap with no bad habits. He was a graceful and efficient fielder, a switch-hitter who went from sudden

streaks of banging the ball to sudden and hopeless slumps. The conservative element in Lakewood approved of Dorrance more than they did of most of the Pioneers, but he was not popular with the real rabid shirt-sleeve fans. He was too cold, aloof and superior.

There were his eight regulars: Riley, Ordway, Vance, Kelsey, Courtney, Drury, Baylor, Dorrance. Poly Marue nodded with grim satisfaction and switched his attention to the bull-pen where the pitchers were limbering up.

Franky Cross had been up with the Indians, and still had plenty of stuff left. Off the diamond he had a good position in the office of a local manufacturer. Lefty Scoffield coached the Lakewood High team, a grave dignified man in his early thirties, who didn't approve of the way some of his teammates carried on. Doc Wade was a brilliant fireballer, but inclined to be wild and unpredictable. A military school product he was now an officer in a CCC camp. Pep Yeager, a quiet stolid tramp athlete, was hard-working, steady and reliable on the mound. Bud Smythers was a youngster with a great deal of smoke and stuff, improving all the time. The rest of the pitching staff wasn't much, but Poly Marue nodded again with secret satisfaction.

As he got ready to hit them for in-field practice Poly Marue wondered how business was going in his small restaurant and beer tavern. He hoped it was good. He was going to need money to fight the Beasley machine. And he was going to fight if he had to beg, borrow or steal to do it.

LAKEWOOD split squarely in two over the issue. On one side, secure behind the bulwark of Beasley's money-bags, were the city officials and politicians, executives, bankers and big business men. On the other side, loyal to the Pioneers and Poly Marue, were the smaller business men and less pros-

perous professional men, the workmen, the unemployed and the young people.

The local papers were filled with praise for the players recruited by the Beasley faction, names that were familiar even in the hinterlands. "The Cream Of The College Crop," said the Lakewood *Clarion*. "All Potential Major Leaguers." And the Pioneers found it almost impossible, all of a sudden, to get any space on the sporting pages.

There were pictures of the Beasley players, topped by a large photo of young Junior Beasley himself. Gyp Gokey, Holy Cross shortstop; Hy Rubin, N.Y.U. third baseman; Crash Kavanich, right fielder from Duke; Teke Nobel, center fielder from Temple; Fin Borowski, left fielder from Holy Cross; Lou Trelli, Fordham first sacker; Candy Cardac, second base, of William and Mary; Jug Bolas, Notre Dame catcher. And pitchers Clipper Croft (Tennessee); Pat Montini (Fordham); Dolly Gray (Duke); Johnny Jurras (Alabama); and of course Junior Beasley, ex-Harvard ace. Jay Rooney, old-time big league ace and present great coach, was to run the team.

Al Courtney and Captain Bo Baylor of the Pioneers sat in Poly Marue's tavern smoking cigarettes and discussing the situation and their first practice game of the season which was coming with a semi-pro outfit from a rival city. Poly Marue sat with them, his homely face a caricature of sadness under his white cap. Except for them the place was empty.

"Business is awful," said Poly Marue. "Terrible. There just ain't no more business."

"Probably the town fathers have blacklisted you," Courtney said. "I wouldn't put it past them."

"They've sure blacklisted my filling station," said Baylor. "I've lost a lot of my best customers all at once."

"You wouldn't think people could be so low and mean and rotten," Poly Marue said, shaking his head. "Them big shots are the ones that are always cryin', 'Buy Lakewood! Buy at home! Support your hometown merchants.' But when it comes to spendin' money for a ball club they got to go way out of the state to hire players. We give 'em a great club, a winnin' club for years, without no salaries. We depend on gate receipts for our pay. Of course they ain't payin' salaries to local boys. When there's salaries to be paid they got to import boys and hand it to them. I don't understand it. It burns me up. But we got to raise money some way."

"We ought to make a little on that exhibition game with Moretown," said Courtney. "They say Junior Beasley volunteered to pitch for them, just for the sake of getting a crack at us."

"I hope he does," Baylor growled. "We'll knock his block off! You know what the School Board told Lefty Scoffield? They insinuated that it'd be just as well for Lefty, and his job, if he didn't do any more pitching for the Pioneers. Now in some ways Lefty is kind of a cold fish, but he's independent and honest and loyal. He told 'em he'd pitch for the Pioneers as long as his arm lasted."

COURTNEY laughed. "The electric company threatened old Sky Kelsey, too. Sky told 'em if they took his job he'd take their whole damn place apart, and every one of them with it. That's the last he heard about that."

"They're doin' everythin' they can to bust us," said Poly Marue. "Nothin's too low for old George Beasley, Fairfax, and them."

Jo-Jo Riley swaggered in, grinning his freckled slit-eyed grin. "Well, I lost my job," Riley announced cheerfully. "Old Beasley's son-in-law took over the mill, you know. Put in new foremen and all. My boss started ridin'

me right away. I stood it long as I could. This afternoon I cooled him." Riley looked at his knuckles. "I must've broke his jaw, honest. It felt like a home run. Of course all they wanted was some excuse to fire me."

"If you didn't like beer so much, Joe, I'd give you a job in here," said Poly Marue.

Jig Vance entered, black and laughing, to cuff and maul his teammates playfully as he crowded into the booth. "I feel pretty good," said Jig. "Just got canned. I thought it was too good to last. I been driving for Fairfax, you know. Pennies from heaven! All I had to do was hang round, run a few errands, drive people places. Swell set-up. Tonight Fairfax said he wouldn't need me any more. Hinted that my reputation was against me. So I'm a free man again. Bring on a round of ales, Poly!"

Poly Marue drew a round of ales and delivered them sorrowfully. "Don't you guys get started drinkin'," he said. "Looks like I got to put Joe and Jig to work in here. It ain't no place for two boys that like the suds like you two, but I got to do it. And we all got to think up ways to raise some money."

Bo Baylor said: "Well, Court, I guess you're about the only guy on the team they can't crack down on one way or another."

Courtney shook his fair head and smiled. "Not much!" he said. "They got to me first. You know I've been going round with Ann Fairfax. She's a nice kid; the mayor must have adopted her. Well, last night when I called for her I was told that she wasn't in, and wouldn't be in any more, so far as I was concerned. The mayor wants Junior Beasley to have a clear field ahead."

"It's a crime!" yelled Poly Marue. "It ain't even decent or human. It's a disgrace to civilization. It's just like Russia!"

THE Pioneers started a drive to raise funds for the coming campaign.

Poly Marue put on dances in the armory. Jo-Jo Riley went back to fighting in the ring. Jack Ordway, a licensed pilot, took passengers up in a rented plane. Jig Vance went on a mysterious mission to Montreal and returned with a roll. Sky Kelsey, as Lefty Scoffield's assistant, coached the Lakewood High boys in batting. Truck Drury conducted a series of profitable raffles in his father's store. Captain Bo Baylor canvassed the city and made the loyal rooters dig up. Steve Dorrance and Lefty Schoffield gave lectures to clubs and organizations. Doc Wade spoke over the radio on the benefits of the CCC. Bud Smythers and Pep Yeager conducted a baseball pool on the major league games. Franky Cross, expert bowler and billiard player, lured victims into playing for money.

Al Courtney entered a diving contest at Pine Bluffs, and found Junior Beasley one of his opponents. The others were lifeguards, early summer visitors, and counselors from boys' camps. If Junior Beasley hadn't been in it Courtney would have been tempted to withdraw. He was a finished diver with natural grace and poise, but he had never done much competitive diving. Beasley was a handsome rangy fellow with insolent dark eyes and a sulky full-lipped mouth. He surveyed the other entrants with amused scorn, and turned to smile at Ann Fairfax on the pier. Junior Beasley was cocksure and arrogant. The fifty dollar prize money meant nothing to him, but he was bent on winning for the sake of winning—and pleasing Ann Fairfax.

At the start Beasley showed himself practice-perfect. On the board his exhibitionism made him outstanding, but after leaving the board his performance was somewhat stiff, wooden and routine. Al Courtney had more fire and grace by far. Watching Beasley left you approv-

ing but cold. Watching Courtney was thrilling, uplifting, and gave the sensation of flying with winged and daring grace.

Ann Fairfax, like everyone else, found herself following the lithe bronzed Courtney and applauding him spasmodically. Ann Fairfax had chestnut hair piled in vagrant curls above a pure brow, and eyes that were clear and blue. The lines of her face were sharply patrician, but her mouth was wide and generous and gracious. Feeling that he was beaten Junior Beasley became sullen and sneering, and his diving suffered. With exultance Al Courtney went through half-gainers, full-gainers, one-and-a-halves, front and back jacks, forgetting competition in the sheer fun of diving.

The judges' announcement was no surprise to anyone—not even to Junior Beasley. And young Al Courtney had contributed a good share to the cause of the Pioneers. Poly Marue made him keep fifteen dollars, taking thirty-five for the club treasury. At the last practice before the exhibition game with Moretown Poly Marue said that they had reached the five-hundred dollar mark, and everyone felt very good about it. Adversity had welded the Pioneers into a closer unit than ever.

The exhibition contest drew a capacity crowd to Lakewood Park. Junior Beasley's presence in the Moretown box attracted all the Beasley adherents, and the regular Pioneer fans turned out to see their team face its initial test. Moretown, while slightly inferior to the Pioneers, had always been a dangerous rival. Playing on their home grounds the Pioneers found themselves in the unique position of outsiders. Lakewood fans favored and cheered the visiting team from Moretown. It bothered the Pioneers, and it hurt Poly Marue. It's never pleasant to be made total strangers and outcasts in your own hometown.

PLANNING to use all his twirlers Poly started Franky Cross, the veteran right-hander. Cross got started badly, walking two invaders. The next man sacrificed, Dorrance to Kelsey being the play. The Moretown clean-up man, Beezer Brock, walloped a double out of Truck Drury's reach in right and two runs scored. Jo-Jo Riley made a life-saving stop and a bullet peg to Dorrance nipped Brock sliding into third. Al Courtney raced deep in left-center to haul down a drive and retire the side. Jig Vance pulled up beside Courtney cursing in mock anger. "What you trying to do, hog 'em all?"

Junior Beasley pitched with elaborate motions and lots of flourish, but he did have plenty of speed. Little Joe Riley swaggered out to greet him, grinning with slit-eyed scorn. Beasley dusted Riley with the first pitch. Jo-Jo got up laughing. "Don't make a habit of that, Junior. I might get mad and bend a bat on your conk." Beasley hooked a curve in there for strike one, and then his fast one sailed at Riley's head again. Jo-Jo got mad then and took a few steps toward the mound. "I'm telling you, punk. Another duster and I'll climb all over you with my cleats." Junior Beasley twisted another curve and Jo-Jo Riley slapped it straight back through the box for a single.

Riley stole second with a quick break and a reckless slide. Ordway flied out to short left. Jig Vance flied out to deep right. Old Sky Kelsey swore and sputtered as Beasley made him a dodge back. "If you hit me," snarled Sky, "it'll be the last damn thing you do in this world!" Beasley slanted a curve over and old Sky Kelsey rifled it down the left field line, scoring Riley. Al Courtney went up, fouled off a half-dozen, and then missed a fireball. Junior Beasley laughed at him. Moretown 2—Pioneers 1.

Franky Cross got through the second inning, but he wasn't going right. Great

stops by Jack Ordway and Steve Dorrance cut off base knocks, and Jig Vance traveled a long way to snare a clout over center. For the Pioneers big Truck Drury singled sharply to right, but Junior Beasley set down Baylor, Dorrance and Cross in rapid order.

"That swell-headed monkey's better'n we thought," muttered Baylor. "He's got a good hard one there."

Old Sky Kelsey scoffed profanely. "I got a kid home that could knock his ears off."

Lefty Scofield took the hill for the Pioneers and stopped the visitors cold for his two rounds, aided by Kelsey's grab of a liner over first, Riley's bare-handed stab behind second, and Courtney's shoe-top snatch in short left.

The Pioneers tied it up at 2-2 when Jo-Jo Riley drew a free ticket, moved up on Ordway's neat bunt, and slid over the dish after Jig Vance ripped a wicked ground single through the infield. With two out Al Courtney had to drop flat twice to escape Beasley's fast ball. Courtney was shaken and hot with rage, but he kept a grip on himself. When the curve came Courtney dragged a long bunt between the pitcher's box and first. The first-baseman fielded it, and Junior Beasley ran over to cover the bag. Running like the wind Al Courtney beat the toss and crashed into Beasley at top speed. Beasley hit the ground hard and rolled over from the force of the collision. Beasley got up, half-groggy and crazed with fury, and leaped at Al Courtney. They swapped smashes to the face and head before the umpire and other players pulled them apart. Panting on the first cushion Al Courtney realized that the booging was for him, and his green eyes narrowed. After playing four years for Lakewood High and five summers with the Pioneers Courtney was being condemned and booed by a hometown crowd. He died on first.

Doc Wade was wild and only stayed

in there one inning, in which Moretown regained the lead, 3-2. Young Bud Smythers pitched shutout ball in his two frames. In the last of the seventh, with only part of the crowd standing in honor of the home team, Jo-Jo Riley punched out a single to start things. Ordway whiffed, but Jo-Jo again stole second with a terrific slide into the bag. Jig Vance, swinging mightily, popped for the second out. Then Junior Beasley purposely passed old Sky Kelsey to get at Al Courtney.

Captain Baylor pounded Courtney's back. "Make him sorry he did it, Court." Courtney walked into the box, planted his spikes and waited. With a 2-2 count Junior Beasley got everything behind his fast one. Al Courtney took a clean stride forward, whipped his long bat around and met the ball squarely. The crash resounded like an explosion and the ball went streaking on a line between left and center. Riley and old Sky Kelsey scored. Moving fleet and smooth as a grayhound Al Courtney went round first and second, and skimmed into third with a long daring slide. He was left there, but the Pioneers led, 4-3.

WITH Pep Yeager on the slab everything went wrong. Dorrance bobbled an easy grounder at third. Truck Drury mis-judged a soft fly ball in right field. Ordway dropped Riley's toss that should have started a double-play, and the sacks were jammed full. Then Yeager made one too good and Junior Beasley hoisted a high one over the right field fence for four runs. Moretown was up, 7-4.

In the last two stanzas Junior Beasley turned on the heat and cut loose with everything. The Pioneers could not touch him. The game ended in a decisive victory for Moretown, 8-4, and it was a crushing blow to Poly Marue and his Pioneers.

"The poor old Pioneers," everyone

was saying and laughing. "Can't even beat that outfit, and they want to get in that new league! They better fold up before they get to be more of a joke and a laughing-stock. Poor old Poly Marue and his Pioneers!"

The next day half of Lakewood turned out at the station to welcome the ball players hired by George K. Beasley.

George K. made a speech, after introducing his athletes to the throng. He said his Lakewood Lions, attired in the best new uniforms that money could buy, would play a three-game series with the Pioneers. The club winning two out of three would be paid good salaries to represent Lakewood in the league. "Of course there is no doubt as to the ultimate results," boomed George K. Beasley. "Just yesterday the Pioneers were badly whipped by a team of backwoodsmen from Moretown. The Lion players are fresh from college diamonds and triumphs, ready to sweep the league. But this three-game series, which will no doubt last only two games, will be good practice for the Lions and get them accustomed to their new home-grounds."

That evening there was a dinner and reception for the new ball players in City Hall.

The Pioneers sat around Poly Marue's place, and even Jig Vance was quiet and subdued for once. There were no other customers in sight.

UNDER the unusual tension and strain, the criticisms and mockery that was poured like vitriol over them, the Pioneers began to wilt and wither, crack and break. Poly Marue tried to keep their spirits burning, but it was difficult, for in himself the spark was low.

The Lakewood Lions roved the streets like cavaliers, accepting the adulation they were given but making little effort to conceal their contempt for the

little country city and its inhabitants.

They were resplendent in scarlet jackets with sleeves of royal blue. Above the blue-and-gold numbers on their backs was embossed a lion's head in gold-and-blue. Their new baseball uniforms were a creamy white piped, lettered and numbered in scarlet-and-blue, with red caps and stockings striped red, blue and gold. They fairly glittered on the field, and their work in practice sparkled too. Large crowds turned out to watch this dazzling array go through the paces. In town they strolled about like conquering warriors, laughing, wisecracking, kidding the local girls.

Mayor Fairfax gave a dance in their honor at the country club. Al Courtney stood on the porch with Jo-Jo Riley, Jig Vance, Truck Drury, and Captain Bo Baylor, watching the dancers. The young ladies of Lakewood looked up at the suntanned Lions with worshipful eyes. Ann Fairfax was no exception. Al Courtney's hands clenched as he saw her spinning from one man to another, and always ending up in Junior Beasley's Harvard embrace.

Informed of their presence Mayor Fairfax and George K. Beasley came outside and frowned upon them. "This is a private dance," the mayor said. "We don't want any disturbances or trouble here. I'd advise you fellows to leave at once."

Jig Vance laughed at the two fat perspiring men. Bo Baylor told them to go shove their private dance. Al Courtney said: "It's probably the first time those gorillas ever got into a country club." Then they all had to hold Jo-Jo Riley who wanted to see how deep his fists would sink into those swollen waistlines.

Shortly afterward a squad of Lions appeared on the porch, stared at the faded Pioneer jackets, and began to laugh and crack wise. "Are these our worthy opponents?" . . . "Sure, our

country cousins!" . . . "Well, well, well!" . . . Jo-Jo Riley broke loose and burst into the midst of them, slashing away with both fists. Gyp Gokey sprawled over the railing and Lou Trelli was flattened against the wall. The other Lions were swarming over little Jo-Jo when the Pioneers jumped into it.

Al Courtney knocked Hy Rubin flat on his back with a whipping left, and took a flurry of jarring punches on the head and return. The air was full of flying fists. Brawny Jig Vance sent Kavanich and Fin Borowski crashing over the rail to the ground. Bo Baylor hurled Pat Montini through a window. Big Truck Drury plucked Teke Nobel and Johnny Jurras off little Joe Riley, and heaved them bodily into the shadows at the far end of the veranda.

More men were rushing out into the surging and embattled dimness. The Pioneers got together, wrenching and smashing away from grasping arms, and fled into the night. Some of the Lions followed them to their car, and there was another savage skirmish in the shadows. Jig Vance laughed as he struck out with terrible hands. Jo-Jo Riley was like a wildcat. Truck Drury's huge hands tossed men about like straw. Al Courtney's fists and forearms were numb from the solid blows he landed. Bo Baylor got the car started, and his teammates piled in and made their getaway.

In the back room at Poly Marue's they found that they had not escaped unscathed by any means. In the heat of conflict they hadn't noticed the punishment, but now their heads were throbbing and their faces were bruised and cut. Al Courtney's nose was swollen and bleeding, and his cheekbones were welted blue. Jig Vance had a black eye and a cut lip. Joe Riley's freckled face was badly marked and his lips were puffed. Bo Baylor's cheek was gashed deeply, and Big Truck

Drury's face was scratched and torn.

The following day there was little else talked of in Lakewood, and vituperative abuse was heaped upon the Pioneers, who were blamed entirely for the brawl. There were warrants out for the five players, but they were nowhere to be found. Poly Marue had foreseen just such an event. It was a perfect opportunity for Fairfax and Beasley to disgrace the Pioneers forever.

So the Pioneer stock dropped lower and lower until it hit rock-bottom. Steve Dorrance, Lefty Scoffield, Doc Wade, and Jack Ordway told Poly Marue frankly that they were afraid they'd have to quit the club, and Franky Cross was of the same mind. These five contended that men in their positions might well be ruined by association with an organization guilty of such rowdyism.

"All right, boys," said Poly Marue sadly. "If that's how you feel about it, okay. I know our boys didn't start that scrap. But it's up to you fellows. You know how you feel and what you want to do. Anyway it looks like the end of the old Pioneers."

GEORGE K. BEASLEY was worried. His Lions had lost most of their cockiness and some of their confidence since that first unofficial meeting with the Pioneers. Old Beasley overheard his players discussing the brawl. "I never saw guys fight like those guys! That little Riley's been in the ring, you know. That black Vance is dynamite, boy, I'm telling you! He's powerful and tough. Did you see him laughing all the time? Yeah, and that big farmer Drury. He don't know his own strength! Courtney looks kinda skinny but he hits like a mule. Maybe Baylor isn't quick and tricky! Well, perhaps they don't play ball as good as they fight . . ."

The conversation did not please

George K. Beasley. He thought he had gambled on a sure thing, but now he began to wonder. Anything could happen in baseball. Nothing was sure. The Pioneers might have a crazy streak and wreck the Lions. Well, if it wasn't a sure thing it could be made into one. George K. had the money and power to do it. He told Mayor Fairfax to have the breach-of-peace charges dropped. It was a gesture that should win more supporters to the Lions' side.

"We'll take care of those five tough guys a different way," promised George K. Beasley. "Another thing, I don't want any of the Pioneers quitting on account of public opinion or pressure. We don't want that at all, see? If some of them—say Riley, Vance, Baylor, Courtney, and Drury—should get drunk and not show up, why that's another matter. You see my point, Fairfax?"

The mayor didn't exactly, but he nodded his bald head. It was a movement that had become automatic with Mayor Fairfax since the advent of Mr. George K. Beasley.

"I happen to know where those five are hiding out," went on Beasley. "They're in the summer cottage owned by Courtney's family. It's up the lake on Arrowhead Point, north of Pine Bluffs. They may decide to stay there longer than they intended." The two men exchanged wise and sinister smiles, and the mayor was nodding violently again.

As they finished talking Ann Fairfax came in from a side room, paused irresolutely and said: "Oh, excuse me. But have you seen Junior, Mr. Beasley?" Mr. Beasley hadn't, but he thought Junior had taken some of the boys out on the lake in his speedboat.

Ann Fairfax walked on through the room and out of the house. Swiftly she slid in back of the wheel of her convertible coupe and swung it down the drive. With little regard for stop

streets and traffic she drove across town, parked a block from her destination, and entered Poly Marue's place for the first time in her life. Surprise revealed itself on Poly's wrinkled and unhappy face.

"Mr. Marue, is there a phone at the Courtney cottage?"

"There was," said Poly. "But something's happened to it. The line's dead. I been tryin' to call— But say, what do you want to know for?"

"Don't worry. I'm on your side. You've got to believe me. I think it's an awful shame the way Lakewood has treated you and the Pioneers. And now that old robber-baron, George Beasley, is going to pull another crooked deal. I don't know just what. Something about the boys at the Courtney camp. I'm going to drive up there and warn them."

"The road's terrible," said Poly Marue. "It's a long trip by land. Lots faster in a boat."

"Well, I have a boat, too. One of the fastest boats on the lake. You'd better come with me, Mr. Marue. And round up some of your ball players, too. We may need them."

"My ball players! My ball players!" groaned Poly Marue. "They're all quittin' on me now. But I can get old Sky maybe, and Bud Smythers and Pep Yeager."

"I'd like to take some of your sissy school teachers along, just to show 'em," said Ann Fairfax. "They're ashamed of something they should be proud of. It's Beasley's bunch that ought to be ashamed, Mr. Marue."

"I know it, I know it, Miss Fairfax. But they can't see it right. Like most folks they're scared to death of public opinion and gossip. Let 'em talk, I say. I know what's right and what's wrong. Don't call me Mr. Marue, Miss Fairfax. Everybody calls me Poly."

The girl smiled. "And my name is Ann," she said.

THE five refugees had been enjoying their lazy stay in the Courtney cottage, but now they were getting restless and uneasy. Truck Drury had proven himself a good cook, assisted by Baylor. There was a great stone fireplace, many comfortable chairs and lounges, and lots of books and magazines to read at night. The daytimes they spent swimming, sunning themselves on the wooden pier, rowing the boat or paddling the canoe, pitching horseshoes and tossing baseballs around.

It was pleasant enough for a while, but they were beginning to feel nervous, impatient, irritable from boredom. It was almost time for the first game of the series with the Lions. They had been in exile three days, and it seemed a great deal longer. They were on the dock in swimming trunks when a boat carrying two men came toward them. The boat drew up to the pier. The strangers chatted with Baylor, while Vance and Drury wrestled about, and Courtney and Riley went on diving from the board. The sun was sinking red behind the western mountain peaks now.

"Time for a drink, Ed," said the short stocky man.

"You said it, Sam," agreed the big husky man. "Will you boys join us? We got some awful nice drinkin' whisky here."

Baylor shook his head regretfully. "Thanks, but we're supposed to be in training."

"Oh, are you fellows playin' ball with the Lakewood Lions? Thought you looked like college ball players."

"We're with the Pioneers," Baylor said.

"Oh, yeah. Gettin' pushed around a little, huh? Haven't got much chance of beatin' the Lions, have you? Well, sorry you won't take a drink with us."

"Hey, wait a minute!" yelled Jig Vance. "I'll drink with you guys. Come

on, Drury. A few shots won't hurt us. It'll do us good. Come on, Court and Jo-Jo."

Courtney grinned. "Let's go inside and do it right. We've got soda and ice and glasses in there."

"That's wonderful," said Sam. "Let's go. What's holding us?"

"We got to take it easy," Bo Baylor said. "Got to go easy, gang."

"Listen to Captain Baylor!" jeered Jo-Jo Riley. "Hear him talk, and he'll drink more'n any of us."

"We got plenty of liquor," volunteered Ed, dragging forth two quart bottles from under a tarpaulin.

A cheer volleyed across the darkening water as they went toward the camp. In a few minutes ice was clinking in tall glasses and the seltzer bottle was fizzing merrily. Half-an-hour later Sam and Ed had been invited to supper and everyone was feeling mellow and happy.

About eight o'clock Bo Baylor said: "I feel kind of funny. Dopey and sleepy . . ." And he passed out on the couch in the corner. Five minutes later Jo-Jo Riley was snoring in his chair, and Courtney kept awake only with great effort. Jig Vance got unsteadily to his feet, growling: "Something's screwy here. That whisky. We haven't had enough to pass those guys out." He started toward the big man called Ed, weaving and swaying weakly. The stocky Sam clipped him from the side, and Jig Vance fell to the floor. Truck Drury heaved to his feet, stared stupidly at the gun thrust into his face, and slumped back into his chair. Courtney tried to rise but there was no strength or feeling in his limbs. Weary and sick he gave up, closed his eyes and sank into depths of darkness. From the lake came the growing noise of a high-powered boat.

"There's the boys," Ed said. "I hope you didn't give these guys too much of that stuff."

"Aw, they'll be okay," said Sam. "Won't feel much like playin' ball for a while maybe. I'm glad the boys are here. These kids are pretty big to be luggin' round in the dark."

LAKEWOOD PARK was packed solid-full of humanity for the opening game of the Lion-Pioneer series. The Lions were shining figures on the field in their white uniforms and red, blue and gold spangles. The Pioneers hadn't showed up yet, and it was almost game-time. "They won't even come," fans were muttering to one another. "They know they're licked. They don't want to make fools of themselves. We'll get our money back today."

In a box behind the Lion dugout Mayor Fairfax and George K. Beasley sat smug and complacent, smiling behind their cigars. Suddenly Fairfax stiffened in his seat and nudged Beasley. They both stared in amazement as a squad of players in plain gray uniforms appeared in front of the opposite dugout. "Good God!" gasped Fairfax. "There's Jig Vance—and Truck Drury. They're all there! Yes, there's Riley and Courtney and Baylor. All of them."

"What in the—?" wheezed Beasley. "Well, I'll be—! How in the name of—? What could've happened anyway?"

Poly Marue told the umpires his team would take no practice and be ready to go in a few minutes. Poly went back to the Pioneer dugout. "Boys, we may have to spot 'em this one game," he said. "But we'll take the next two. Today Baylor, Riley, Vance, Courtney, and Drury are sick men. They shouldn't be playin' ball at all. They ought to be in bed. I want you to all know what happened, if you don't already. So you won't have to be ashamed of belongin' to the Pioneers. You can be proud and thankful you're Pioneers instead of on Beasley's side.

These five boys were drugged by men hired by George K. Beasley. And they wouldn't even be here today if it wasn't for Miss Ann Fairfax. She took us up the lake in her speedboat, and we got there just in time. They even shot at us, but Ann Fairfax kept on goin'. And we drove 'em away and got these five boys out of there safe. They're sick, but they'll be in there tryin'. It's up to you men that aren't sick to play twice as hard. All right, go out there, gang!"

The Pioneers took the field for the first inning, and there were five very sick boys in the lineup. Their faces were gray and drawn under the tan, and their eyes were dull and heavy. Their legs and arms felt numb and weak, and nausea still writhed under their belts.

"Look at 'em," people said in the crowd. "They've been on another drunk. They're still rum-dumb. This'll be pitiful!"

It was almost that bad. Bud Smythers breezed through two innings all right, but in the third his defense collapsed in back of him. Jig Vance lost a fly ball in center; Jo-Jo Riley fell over a grounder with a double-play all set up; both runners advanced when Baylor let a pitch get away from him. Then Al Courtney dropped a long drive and two runs scored. Young Smythers blew up then, walking three in a row to force in two more Lions. Doc Wade went in, cold mad, and struck out three men in succession to end the massacre. The Lions were ahead, 4-0.

Jack Ordway singled and scored on Sky Kelsey's long double in the fifth. Bo Baylor got a fluke double and counted on Steve Dorrance's one-shot blow in the sixth. And Doc Wade, still in a grim rage, kept the Lions handcuffed until the seventh. In that frame Jug Bolas and Gyp Gokey rapped out safeties, and Crash Kavanich propelled a triple over Drury's head in right to

chase them across. Lions out front, 6-2.

Al Courtney had a chance to drive in two scores in the seventh, after Jo-Jo Riley and Jig Vance had somehow managed to connect safely. But Courtney was weak and sick, an easy victim for Fordham Pat Montini. In the ninth Doc Wade blew, and the Lions crossed the plate three times more.

The final score was 9-2, for the Beasley aggregation. And the Pioneers were more of a joke club than ever. Lakewood was rife with lurid details of the debauchery of the Pioneer players and the disgraceful condition in which five of them tried to play ball.

THE second game was but scantily attended. Everybody expected another walk-away for the Lions. Those who went did so in the hope that the Lions might take it easy and make a ball game of it instead of a farce. And they were rewarded by seeing a close hard-fought battle of beautiful baseball.

The five ailing Pioneers had recovered and were raring to go. Lefty Scoffield, the grave and sober schoolmaster, was on the slab for Poly Marue's gang, and never had he been cooler, smarter, or had such superb control. With rifle accuracy Lefty Scoffield drilled his pitches into Bo Baylor's mitt. Like the rest of the Pioneers Scoffield burned with vengeful anger at the foul tactics George K. Beasley had employed. The big southpaw hurled his heart out that day, and was accorded sensational support by his mates.

Bo Baylor rode without mercy every Lion that came to bat. On the bases Jo-Jo Riley, Jig Vance and Al Courtney, the Pioneer speed-boys, had the enemy basemen backing away from their savage slides and flashing steel cleats. Fin Borowski tried to spike Sky Kelsey in a close play at first. The next Lion that rounded the initial has-

sock got old Sky's expert hip and took a stunning nosedive. For the Beasley bunch Dolly Gray of Duke was chucking brilliantly, too.

In the field Jo-Jo Riley came up with impossible stops and deadly snap throws. Old Sky Kelsey stretched to dig pegs out of the dirt and spear them out of the air—and cursed the infielders for no-good scatter-armed bushers. Al Courtney sprinted back in left to make a running leaping glove-hand catch of what looked like a sure triple. Jig Vance galloped far and wide to snag blows to center. Bo Baylor nailed two runners stealing and picked another off second with a surprise throw.

With Lions on first and third they started a double-steal. Faking a throw to second Baylor lined the ball to Lefty Scoffield in the box, and Lefty drove it to Dorrance at third, catching that runner flat-footed off the bag. Once more with a Lion on third Poly Marue saw a squeeze play coming and signaled to his players. Steve Dorrance crept in on the grass as if forgetting the runner on third. The Lion took a long lead. Scoffield threw a pitchout, and Bo Baylor gunned the ball down the line to third. Jack Ordway raced over from short to take the throw and slap it onto the surprised runner as he dived back at the base.

No score until the seventh. Jo-Jo Riley singled viciously. With Ordway up Riley started with the second pitch, and Ordway tapped a bunt. They got Ordway at first, but Riley went all the way round to third, running and sliding like a wild man, spilling Hy Rubin as he rode into the bag in showers of dust. Then Jig Vance powered a triple to right-center, Sky Kelsey blasted a single past third, and the Pioneers led, 2-0. Al Courtney slammed out another ringing three-base blow, making it 3-0. . . . The Lions threatened in the eighth, but Jo-Jo Riley pivoted a double-play toss from Dorrance to stop them short.

The Pioneers got one more to make it sure. Al Courtney was on second after smashing out a double. With one out Bo Baylor laid down a bunt. Off to a flying start Courtney rounded third and raced for home while they were getting Baylor at first. Lou Trelli heaved the ball in to Jug Bolas, but Courtney slid safely over in a torrent of dust, the fury of his slide knocking Bolas flat on his shoulderblades.

That's the way it ended: Pioneers 4—Lions 0. Everyone said the Lions had eased up to let the Pioneers win and make a third-game necessary. Old George K. Beasley was smart enough to grab all the gate-receipts possible.

The morning of the third game Ann Fairfax's story appeared in the local papers, a story that rocked Lakewood from the tower of City Hall to its very foundations.

THE park was mobbed for the final game and excitement ran high. The Lions found themselves in great and sudden disfavor, the immense crowd booing and jeering their every move. All this added to the demoralization and disgust the Lions already knew.

George K. Beasley threatened Mayor Fairfax with revenge for the act of treason perpetrated by Ann. For the first time the mayor faced Beasley in upright wrath and said: "You're done in this town. You'll be lucky if you get out of here without being lynched, you crook!"

Junior Beasley started for the Lions, at George K.'s demand, but Junior wasn't in there for long. In the second stanza Al Courtney, Truck Drury and Bo Baylor slashed out driving singles in succession. Then with two out Jo-Jo Riley bounced a double off the right field wall, and Junior Beasley walked off the diamond, booed every step of the way. The Pioneers had three runs.

George K. Beasley and his son left the park at once and in a hurry.

Alabama Johnny Jurras replaced Junior on the mound. In the fifth the Pioneers got after him. Jig Vance and Sky Kelsey started it with blazing singles, and Courtney bunted them along a notch. Big Truck Drury went up, red-faced and smiling, and sent a mighty home run arching far over the right field barrier. The Pioneers were way out front, 6-0, and Poly Marue was happier than ever before. "Keep slug-gin', boys," said Poly. "I hope you get a hundred runs!" And apparently the crowd did, too, for they cheered every Pioneer hit as if it were badly needed.

For the Pioneers Franky Cross pitched the first half of the game, and Pep Yeager finished up in grand style. The Lions were dazed, dumbfounded, bewildered, and broken. Many of them, sickened by Beasley's methods, hoped the local team would win and did not care by what top-heavy score.

Before it was over the boys in sombre gray went on another spree, with Riley, Vance, Kelsey, Courtney, and Baylor doing the damage with their terrible war-clubs. The final score was 10-1. The Pioneers were in the league for Lakewood, and salaried players now.

Mayor Fairfax sought Poly Marue after the slaughter, and tried to shake hands with him. The city officials were

at his heels. Poly Marue said: "All we want from you, Fairfax, is our salaries."

"You'll get 'em, Poly, don't worry," said the mayor humbly.

"How about his daughter?" said Ann Fairfax brightly. "She wants to be your mascot, Poly."

"She *is!*" laughed Poly Marue.

The Lions came over to offer congratulations, and to apologize for their sponsor's actions. But Ann Fairfax's blue eyes saw nothing but the bronzed and grimy face of Al Courtney, slim and smiling and fair in his dirty uniform.

And Poly Marue, shaking hands with everyone in sight now, was looking into the glorious summer that stretched ahead, his pop-eyes shining, his gargoyle face ecstatic. He saw his boys fighting their way toward the league pennant. And he saw his restaurant and tavern crowded and swarming with customers from now on.

"It's going to be a great summer, boys," said Poly Marue.

Old Sky Kelsey swore. "Yuh!" he grunted. "If you can teach them half-baked infielders of ours how to throw a ball to first base."

Al Courtney grinned at Ann Fairfax. "It certainly feels just like getting back home."

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THE KID WHO COULD ONLY KICK

by JOHNNY LAWSON

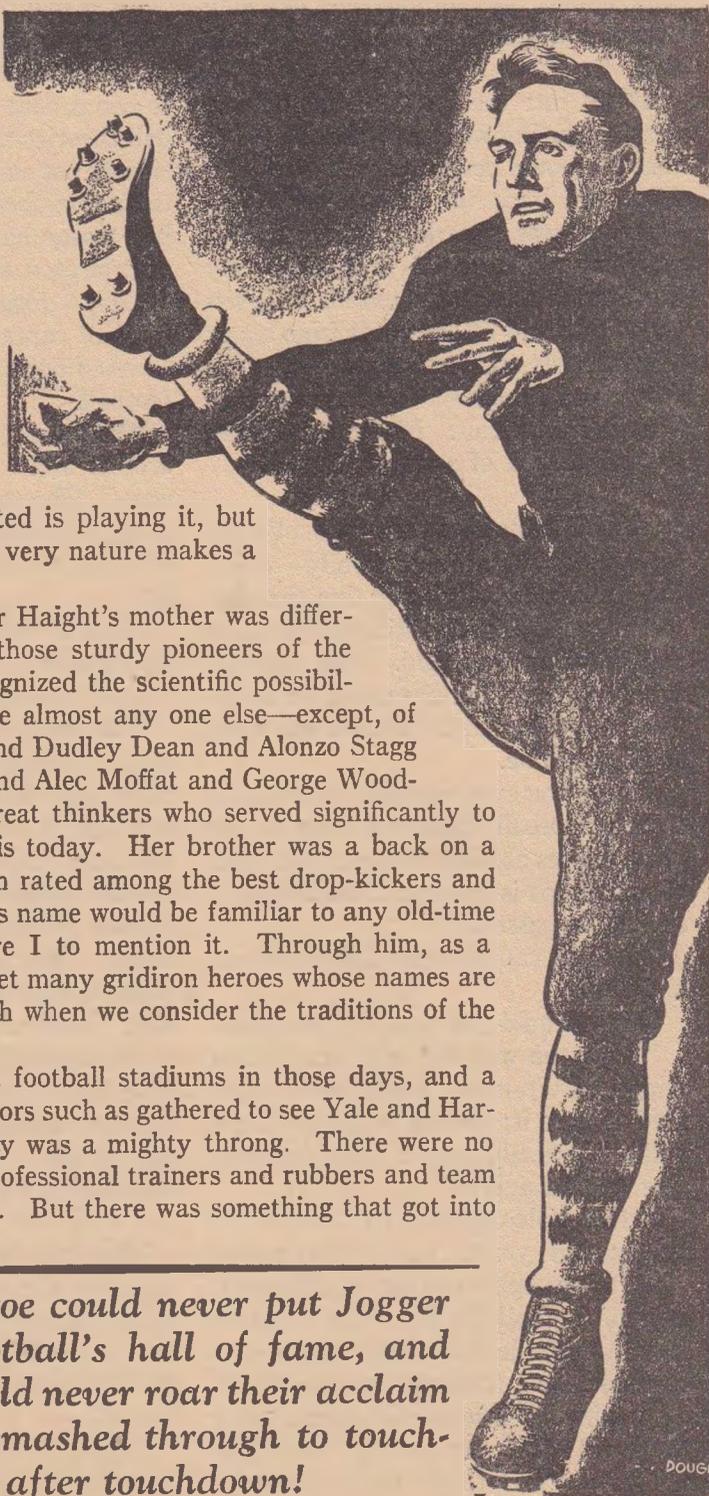
Author of "When Southpaws Meet," etc.

FIRST of all something should be said about young Jogger Haight's mother. She was a football fan. Now there are many girls of these modern days who pride themselves upon their knowledge of the salient points of the gridiron game; who follow it not only because some one in whom they are interested is playing it, but because the sport in its very nature makes a brave appeal.

None the less, Jogger Haight's mother was different. She was one of those sturdy pioneers of the early nineties who recognized the scientific possibilities of the game before almost any one else—except, of course, Walter Camp and Dudley Dean and Alonzo Stagg and Marshall Newell and Alec Moffat and George Woodruff and a few other great thinkers who served significantly to make football what it is today. Her brother was a back on a Wesleyan eleven, a man rated among the best drop-kickers and runners of his day. His name would be familiar to any old-time football enthusiast were I to mention it. Through him, as a mere girl, Sally King met many gridiron heroes whose names are still to be reckoned with when we consider the traditions of the game.

There were no great football stadiums in those days, and a crowd of 10,000 spectators such as gathered to see Yale and Harvard and Princeton play was a mighty throng. There were no staffs of coaches and professional trainers and rubbers and team physicians and the like. But there was something that got into

His educated toe could never put Jogger Haight in football's hall of fame, and thousands would never roar their acclaim while Jogger smashed through to touchdown after touchdown!



one's blood, never to be eradicated—an undefinable essence made up of the joy of physical clash, of the matching of wits against wits, of the tang of chilly autumn days, and the smell of the crisp turf.

It got into the blood of Sally King, despite her knowledge of the grim fact that she would never wear a canvas uniform and buck the line for old Wesleyan. It was a carking sorrow. Her brother taught her to drop-kick. By the time he was graduated his little sister could stand fifteen yards from a pair of goal posts and send the ball over the cross bar fifteen times out of twenty with her eyes shut. More than fifteen yards her lack of strength denied.

LATER came long skirts and a theory on the part of her family—which the girl reluctantly shared that the time for drop-kicking and kindred pursuits had logically vanished. She couldn't ever be a boy—but she could be an attractive young lady. So that was what she came to be.

"Have you ever thought," she said to a Yale football captain at one of the prom dances at New Haven, "that none of you chaps is passing a football as it should be passed?"

The Yale captain raised his eyebrows and smiled.

"How should you pass it?" he asked.

"Why, the way my brother, Gordon King—of Wesleyan, you know—and I used to pass it; so that it spirals like a bullet. It really goes a great deal farther and straighter."

If that Yale captain had not been an opinionated young man, who among other things believed that as all knowledge of football lived at Yale so would it die there, the spiral pass might well have become a factor in the play of the early nineties instead of waiting until the late 1900's. As perhaps, too, Sally King then and there would not have

developed an abiding longing to see the proud and puissant sons of Eli discomfited and brought to earth.

Or it may have been because at this very prom she met Jogger Haight, the famous Princeton tackle, who appealed to her at once because he took her football theories seriously. Jogger took seriously not only her theories, but everything else about her. In the next football season he had her down to a dance at Princeton and next afternoon—it was Sunday—Jogger and Sally King and the football captain and two of the backs sneaked down to university field with a football.

"You see," said Sally, "the way my brother and I used to throw it was this way." She took the ball and threw it to the varsity captain. It went through his arms and struck his chest like a bullet.

"How'd you hold that ball?" asked the captain.

Sally showed him.

Two weeks later on Thanksgiving Day at Manhattan field in New York City, Sally King sat on top of a coach and saw a Princeton back throw the ball practically across the gridiron to another Princeton back who caught it clear of all opposition. A long gain followed. Only a stumble at an ill-timed moment prevented a touchdown. Sally King laughed aloud. She saw the dazed expression on the faces of the Yale players, saw a Yale party on the top of an adjoining coach exchange puzzled glances. She laughed again. Her satisfaction was as great as though she had made the pass.

This, too, should be said: her pleasure over the extraordinary game that Jogger Haight played at left tackle that day was even greater than though she herself had played that game. Princeton won.

Jogger got his diploma the following June and two months later he got some-

thing even more desirable—he married Sally King.

NOW Jogger Haight immediately upon graduation plunged into the vast interests of Haight & Co., steel people. The game he came to play involved prices per pound of steel rails, manufacturing costs, and general business competition. Football was merged in the golden midst of dead college years.

At a certain time each November Sally Haight would turn to him with a faint smile.

“Jogger, I suppose you know Princeton plays Yale tomorrow.”

And Jogger would look up with a smile equally faint.

“By George, Sally girl, that’s so, isn’t it? Some time, by Jove, we’ll go east and take one of ’em in.”

“Yes—some time.” There was always something wistful about the way Sally said that.

There came a day when a trim, efficient young woman garbed in white, with impeccable cuffs, collar, and cap, came to Sally Haight’s bedside bearing a mite of a thing all pink and wriggling.

Sally turned her face toward it wide eyed.

“Don’t—don’t tell me it’s a girl,” she said in a low voice.

Her husband, kneeling by the bed holding her hand, spoke, his big voice quivering.

“No, it’s a boy, my darling girl.”

Then suddenly Sally Haight raised up on her elbow.

“Hello, little Jogger,” she said. “I’m so glad, nurse, that you remembered to put on those orange and black socks I knitted.”

When Jogger Jr. was 3 years old his mother took a great yellow object and handed it to him.

“What’s that, Jogger?” she asked.

“Easter egg,” chuckled the boy.

“No, Jogger——” The woman shook her head gravely. “That’s a football. No, it’s not made to eat.”

“I think, Sally,” laughed her husband, who had taken on weight and was a man of serious affairs, “that you’d better let it go at eggs for a year or so.”

“I guess I had better,” replied his wife.

Sally waited then until Jogger’s fifth birthday. He seized the gleaming football with an eagerness which Sally was convinced was instinctive. Five minutes later he had sent it flying through one of the big drawing room windows to an accompaniment of crashing glass and screams of the nurse.

“Jogger,” said the father, aroused from contemplative depths of the blue smoke of his Sunday morning cigar, “hereafter——”

“Just a minute, my dear,” said Sally. “Did you aim for the window, Jogger?”

“Y-yes,” Jogger had heard of Washington and his hatchet. “I did it wif my little football.”

“Ho! Ho!” Jogger senior disappeared within the folds of his newspaper, writhing.

“Don’t be silly, Jogger.” Sally frowned upon her husband and then smiled. “The point you seem to miss is that he aimed for that window—and that he hit it, fairly and squarely.”

“I’d have been more impressed,” replied the man humorously, “if he’d bagged that Sevres vase on the table. However——” he shrugged.

But Jogger after all was a normal child who didn’t see any reason at all why he should become excited over a certain game which men played with an oval ball when two blocks down was a fire truck upon which a number of the most wonderful men in the world rode ever and again to put out real houses on fire. Then, too, there was Jim Halpin, the policeman whose beat

lay in front of Jogger's house. Also there was that big, smiling engineer who drove the train which took the Hights to their summer place at Lake Forest every year.

SO the football gathered the dust of disuse in a corner of the playroom, while railroad trains and toy fire engines and the like appeared and were broken and replaced.

Sally Haight was a wise mother who didn't believe in forcing things, and anyway, she had an abiding faith in the theory that blood, after all, will tell. Besides, Jogger had a little sister now who occupied a lot of Sally's thought and attention.

Jogger was nine years old when he saw his first big game. He walked between his father and mother through a tunnel delved into a vast concrete structure—a huge horseshoe filled with more than 50,000 spectators; a throng colorful in all that variation of brilliant hues which are applied to feminine costume; a throng brave with banners and compelling in its enthusiasm.

The thought occurred then and there that by no possibility could there be anything finer or bigger in this life than to run out upon a football field while thousands roared their acclaim and strive to make touchdowns for Princeton. Yale won that day. Is made a stunning impression on the boy, that defeat.

"Does Yale always win?" he asked his mother.

"Not always, my dear."

"Father beat Yale, didn't he?" Jogger's eyes were big.

"He helped, my dear. He stood down there—well, not on this field—it was in New York—but he stood there, and whenever those Yale men came within reach of his arms he threw them down so hard—so hard that the field trembled."

"Hey! They were sorry they came near dad, eh? I'll bet they were."

"They were, Jogger. And when you're big and in Princeton I want them to be sorry they came near you. At that time I'm going to sit right up here and laugh and say: 'Well, old Yale, you didn't know you were playing against Jogger Haight's son, did you?'"

The boy's eyes burned. Thereafter Sally Haight had never to worry about her son's interest in football. While the firemen and the policemen and the railroad engineer were not altogether discarded, they were obliged definitely to yield precedence to a new line of heroes at the head of which was Jogger senior, Uncle Gordon King of Wesleyan, Phil King, Johnny Poe, Marshall Newell, Frank Hinkey—and yes, Sally Haight.

For one day while Jogger was practicing football with the class team of the school he was attending, his mother and father came by the field on horseback. One of the boys was trying to drop-kick.

"Just a minute." Sally Haight threw her reins to her husband and dismounting walked upon the field.

"Tommy," she said, "that is not the way to drop-kick. Don't you see—" She turned to the sturdy redhaired boy, whose eyes were dancing with interest. "Here, Tommy, give me that ball; yes, throw it. That's it." Catching it according to Hoyle she turned it lovingly in her hands and then took sight at the goal about twenty-five yards away. With her knee length riding skirt and square toed boots she was perfectly attired for kicking. "You drop the ball so, see, and then you begin to swing your leg forward as the ball falls. That is, you time your kick so that the toe will meet the ball at just instant it starts to bounce from the ground."

SHE illustrated slowly and gently so that all might see, sending the ball

a few feet along the ground.

"Do you understand? All right; now give me the ball again. Here's the way to make a real field goal." So saying she dropped the ball and then booted it with all the power that was in her. And the ball flew on a straight line over the cross bar.

Amazing! The boys who were grouped about her stared with open mouths, first at the woman, then at the goal posts, then at Jogger. There came a chuckle from behind. Sally, turning, flushing, recognized the headmaster of the school.

"Dr. Elcock!"

"Oh, Mrs. Haight, you mustn't mind me. It was simply beautiful. Now I know where Jogger gets his kicking ability."

"His kicking ability! Can Jogger really kick? He hasn't told me."

"Can he kick! Here, Jogger. Take that ball and show your mother what you can do."

For the next fifteen minutes Jogger Haight with apparent indifference kicked goals from the twenty yard line at every angle, using his right or left foot as fancy dictated.

Sally Haight went to her son, and placing both hands upon his shoulders looked him in the eyes. Then without a word she rejoined her husband.

"Did you see Jogger?"

Her husband nodded.

"Yes, I saw him." He didn't say anything more. And his face had a solemn expression which his wife could not interpret. Nor would he explain.

Two weeks later Jogger was brought home with a dislocated shoulder and a badly sprained ankle. He had tackled a runner head on.

When Sally told her husband about it that evening he shook his head.

"Doesn't look like varsity material, does he?"

"Why, what do you mean, Jogger?"

Did you ever know a boy who didn't get banged up at football?"

"Sally, you'd be terribly disappointed, wouldn't you, if Jogger didn't make the varsity at college? Aren't you counting on it heavily? Many are called and few are chosen for the eleven, you know."

"He's your son, Jared."

"Yes, and yours, you little firebrand. But look here, Sally; I haven't wanted to speak about it, but—"

"But what?"

"Well, Jogger isn't going to have my build; he's taking after you."

"A boy doesn't have to be a giant or a physical marvel to play football."

"No—" Haight hesitated. "But he's got to have some physique; at least Jogger has to have before I'll give him permission to play."

"Jared Haight!"

"He looks to be small boned, like you. And today's accident means he may be brittle. Now it's all right to play football; but I have some ambitions for Jogger, too. I want him to come into the works and take things up just as I did. I'm counting on him too heavily to risk breaking his neck or have him a man with an over-strained heart and a crippled body."

AS Sally did not reply the man went on.

"Now, I love football as much as you do. But it's a hard, rough game; brute rough. I liked it while I was playing it; but after all it was a grind. And I wasn't sorry when my four years were up. Anyway, I've seen too many boys ruined because they were permitted to play a game for which they were not physically qualified."

Sally Haight's eyes flashed.

"Jared, dear, the only cross I have had to bear was that I wasn't a boy and couldn't play football. Nature made a mistake and put football blood

in me. But I was a girl and couldn't play. But I always knew, knew from girlhood, that I was going to have a son who could play. That was my dream. And I was to sit in the stand and play the game with him—be almost in the game. That was another part of the dream. Then Jogger came—the first part of the dream. And then I knew, simply all the rest was to come true.”

“I know, Sally.” Jared Haight took her in his arms and kissed her. “I know exactly how you feel. Well, I may be wrong about Jogger. He may come through physically after all. I hope so. For I shouldn't mind seeing him wear my old sweater in his first Yale game.”

Sally stared at him. “You will see that,” she said quietly. But there was a dubious note in her voice. Somehow the idea that Jogger might be lacking in physique had never occurred to her. In fact, she had taken it as much for granted that her son would grow up and play football on the Princeton varsity eleven as she had that in good time his voice would change, that his wisdom teeth would come, or that he would experience all the natural and logical mutations that mark the course of boyhood and youth.

Sally had counted a lot on this, thinking as much of herself as of the boy. For those old days of the late eighties and the early years of the golden nineties had held for her an enduring flavor. Veiled as they now were in that full, mellow tone which time alone can supply, those years involved an epic quality which she fain would live again—which in sooth through her son, *with* her son, indeed, she intended to live.

But now—?

One night when Jogger was undressing for bed Sally entered the room. “Jogger,” she said, “stand up.”

She studied the straight, slim figure not with a fond maternal eye, but with the keen appraising glance of a trainer

of men. She flinched as she saw the shoulder blades and the thin arms. How swiftly he had outgrown the sturdiness of boyhood.

“Jogger boy”—Sally hesitated and then spoke rapidly and a bit thickly. “Jogger, we'll never make the varsity unless we begin to get more of a chest and bigger shoulders and a thicker”—she stopped short.

After all, Jogger could not be blamed for the shortcomings of nature.

“You see,” she went on, “you're growing swiftly—very swiftly. But you must grow out sidewise, too. Of course, when you get to college”—speech ceased.

INDEED, no further words were necessary. Jogger was a wise boy. He saw. The shock of that head-on tackle seemed to have penetrated his very bones.

Several blocks down there was a garage. Among the mechanics was a man who in his youth, according to repute, had been a prize fighter. He and Jogger were fast friends—had been for several years.

“Swipes,” he said, “when I go to college I want to play football.”

The mechanic smiled.

“Sure you do. And will if you take after the old man. He was some football player, kid.”

“Yes, he was. But look at how big he was. I ain't going to be so big as that.”

“Who told you you wasn't?”

“Oh, I heard father and mother talking. It was after I was hurt and they thought I was in bed. And I was so hurt and felt bum. But I knew they were talking about me; so I sneaked out of bed to the head of the stairs, and father said that I wasn't going to take after him, he didn't think; that I was more like mother. He said he wasn't going to let me play if I didn't get big

when I went to college.”

“So he said that, did he, kid? Well, he ought to a known better than to say that.”

“Why should he?”

“Because—” Swipes McAvoy paused, his eyes glistened. “I’ll tell you why, Jogger. It’s because in this fight game, fists, football, or rough and tumble—any old sort of a fight game—it ain’t the big guy that always wins the money. Not by a da—not by a good deal. A bloke may be as big as a house and yet not have the stuff inside of him. I’ve seen lots of ’em. I’ve seen little men make ’em jump out of the ring—lots of times.”

“You have, eh?”

“Why, sure, I have. Of course, a good big man will lick a good little man any day. But you take a little guy who’s got the real fightin’ stuff in him and he gets my money against every big man he tackles that hasn’t. It’s all in the mind, kid; all in the mind. If you won’t be beat you can’t be beat. Mike Murphy said that and he said an earful, son.”

“You mean never give up?”

“Well, not only that. Yes, sure, never give up. But give to the other guy, too. Now, kid, you got hurt tryin’ to tackle a bigger guy at your school. Your mother told me. She knows I helped Mike Murphy train two Yale elevens, so me and her’s great pals. Why, she’ll set in her car here while I’m fixin’ something on it and talk football the whole time. She’s a woman, that mother of yours is. Well, anyhow, I’m going to tell you what I told her about that tackle where you got hurt.”

“All right, Swipes.”

“You see that guy comin’ for you with the ball. And you says, ‘Hully, gee, this is a big bloke, and when we meet there’s going to be trouble for yours truly.’ Didn’t you think somethin’ like that, kid?”

“Well, something, I guess.”

“SURE, you did. You got mellow inside, instead of saying: ‘Here comes this big stiff; I’ll show him up good.’ What you shoulda done, kid, was to have started for him a little faster than he was comin’ for you. Fur instance, if a pumpkin comin’ through the air was to meet a little hard, green apple comin’ faster than the pumpkin was, that little apple would bore a hole clean through the punkin. Catch it? Think it over.”

“All right, Swipes, I will. But—” Jogger was a manly little chap with a lot of persistence—“what I want you to do is to tell me how I can get big.”

“Sure.” The man looked at the boy. “You go back there in the toolroom and peel off your clothes and let me have a look at you.”

A few minutes later the ex-pugilist was studying him with professional eye.

“Well, Jogger,” he said at length, “one can’t never tell about a boy, but it looks to me as if you was always going to be kinda stringy. That’s the way I size you up, at least.”

“Yes?” Jogger’s face fell.

“But—” Swipes’s powerful fingers were busy prodding and pinching the lad—“beef ain’t everything. Double up your arm and let’s see your biceps. Gee, that’s a little lump, for certain. Jogger, kid, you’re all muscle, all bone and muscle. Your dad’s got you all wrong.”

“You think so?”

“Sure, I think so. You take care of yourself and you’ll be like a whip. Drink any milk?”

“Lots of it.”

“Well, keep on and eat potatoes and bread and butter, all you can stuff. That’ll help some—and don’t you ever make a movement in a game when you don’t put everythin’ you’ve got into it. You weigh ninety pounds. Well, you put all that ninety pounds into a punch

or a tackle and it'll be worth more than the heavyweight who only puts forty pounds or less into what he does. Catch it?"

As Jogger nodded the man went on.

"Now there was once a guy named Frank Hinkey, who played football at Yale. He—"

"Oh, father's told me all about Frank Hinkey—and mother, too."

"Well, they never told you what I'm thinkin' of. So you just go home to mamma and say: 'Ma, I was talkin' to Swipes McAvoy and he told me to get you to tell that story about Frank Hinkey.' She'll know—and mebbe she'll tell—if your pa'll let her."

So that night at dinner Jogger turned to his mother and repeated his conversation with the garage man.

"I think, Jared—" Sally Haight's eyes were filled with laughter—"that you had better tell him."

Haight laughed comfortably.

"No, you. I haven't a bit of false pride about that."

"Well, one day when your father was at Princeton there came to Yale a thin, pale boy with blue eyes and sandy hair. He weighed, I think, about one hundred and thirty-eight pounds. I suppose, really, son, that he looked about as much like a varsity football player as you would if you—well, not quite so bad as that. Anyway, he looked weak and sick and everything. So in the first Princeton game in which he played a Yale man fumbled a punt and your father, who happened to be out to one side, picked it up. He started for the Yale goal. And there was a clear field, except for one man—that pale, sickly looking young novice, Hinkey. Father weighed nearly two hundred pounds, and when he ran he was like a runaway locomotive. He didn't think any more of that pale young chap standing in his path than he would have thought of a fly. So he didn't even try to dodge—"

"He went straight at him?"

"YES, straight, thinking that if the player didn't jump to one side he would be knocked there. Well—" Sally smiled at her husband. "You tell the rest, dear."

"There isn't much to tell," laughed her husband. "When I came to, Jogger, I saw the captain and two or three others bending over me. And I looked at them and I said, still a bit out of my sense—I said: 'How many were killed in the train wreck? Or am I the only one?'"

"Gee! And Hinkey weighed 138 pounds and you weighed nearly 200!"

"Yes, but look here, son"—Jared Haight leaned forward, shaking a solemn finger. "Remember there has been only one Frank Hinkey since football started, down to the present day."

Sally Haight's eyes were sparkling.

"Which doesn't mean, Jared, darling, that there may not be another some day."

Jared stared at her and then shook his head solemnly.

A week later Jogger Haight limped home from school with a swollen eye, rapidly turning a convincing blue-black.

"Jogger, come here." His mother left a caller in the drawing room and hurried to his side. "You've been fighting."

"Well—not fighting—that is, I was playing football. And I tackled Tommy Treadwell again."

"I see. Well, I think, Jogger"—there was a catch in Sally's voice—"that hereafter when you see Tommy Treadwell coming your way you'd, you'd—well, I think—" She paused.

"Oh, Tommy won't come my way again this season, mother. He was so long coming to that I got scared. But the coach brought him ar—"

"Jogger, look at me," The eyes of mother and son met. Both pairs were that cold gray that verges upon blue.

Neither said anything.

Each afternoon Jogger went down to the garage and took boxing lessons from Swipes. He said nothing to his father and mother about this, paying for the lessons out of his allowance. But Swipes would not have been Swipes had he not told Sally Haight all about it.

When Jogger was fifteen his father leaned back in his chair at the breakfast table.

"Sally," he said, "we've got to think about prep school. Shall Jogger go to my old place at Lawrenceville or do you want him nearer home at Culver?"

Sally Haight shook her head.

"I don't want him any place but home, Jared. He's the only son we have and four years at college will be quite enough. Besides, he's doing splendidly at school here. I most certainly shall want him to be under Prof. McAvoy's influence as long as possible."

"Prof. who?" Haight stared at his wife.

"Why, Prof. McAvoy. You needn't worry at all about his being throughly prepared for college."

"Well, all right." Haight & Co. were having a fight with the government and Jared Haight, therefore, had troubles enough of his own.

One beautiful September morning at the Haight Lake Forest home Sally and her husband were seated on the veranda in their tennis flannels waiting for the man to set the net.

Jogger came out of the house. He was attired in a bathing suit and wore sneakers. In his hands were a set of boxing gloves.

"Dad," he said. His face was highly colored and there was sort of a catch in his voice. "In two weeks I leave for Princeton. Can I go out for the freshman eleven?"

SALLY caught her breath. This was an issue that had been put off for

several months. Jared Haight sat up straight, glancing at the boy's long, thin legs and arms and the broad bony shoulders.

"How much do you weigh, Jogger?"

"A hundred and thirty pounds, sir."

"Well, I'll be fair. When you weigh 150 you may play football."

"But, father, I'll—I don't know that I'll ever weigh that."

"All right. Then go in for track or baseball or tennis. No football."

"Father—" The boy's voice trembled—"I knew you'd say that. Well, weight isn't everything. I suppose you think because you're so big that no one is any good who—"

"Jogger!" Sally shook her head at the boy, who, however, bore on, not disrespectfully, but full of his subject.

"That no one is any good who hasn't got weight. I think, really, dad, that you're too big to get out of your way. If you're not, put on these gloves."

"What's that?" The big man looked at his son and threw back his head, roaring with laughter.

"All right, laugh. But if you're a sport you'll come out there on the tennis court with me. You'd hate to be shown up, wouldn't you?"

Jared studied his son for a moment, then slowly rose.

"All right," he said, "give me the gloves."

"Do you think, Jared, you're in condition? You oughtn't hurt yourself."

"Eh!" Haight stared at his wife. Then he smiled. "You quit kidding. Come on, there, bantam."

As the two faced each other, one a great hulking man weighing 230 pounds, 6 feet tall, the other a stripling of 18, Sally laughed, seeking to mitigate a tenseness in the atmosphere caused by her son's burning seriousness.

"History repeating itself. David and Goliath," she said.

"Eh, so you've been taking boxing

lessons," observed the man as he noted his son's businesslike stance. "Look out, there." He swung playfully at the boy.

The next instant Jared Haight had the impression of a white streak flashing in under his arm and rising close to him. The next instant something hit him under the eye. It felt as hard as a baseball.

"Hi!" Jared clinched to save another blow and the thing his arms enclosed felt like an eel with a steel backbone. "You little—" But Jogger had wriggled loose, delivering a sharp jab under his father's ribs as he went. Jared grunted.

Sally was laughing.

"That eye, Jared. I'm afraid it's going to be black and blue."

"NEVER mind the eye," growled her husband. His old knowledge of the art of fisticuffs was coming back to him. He deftly blocked Jogger's right hand feint for the head with a shift and a left hand stab at the jaw and then swung in a counter which Jogger ducked. Immediately the boy flashed in under the man's left lead and beat a tattoo upon Jared's body, ducking away from under a big right fist.

"You look out, Jogger." The father was blowing like a walrus. "Next time you come in I'm going to land you. Be warned."

Jogger, without a smile or a word, launched a left hand lead for the head and then, suddenly turning and ducking, sent his right into the man's stomach, a blow so painful that the father, thoroughly irritated, rushed his opponent like a bull. Jogger's defense under the flailing attack was a beautiful thing to see. He ducked in and out, countered, but Jared Haight was not to be denied. A hard right hand wallop caught the boy on the side of the head, and as Sally rushed forward she saw

him catapulting into the tennis net, which he carried to earth with him.

"Jogger!"

"Nonsense, mother." The boy had bounced to his feet like a rubber ball.

"All right, father."

But Jared Haight, who had observed the effects of his blow with apprehension bordering on panic, was taking off the gloves.

"Sure you're all right, Jogger?"

"Certainly I am. What's the matter?"

"Nothing, Jogger, nothing at all." He hesitated. "If you want to play football at Princeton it's all right so far as I am concerned."

In the rear of the Osborn field house at Princeton is a fine stretch of turf, a section of University Field annually devoted to the candidates for the freshman team. As Jogger, who had dressed in his room in one of the freshman dormitories, came upon the field he paused irresolutely, his hands clenching and unclenching nervously. Before him were boys garbed in the jerseys and stockings of almost every preparatory school of which he had ever heard.

So these were freshmen! How big, in sooth, must varsity men be! For the chests of most of these boys were like barrels; their legs tapering beautifully at the ankles reminded him of the underpinning of the grand piano at home. The 132 pounds of which he had been so proud dwindled infinitesimally. He felt weak and puny. Feverishly, as though it were a ritual, he murmured the words of Swipes McAvoy:

"'It's all in the mind, kid. All in the mind. If you won't be beat you can't be beat.'"

He walked out on the field to where the coach was assorting his material into linemen and backs, kickers and the like. He was a powerfully built man with a shock of red hair, and he wore his varsity sweater inside out. He

glanced at Jogger with obvious lack of interest.

"Where you from?" he asked.

"Dean school in Indiana, sir."

"Get your letter?"

"Yes, sir; that is, I was put in games to kick drop-kicks."

"Good at that, eh?" The coach's voice was ravelling on.

"Pretty good, sir."

"All right, I'll try you out some time." The coach turned away to speak to a candidate. He never did try Jogger out. He forgot all about him. For a week he came down to the field and hung around, and then one day when a list of cuts from the squad was posted in the dressing room Jogger's name led all the rest.

HE kept that fact out of his letters to his mother, but like all wise mothers she read between the lines.

"You know, son," she wrote, "the men who succeed in this world are the men who believe so firmly in themselves that they make others believe in them, too. You can at least kick. You know that. You inherited ability to do this and you've improved upon it. You know what you can do and I know—whether that old coach knows it or not. Your father withdrew his objections to having you play after that roughhouse you and he had last summer when you had him puffing. So that was the hardest part of your battle; I mean winning him over. See if you can't win that coach. Does he know you're the son of Jogger Haight?"

Jogger dropped the letter, flushing.

"I don't know whether he knows it or not. Anyway, I'll never tell him. I'll stand on my own feet if I can stand at all."

It was the week before the game against the Yale freshmen. He put on his uniform, which had not been worn for nearly two months, and went down

to the field. The coach, an old felt hat pulled down over his eyes, was fussing with the tackling dummy.

"Mr. Sprague—" Jogger cleared his throat. "You don't remember me."

"No, I don't."

"Well, sir, my name is Haight. I don't want to be fresh, but I've been watching the practice, and I've seen all the games. You've got a good back-field."

"Thanks for the information," was the dry rejoinder.

"But," pressed on Jogger, "you need a drop-kicker."

"I'll say we do, son. Can you drop-kick?"

"Try me, sir."

Sprague hesitated and then picking up a ball walked out to the twenty-five-yard line, where, with an underhand motion he spiraled the ball to Jogger, standing a yard or two back of the thirty-yard mark. The ball whistled through the goal posts like a bullet. Sprague's face was noncommittal as he motioned Jogger to a point fifteen yards to one side of center. Again the ball described a true course over the cross bar. From the forty-yard-line Jogger shot seven out of ten goals at all angles.

"That'll do." Sprague's voice was genial now. "We'll see what you can do from scrimmage later."

Jogger did so well that in the crucial game against the Yale freshmen the following Saturday he was sent in to kick a goal in the first period when Princeton was stopped on the thirty-yard line, and having performed his duty with neatness and dispatch was immediately withdrawn. Both teams made touchdowns in the following periods and then Yale scored on a drop-kick, tying the score. In the final period with a few minutes left to play, a Yale man dropped a punt on his own twenty-five-yard line. Princeton played the ball so faultily in her efforts to advance that when

the time for a drop-kick came and Jogger was sent in the angle was almost prohibitive. But Jogger made it without a flaw.

HIS reputation was made. He was Princeton's pinch kicker. He was used in both the Yale and Harvard games in his sophomore year to perform his specialty; having performed it he was forthwith returned to the bench. The coaches were as careful of this weedy youth as though they feared he were made of glass, liable to be broken to bits upon the slightest jostling.

But no team had a chance to even jostle him. At just the psychological moment he was rushed into the game and then, having delivered his kick, was hastily rushed out. And his rivals prayed for just one shot at him, just one. They reviled him and joshed him when he ran upon the field and kissed their hands satirically when, having done his bit, he was withdrawn. In a way he became sort of an intercollegiate joke by the time he was in his junior year—a rather bitter joke to opposing elevens, but none the less a joke.

"I suppose," he wrote to his mother, "that my status in football is about the same as that of a submarine in war—a stealthy, skulking thing that sneaks up and puts big, brave battleships out of business without chance for a comeback.

"There's that big back, Chauncey of Yale. Last year and this he has glared at me like a lion with the pip, and when I have the ball for the kick he comes through the line with a bull-like rush, his hands out—his fists, I mean—just dying for a crack at me. And each time Slugger Dean, who protects my left side, bumps him off to the turf, where he lies fairly frothing at the mouth. I'm praying that next year he'll get past Dean and just see where he lands when he tries to plaster me. But he won't.

"And there are two protectors on my kicking side. Now, mother darling, you saw me get my varsity letter two years ago against Yale and Harvard and you saw it again this year. And you'll see it next. I could see how happy you were—and dad, too.

"But, mother, do you realize, that I bid fair to leave Old Nassau with the solitary distinction, the unique distinction, of having played on the varsity some twenty minutes all told in the course of three years without having felt the angry caress of a Johnny or an Eli or myself having so much as touched the hem of an enemy's sweater? O, I'm fragile—warranted to break. I received a post card from New Haven to that effect the other day; it was unsigned, but it came from Chauncey, I'm sure. And the worst of it is that both Yale and Harvard have beaten us the two last years, because of poor tackling at critical moments. And, mother, you know I can tackle. Gee, I can tackle!"

"Yes," wrote Sally in reply. "I know you can tackle." That was all she said. Sally's unsaid things were very frequently more effective than reams of things written by other women.

THE cheers of some 20,000 Princeton partisans, a small segment indeed in that immense crowd of nearly 80,000 spectators which filled the Yale bowl at New Haven, had not died away when one of the backfield coaches who had been watching the team working its way down the field in preliminary signal practice turned to Haight.

"Go out there with Kelly and Armstrong, Jogger, and see how your toe is. We may need it today."

Jogger nodded, gloomily. It was to be the same old story of a pinch kicker regarded as fit for nothing else. With all solemnity he had submitted his plea to the head coach before the Harvard game, and the coach had run his eye up

and down the tall, spare figure and smiled.

"We're taking no chances on you, Jogger. You're too valuable."

After the game there was little compensation in the fact that his successful drop kick in the last few minutes of play had turned approaching defeat into a tie game. And now there was to be the same procedure against Yale. He glanced toward Princeton sections; somewhere amid that vast human medley were ensconced his mother and his father and his sister. And it was the last game he was ever to play on an intercollegiate gridiron; the last game—and he had never felt the joy of a fallen Eli nor had himself been downed by one.

"Fragile! Breakable!" The Yale eleven was sweeping by in signal practice. Looking about he saw Chauncey mouthing the words with a malevolent grin.

Jogger colored. Then he missed an easy try for goal from the thirty yard line.

Suddenly he saw the teams walking to the side lines. The referee and the two captains and coaches were standing together in midfield. Jogger seized his blanket and sank into a seat on the bench among the substitutes. Somehow the vividness of the scene seemed to have departed. As through a haze he saw his captain run to the side lines, saw the members of the varsity arise, throw off their blankets, and coalesce into a knot, heads bent forward, arms about one another's shoulders.

Then, as though a new picture had been thrown upon the screen, he saw the teams lined up for the kick-off, the referee standing in midfield with whistle poised. The next moment it shrilled insistently, the game was on.

It came to be a gruelling struggle. Both elevens were about the average, both evenly matched in offensive and

defensive ability. And both had been coached up to the hilt in all the tactics that the modern game embodies. There were forward passes, met by defense scientifically arranged so that only small gains resulted, if any, and sharp line attack as sharply met by cool, resourceful diagnosticians.

The first quarter found the teams at a perfect checkmate, and in the second both elevens unlimbered a punting game, looking for a break of some sort. But distance gained was about equal; certainly there was no discrepancy of importance sufficient to bring advantage to either side. The half ended with the ball in midfield and with neither side having been anywhere near a score.

WHILE the bands played and the cheering sections sang, Jogger watched the varsity men go off the field to the dressing room while he, together with a number of substitutes, went out on the field. His mood had changed; he was filled with a spirit which he did not recognize—a cold, nervous tenseness which made him move like a delicately geared machine. He took the ball and kicked such drop kicks as he never before had kicked, from all distances inside of midfield. He heard applause and realized that the cheers were for him. For a few minutes he enjoyed it. Then he scowled. It was too much like a star actor. Casting the ball aside he walked to the side lines and picked up his blanket.

"What is the matter, Jogger?" asked the assistant coach. "You had the crowd all to yourself."

Jogger muttered something and disappeared within the folds of his blanket.

Almost before he realized the game was resumed. For a brief period he sat watching the play with vacant eyes. Then suddenly his vision cleared. The Princeton backfield were lined up in

that new formation on the weak side of an unbalanced line. Jogger scanned the team eagerly. Yes, there was Channing, the end, just where he should be.

An instant later Channing was coming around from behind while the Yale defense was being drawn to the other side. There was a flashing of legs, and a long-drawn-out roar from the stands, rising and reverberating with ever increasing force. A touchdown? No. The Yale quarterback downed his man on the thirty yard line.

Like veritable tigers the men of Princeton rushed into the line-up, while the quarter-back, like a man possessed, rushed among them shaking his fist. Case, the plunging full-back, dived into the line. A yard. Case took the ball again and then on split interference passed the ball to Loomis, who squirmed two yards through tackle. Clearly a line attack was not going to succeed.

Jogger felt a hand slap upon his shoulder. He shot to his feet as though struck by electricity. It was the coach. "Go out there, Jogger, and kick that goal. Be sure and report to the referee. Here's your chance to win a game."

The field was a blur, the stands with their tense thousands were vague and unreal as he rushed across the turf. Straight he made for the referee. The man standing poised nodded as Jogger touched his shoulder.

"In for Watson," he said.

"All right," he said. "Speak to no one. Keep your mouth shut."

The quarter-back barked the signal. Jogger listened. So he was not to kick this time. It was third down. It was to be a fake kick formation with a forward pass.

Well, Jogger knew the part he had to play. Bending down he carefully removed tufts of grass from the space in front of him. He lifted his feet and examined his cleats. He nodded and

stood with arms outstretched. The quarter snapped out the passing signal. Back straight and true came the ball, not to Jogger, but to Loomis, the forward passer. But Yale had not been fooled. Both the ends were well covered and the other eligible men were in dangerous positions. The result was a toss straight over center that netted but half a yard gain.

"Now, Jogger!"

IT WAS the fourth down. There was no doubt that this time he would have to kick.

Again he stretched out his arms and again the ball spiraled like a bullet. He caught it, turned it in his hand, sighted at the posts. And then—the two Yale guards by prearrangement had seized the Princeton center, pulling him over on his face. And through the hole thus made leaped Chauncey with fearful volition.

Jogger saw him coming. He knew he couldn't kick. That would be fatal. Somehow he wasn't chagrined. With a gurgle of delight he hugged the ball close and then swung sideways so that he was all hips and elbows.

Chauncey's impression probably was that he had collided with a steel fence post filled with sharp knobs. He glanced off, hurtling to the ground on his face, while Jogger's taunting laughter rose clear even as he was buried under an avalanche of hungry Elis.

Yale had the ball. Yale was lining up to take it out of her territory. Jogger looked about guiltily. But no one said anything about his coming out of the game. Perhaps? But a player was galloping out from the side lines.

"All right, Jogger, beat it."

Jogger wondered if his mother was watching him as he made his way to the side lines. He would wager she was not.

The quarter ended, the game still scoreless. Yale had gained more con-

sistently than Princeton, but not enough to produce scores.

The last period began as a reproduction of all that had gone before, and upon the stands had settled that solidity which marks the conviction of a football crowd that nothing is going to happen, when suddenly, blazingly came a Yale score, a place-kick unerringly driven from a spot a few yards inside of midfield, an appalling, a perfectly stunning blow to Princeton's rooters, who but a moment before had been grumbling over the prospect of a tie game.

The brightness slowly stole out of the sunlight; the haze in which West Rock beyond the bowl had been swimming turned to steel. Jogger was not watching the field. His sun was setting, too. In five more minutes he would walk from the field never to play football again—and the sting to carry through life of a victory won by Yale. He was sodden; it seemed to him almost as though he could fall asleep in his blanket.

A sharp staccato roar aroused him. Looking curiously out upon the field he saw Loomis dusting toward Yale territory. He had intercepted a forward pass upon his own goal line and was—well, was he clear? Jogger, now upon his feet, strained his eyes upon the scene, saw a Yale tackler cutting across, saw him dive and bring the runner to earth on Yale's twenty-five yard line.

WITH a quick motion he flung aside his blanket. He needed no word from the coach. At least he had a chance to tie the score. As he raced up and down the side lines he saw a forward pass fail. He saw an end run smeared.

"Jogger, out you go. Third down. Take out Loomis."

The captain of the team came up as Jogger spoke to the referee.

"You can do it, can't you, Jogger?"

The man's face was working. "We need those three points."

Jogger without a word of reply stepped to one side of the captain and took his place.

"Third down." He heard the quarter-back's signal calling for a drop-kick formation, a real one this time, no camouflage.

Jogger leaned down, his hands upon his knees. Somehow he wasn't thinking about a kick at all. Through his mind in a series of sharp impressions came streaming detail upon detail of the incidents which had led up to his failure to get away with the previous drop-kick. The center had been pulled over, yes. But the tackles, too, had come through converging while the ends and backs, seeing no forward pass was intended, had run up to block it with their uplifted palms.

The ball came back straight into his hands. Jogger gripped it cleanly. He turned up the lacing. Upon his right and left sides Yale men were blocked in their frenzied course to reach him. An alley seemed to have formed before him, a clear, straight alley with the goal posts beyond; a narrow alley banked on all sides by struggling figures.

Then Jogger went insane. Tucking the ball under his arm he dashed for that alley; he knew not whether it was a real one or one imagined. He had a flashing glimpse of a face, distorted by a fierce grin. Chauncey! Jogger's arm went out straight and stiff. It was as though the Yale tackler had run into a bayonet. He slewed to one side, stinging with pain, and fell. The alley was closed now. But there was a patch to the left. Like a being furiously endowed, as indeed Jogger was, he sprang for it.

His feet were still pounding the turf. He felt the grip of an arm. He twisted out of it. Overhead the goal posts loomed. Jogger left his feet in a dive. He felt a hand. He kicked back with

the left foot and felt his cleats crunch into a face. He scrambled on. A white chalk mark appeared beneath his eyes. He thrust the football forward, and then as a pain too great to bear shot up his left leg, he closed his eyes. . . .

* * *

In the depths of the Princeton cheering sections, a section containing thousands suddenly gone mad, gyrating, shouting raucously, throwing away hats with supreme indifference to the high cost of fall headgear—in the depths of the insane welter Sally Haight's fingers tightened upon her husband's arm, her eyes fixed upon a knot of players bending over a figure lying beneath the Yale goal posts.

"Jared!" She was staring at the man wild eyed. "You've simply got to go down to the field and find out what has happened. The players' bench is just below us. Hurry."

Her husband nodded, hurrying down the aisle toward the lower tiers of the bowl.

AS THE cheering grew in volume Sally took her eyes from the group

beneath the goal and glanced swiftly toward the scoreboard, where the sign Princeton, 6; Yale, 3; had appeared. Flushing, she turned her eyes to the field again. A slight figure was being borne to the side lines, a figure with one leg dangling. She saw her husband's big form scaling the wall below.

A silence settled upon the field. Sally closed her eyes. Possibly it was because they were preparing for the try for goal. Sally did not know. And she dared not look. Thus she sat, she knew not how long. She felt a hand upon her shoulder as a great cheer rose.

"Jared!" She sprang to her feet. "What was it?"

"Oh, nothing terrible—a dislocated knee and a badly sprained ankle. Why, Sally! You're pale." Suddenly Jared Haight threw back his head and laughed. "Well, for a Spartan mother you certainly—"

She held up her hand, interrupting him.

"Jared, dear, don't be a goose. I—I was merely afraid that Jogger had dropped the ball."

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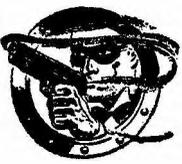
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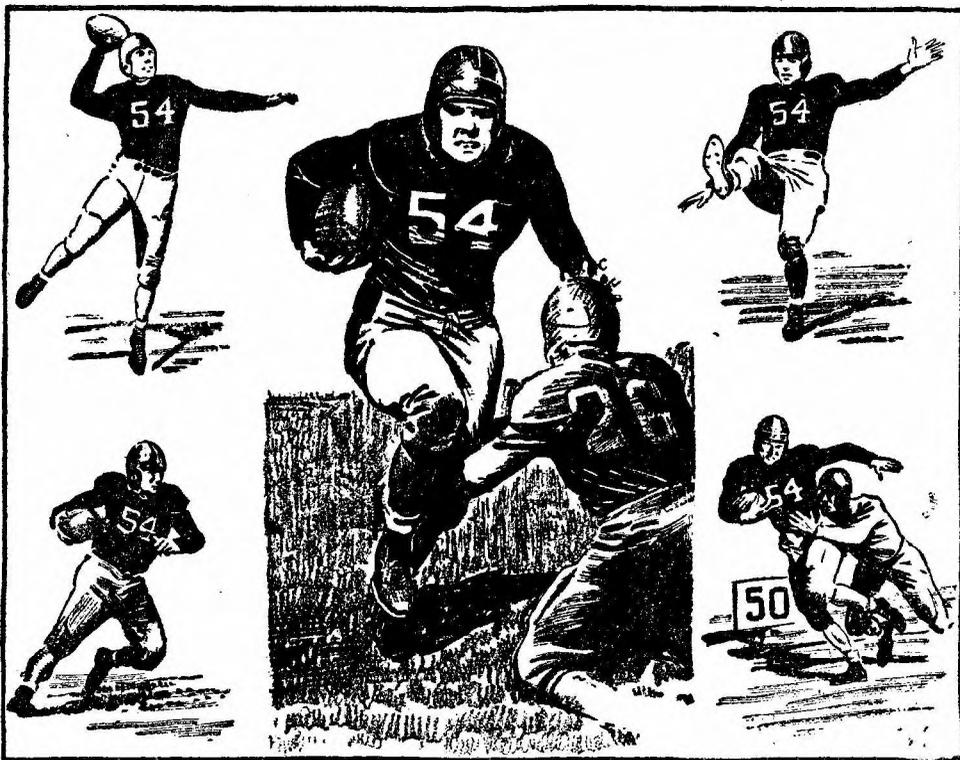
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HIT THAT LINE!

by WILL KEEFE

Author of "The Running Fool," etc.



Football looked too easy to Culpepper Darius Higby . . . what could be hard about taking the pigskin and smacking the other team out of your way and putting the ball down beyond their goal line?

THE empty stands of Southmore College's stadium looked down upon this practice session—a session that was sprouting gray hairs on the temples of Coach Kip McDonald so rapidly you could almost count them.

Team A came out of its huddle and shifted.

"36—45—27—"

An end from Team B shot into the backfield. A tackle went with him. Lines went down like rows of brick. In a moment you couldn't tell toward which goal each team was headed.

Kip McDonald tried to blow his whis-

tle, but his blazing cheeks refused to puff.

"No, no, *NO*," he shouted. "How many times have I got to tell you to stay on side? Listen," he said patiently to the gawking end of Team B. "A long time ago someone decided that football ought to be played according to rules. I know that sounds silly to most of you. But so long as I am being paid to coach a so-called football team, and you are provided with nice uniforms, free trips and a crack at a training table, let's pretend football *ought* to have some rules. Is that clear?"

He allowed his sarcasm to sink in. The teams had been lined up pretty close to a sideline and standing off the gridiron was a hulking chap with a load of books under his arm. There was a big grin on his freckled face as if the coach were putting on an act for his benefit. On the contrary the amusement of the spectator only served as a flux to McDonald's bitterness.

"Okay," he said to the team. "Assuming that we play by rules, one of those rules is that the defending team can not cross the line of play until the ball is snapped. A very difficult thing to remember of course, but please try. Otherwise our opponents will march to touchdowns without even putting the ball into play. Try it again."

The teams lined up once more in the same formation. McDonald shot a glance toward the sideline and scowled. One thing the coach liked most was a big student. And what he disliked most of all was a big student who wouldn't report for football.

WHEN McDonald accepted the offer to coach Southmore he had reached around and patted himself on the back. He looked at the large enrollment and decided that any college boasting that many students should turn out plenty material.

But to his surprise and disgust he learned that this enrollment included graduate students, special students and many who took night courses. Despite the best efforts of the Student Council which was manfully trying to inject a real college spirit into Southmore's scattered enrollment the best McDonald could muster for football was a grab bag collection of about thirty-five.

The quarterback started chanting his signals. With premeditation and foreboding the coach heard the quarter call a reverse. The ball passed to the left halfback who was to cross-cross with

the right halfback, Bill Burnell, better known as the "Kangaroo."

But instead of taking the ball, Burnell crashed into the left halfback and the pair fell in a tangle of arms and legs with the ball spurting free and rolling out of bounds.

Burnell started for the ball and then stopped. His anger at the mishap was heightened by the loud guffaws of the student on the sideline.

"What are you laughing at," he demanded. "Why don't you get the ball?"

"Sure." The student loped after the bounding ball, scooped it up the way a thirdsacker grabs a topped grounder and whipped the ball to Burnell. It bounded from the back's hands.

Burnell started for the student, but the coach stopped him.

"Wait a minute. Cool down. Know that guy?"

"Sure," said Burnell. "He's a freshman even if he is older than I am. One of those birds who come to college late and think football and all that stuff is kid play. Name is Culpepper Higby."

"Then why not take him before the Bat Board?" suggested the coach.

Burnell's blue eyes brightened at the suggestion. "Not a bad idea," he murmured.

The Bat Board was the Student Council, but in more recent years its functions had approached dangerously near to an instrument for hazing and because of that weakness the board had lost some of its influence.

All this Culpepper Higby appreciated when he received a summons. He could ignore the summons if he chose, and was inclined to do so. But Burnell had other ideas. He made it a point to way-lay the mature freshman outside a classroom.

"I heard you got a summons to go before the Bat Board. I'm betting you won't go because I don't think you have it in you to take a little ribbing."

Burnell had a jutting jaw that made his remarks sound even meaner than their intent. Right now he was getting under the skin of the good-natured farmer boy who desired nothing more than to be left alone. He realized students were hovering close by.

"Don't worry," he said, "I'll be there, and ready to take anything you can hand out."

But even as he went toward the designated room he was sore with himself at having been made do something against his will. He wouldn't back out. He would be dignified and condescending—

SOMETHING struck him on the head as he entered a darkened room. An inflated bladder. He controlled his anger as laughter rippled. By the muffled light of a red bulb he could make out the top of a desk and a robed figure behind it. The latter pointed to a chair before the table.

Higby sat in it—and it collapsed under him! More laughter. They were having swell fun.

"Your full name, neophyte."

"Culpepper Darius Higby."

The inquisitor rolled the name lusciously before his tone became severe. "Southmore has been accused of not possessing a proper spirit. It is about time that we made an example of this indifference on the part of students. You are charged with refusing to come out for football yourself and at the same time deriding and otherwise making sport of those who are endeavoring to uphold the valor of Southmore on the gridiron. Do you deny this?"

The charge was not true as put, but Higby saw no sense in denying. He said so.

"Very well, you are guilty as charged by your own admission. You are sentenced to take part in next Saturday's game—as *waterboy!*"

Two o'clock Saturday afternoon found Culpepper Higby lying on the grass just off the sideline and since the squad had not yet come upon the field he realized that he was the center of attention. His ears burned. He knew he was being pointed out. The student body was poking fun at him. Well, he could take it. They should laugh. Why didn't *they* come out for the team. At least some of them had played football. That was more than he could say.

Bands began to play. On both sides sweated cheer leaders that included co-eds began to lead the songs and cheers. Higby felt his pulses stirring. A squad of blue jerseys blossomed at the entrance and came racing across the field.

"*Rah! Rah! Rah! Rah! Rah! Southmore! Southmore! Team! Team! TEAM!*"

Higby felt his skin creep. An instant later a similar greeting rolled from the far side. Now Higby watched the captains meet and toss a coin. The captains came back. The teams huddled and then raced to their places. Higby was amazed at his own nervousness as he waited for the kick to be booted.

He saw it go down. He leaped to his feet as Burnell caught the ball and started up the field with that loping gait. Players dove at each other, muscles taut from excitement. Burnell went down. The whistle shrilled. Someone in blue remained on the ground. The referee waved his hand.

"Hey, you," snapped Coach McDonald, "you with the water. Get out there."

Higby picked up his pail and started out.

"Come back here. You forgot the cups."

Higby returned for the cups. He pinked as he heard the laughter from the stands. But his embarrassment soon passed as he reached the players.

He couldn't explain his new feeling, but there was a joy in being out here—even as a waterboy.

He returned with his pail and dropped on the grass. His regret was genuine as he saw Southmore fail to pierce the Malden line. He watched the punt and then trembled as Malden took over the ball.

NOW he watched closely. He studied each player and figured out his assignment. He sensed the danger as Southmore yielded ground, cheered as his college mates took over and began to understand how a shortage of reserves held Southmore back. He groaned with dismay as Malden pushed over a score and made the count 7 to 0.

Higby accompanied the tired players to the locker room at the end of the half. No one noticed him. He would even have welcomed a wisecrack from Burnell.

He went back to his water pail for the second half and saw a determined Southmore team stall twice inside the twenty-yard line and throw puny passes. On a third effort Martell elected to drop kick on the fourth down and made the count 7 to 3.

Southmore had its first chance to cheer. But the game was running out.

Malden stalled and held onto the ball and with about two minutes of play remaining the visitors punted. Higby watched as Burnell waited under the ball. He saw Burnell make the catch and shoot past a diving end. He rose to his feet and cheered as Burnell got into the clear with that deceptive bounding but speedy style of running that had won him the name of "Kangaroo."

Higby found himself yelling madly as Burnell seemed in the clear for a touch-down, but a desperate lunge knocked him out on the five-yard line. Higby sank down on the sideline limp from cheering.

The teams lined up again. Southmore was within five yards of winning the game. Krascow, the fullback, banged the line, but Malden held with the secondary backing up. Burnell tried an end but only made a yard. Krascow hit again and picked up two. Fourth down and about a yard to go.

Burnell came away from the scrimmage and Higby saw him reel a bit. He was hurt.

Without waiting for a summons from the referee Higby picked up his pail and cups and raced out.

"Give it to 'em," he exclaimed to Burnell. "You can put it over."

The referee's whistle shrilled. "Penalty for coming onto the field without a summons and for giving instructions."

The referee picked up the ball and as he paced off the yards dismay stilled the Southmore cheering. It broke into boos as Higby came off the field with head down.

He turned to see Burnell throw a desperate forward for the final effort and watched it fail. A moment later the game ended. A waterboy had lost a game for Southmore.

Culpepper Higby remained in self imposed solitary. But those thin lips were set grimly and his gray eyes flashed with a new light of determination. He burned the midnight oil, but none knew what he was studying.

In the small country school from which Culpepper Higby had graduated there had never been enough men for a football team, but the school did play basketball. Somewhere Culpepper Higby had a newspaper clipping. In the solitude of his room he finally dug it out. It was three years old.

“. . . The big disappointment of the State Basketball Tournament was the forced withdrawal of the Buxton High team for the astounding reason that the high school only has five male students and when

Granston was injured there was no substitute. Buxton asked to continue with four men and it is interesting to speculate just what might have happened. The brilliant scoring evinced by Culpepper Higby, who handles a basketball like a baseball, makes it seem possible that Buxton might have won even with four men."

SOUTHMORE left to play Glendale College the following Saturday and although Glendale had a much weaker team than either Malden or Southmore the Southmore eleven barely eked out a 7 to 6 victory. The team was certainly in the dumps and Coach McDonald could trace his trouble right back to one play—the penalty that robbed Southmore of an inspiring victory over Malden.

On Monday, McDonald summoned his slim squad onto the practice field in the desperate hope of drilling enthusiasm into his players. As he came onto the field he stopped in his tracks as he saw Culpepper Higby standing waiting for him.

"Well, what do you want—your job as waterboy again?"

"No," he said quietly, "I'd like to play football."

"Football?" His angry amazement inspired a general laugh from the squad. But Higby's jaws hardened.

"And just what position would you like to play?" said McDonald with a thinly disguised sarcasm.

"Halfback." The laughter doubled.

The coach smiled. "All right. I'll use you on the seconds. See if you can dig up a uniform."

In the clubhouse Higby managed to put together a complete uniform. He returned to the field where the teams were already scrimmaging. McDonald assigned him to right half on the second team. Burnell came over.

"You don't need the signals," he said with a smile. "I'll tell you the play in advance. I'm coming right through you."

Burnell did as he said. Maybe the line allowed him to shoot through without making a real effort to halt him. At any rate, Higby saw the fast-running back charging down on him. Higby set himself for the dive—and a stiff straight arm cupped him on the chin and flattened him.

He rose to his feet with the laughter of his mates ringing in his ears. He waited until Burnell came back. "Just try that again," he challenged.

"Sure," agreed Burnell. "Anything to oblige."

This time Higby watched for the straight arm. He batted it aside and crashed the Kangaroo in a diving tackle. A third time he dove and this time Burnell sailed over him. But a fourth time when Burnell tried his Kangaroo leap Higby caught him in mid-air and tossed him back as if he were a sack of laundry clothes.

The coach had been watching without comment, but now he stepped in. "Well, we've had enough of this personal feud. Now let's play some football."

Higby remained in the backfield. Everything seemed so simple from the book, but with twenty-two men tangling on the pass of the ball Higby had no time to recall what the book said. He was caught out of position, he chased the wrong men and he was fooled by backs who didn't charge straight on or leap into the air as did Burnell.

Finally, he got a chance to carry the ball. Simple plays were explained to him in huddles, but they failed to remain simple as he attempted to carry them out. Naturally, the coach made allowances, but he was also looking for some glimmer of talent—and he failed to find it. He stopped the play.

"Just where did you learn to play football?" he demanded of Higby.

Higby hesitated, but it was his nature to answer truthfully. "From books, sir."

"Books?" The coach's eyes flamed as if he suspected he was being made the butt of some gag, but the seriousness of the tall lad's expression changed his mind.

"I'm sorry, but you can't get this game from books." The coach offered his hand. "Thanks for trying," he said, "and come out for the team early next season when I'll have time to teach you fundamentals." He looked down at his hand and found it engulfed in the largest paw he had ever encountered.

"Wait a minute," he said. "You're the bird who threw a football at Burnell one day. Get back in the game."

THE coach gave instructions to the quarterback to call pass plays and explained to Higby who his eligibles were on the plays.

The ball snapped back to Higby. Casually he spotted a man who had run to his usual receiving position on the play, about ten yards beyond scrimmage, and was waiting for the pass without the least bit of deception. Higby smacked the ball right into his hands, but it bounded out even as he was hit. The teams lined up again and another swift pass slapped out of a receiver's hands.

Burnell came back protesting. "Why don't you throw your passes to me? I'll hold 'em."

"Well, don't stand out there with a flag up telling the world you're waiting for a pass," declared Higby. "You're supposed to be fast. Let's see you get down to the twenty yard mark and I'll bounce one off your helmet."

"Oh, a wise guy," said Burnell as the team huddled.

But on the play Burnell started

sprinting with his bounding, deceiving gait. Higby faded back of the mid-field stripe. Down at the twenty Burnell smiled. He started to turn his head—when something smacked him like a club on the helmet. His ungainly legs tangled and he went down.

Higby smiled. Now the players could laugh at someone else beside him. But the laughter was cut short by a sharp bark from Coach McDonald.

"So we're having a vaudeville show instead of a football practice. Maybe I'm at the wrong place. Higby, come here." Higby crossed, disturbed by the tone and not noting the gleam in the coach's eyes.

"I'm sorry, feller, but you showed up a month too late, and I haven't the time to hold up the team to go back and start all over again just to make room for you. In those books you read, do you remember anything about tackling dummies and training equipment?"

"Yes, sir," said Higby, wondering.

"Well, you'll find all that stuff over behind the stadium. You'll have to be your own instructor. Heaven knows I have enough to do trying to whip this assortment into a team that has four more games to play to say nothing of meeting Colford. Now if you make a serious job of learning fundamentals you ought to make the team next year. I may even let you into the Colford game long enough to earn your letter."

Culpepper Higby took his dismissal in good spirit, although he thought the coach had been a little bit hasty. He could improve with practice and the coach hadn't given him a fair chance to show his passing ability. Southmore could stand a good passer.

But Higby followed instructions and conducted a one man show with the tackling dummies. "Show" seemed to be the right word, for an increasing number of Southmore students, including co-eds, watched him with uncon-

cealed amusement until he began to suspect he was being made the object of a gag.

On Saturdays he had the privilege of sitting on the bench and watching the squad show anything but an inspiring brand of football. He heard Coach McDonald bitterly criticised for lack of victories, but it seemed to Higby that McDonald was doing wonders with the material wished upon him.

Every college has its rival which it meets in the objective climax game of the season. Colford College was Southmore's big rival. This year Colford had its team of teams, a powerful aggregation that had not been scored on since the second game of the season. Its students and alumni were already talking of Bowl contests that would come after the slaughter of Southmore.

In apparent desperation for material the coach drafted Higby for the scant squad of reserves and ineligibles upon whom the varsity practiced. Higby took the punishment without a murmur and actually began to believe he was finding himself.

ON Monday of the final week which would close with the all important clash with Colford Higby felt encouraged enough to approach the coach.

"Coach, I don't mind being on the scrubs, but I would like a chance to try for the varsity—"

He was interrupted by a laugh from Burnell. "You certainly have a swell impression of yourself," he said. "In four weeks you think you can become a star."

"I didn't say I was a star," snapped Higby. "I have plenty to learn, but I can pass right now as good as anyone on the team. Remember I smacked you on the head at forty yards."

"I remember that," cut in the coach without enthusiasm. "Suppose you two go down to the other end of the field

and play pass. I'll look you over."

Reluctantly, Burnell complied. The coach came down once and suggested faster running by Burnell with longer passes by Higby, but otherwise showed scant interest.

On Thursday the coach brought Burnell and Higby back to the squad and placed the former in his old position at left halfback on the first team while Higby was assigned to right half on the scrubs. Two teams went through a final rugged session and then were dismissed.

Higby followed the players into the locker room feeling pretty good. He had done nothing but back up the line defensively but he had a feeling as though he had found himself. He hadn't been confused or tricked. He didn't have to pause to figure out the right play. He moved instinctively, and usually correctly. Yeah, he was only a sub, but he felt pleased.

Obviously his mood was not shared by others. Not feeling privileged to mix and embarrassed also because he was older than most of the players to whom he was only a sub Higby undressed without paying much attention to the grumbling.

He came out of the showers with a towel about his gleaming body to hear Burnell addressing a group of players.

"The trouble with Kip is that he is quitting. Teams as lowly rated as ours have beaten Colford and we can do it again."

There were murmurs of approval . . . Higby paused. So far he could agree with Burnell, except for the quitting part. But Burnell went on.

"But what chance have we? What's he given us this week? Nothing but defensive plays. The way I figure it Kip wants to keep his job so he's out to keep Colford's margin of victory as low as possible."

Higby had heard enough. He pushed

through the ring of players.

"Burnell," he said quietly, "get down off the soap box. You've talked enough. You ain't *said* anything, because you talk like you run—a lot of leaps and bounds that like as not get you tangled up."

Burnell crimsoned at the interruption. "Look who's talking. You're the best proof of what I've been saying—that Kip McDonald is only thinking about next year. He uses you in the scrub backfield to give you experience. He thinks he can make a passer out of you so what does he do? Makes me waste my time acting as a target for you."

"Listen, Burnell," said Higby quietly, "you've got the wrong slant on things. Your eagerness to beat a team everyone knows is better than ours deserves a few bouquets, but it can be carried too far. The place to win the game is out on the field and not in the locker room. I won't even be in the game, but I'm willing to do my part sitting on the bench."

"And rushing out the water pail," suggested the belligerent Burnell. It got some snickers which ended quickly as the players saw Higby's jaw tighten and his eyes narrow.

"Yes—rushing out the water pail, if that's what I'm asked to do by the coach. I've seen Kip McDonald do a hell of a lot with the handful of material thrown at him, and I don't like to hear anyone accuse him of folding up. And when I don't like something I'm inclined sometimes to get mean about it."

And Culpepper Higby let the towel slip from his shoulders, shoulders that were well muscled, arms that seemed banded with layers of tempered steel. There was a cut to his jaw and a gleam in his gray eyes that sort of made the gathering of players, some of them as big as himself or bigger, edge away.

Culpepper Higby went to his locker

and proceeded to dress.

SATURDAY proved an ideal day for football; cool, crisp and with a bright sun. A good many alumni had come back to Southmore for the game, refusing to be disturbed by the statements of experts that Colford greatly excelled the Southmore eleven. They insisted loudly that a Southmore team that played in seven games and a Southmore team that played against Colford were two distinct teams. And somehow the assurance of the old grads acted as a tonic and revived hope.

And this hope was carried into the stadium. It rolled forth in the cheers that went booming across the gridiron to the Colford adherents. It exploded in the welcome showered upon the slim Southmore squad that raced upon the field in blue jerseys with clean white numbers on the backs.

And as Higby ran on to the bench with the other subs while the starting eleven took a few shadow charges he was reconciled to the fact that when the game ended his number 47 would be as virgin white as it was now. The only part of his uniform that might show usage would be the seat of his pants made shiny from sitting on the bench.

But Higby didn't care. He could still yell. Yes, and he could carry the bucket.

Southmore won the toss, which seemed like a good sign, and Al Martell, the quarterback, ran the ball back to the thirty-five for a cheering start. But the heavy crimson line of Colford quickly revealed its power by stopping Southmore on three line plays for no game.

Kraskow punted deeply and Colford began its march. Southmore resisted stubbornly. Sliding on the bench, Higby could see the value of the coach's defensive drilling. The men played well, and their spirit was good. But after they had been pounded by the heavier Colford players, what then? Higby could

only wonder.

Yard by yard Colford pounded up the field, but a stubborn Southmore eleven held in the shadow of its goal and Krasnow continued to kick deep with the wind at his back. This advantage was lost with the change of the quarter and Colford's drive finally pushed over a touchdown.

Southmore's resistance snapped. Higby could sense it on the bench. McDonald rushed in substitutes, mostly linemen, but the crimson horde had tasted blood and would not be denied. Colford scored again and was ten yards short of a third touchdown when the half ended.

But that touchdown was delayed only by the period of intermission. Southmore returned to the battle only partly refreshed by the half hour respite. Colford received and started its drive. In ten successive plays the crimson tide rolled over and with the kick made the score 20 to 0.

Colford took advantage of the big lead to send in many substitutes anxious to earn a letter and against these second stringers Southmore made some progress. But the boys in blue failed to string together enough successive first downs to excite the dying hopes of their supporters.

Southmore had given too much in the futile task of stemming the terrific drive of the crimson warriors. But more than that, now that Southmore had a weakened defense, the team seemed to lack offensive plays.

Had Burnell been right? Higby, who chanced to be sitting near the coach, began to doubt. A worried frown wrinkled his brow. He studied McDonald. Now, as all through the game, the coach was watching the play like a scientist staring through a microscope.

Yeah, Burnell must have had the right dope. Kip had thrown this game into the ash can. He was looking

through the contest to next season. His only desire was to keep the game from becoming a rout. As if he sensed Higby looking at him he turned.

"You'd like to win this game, wouldn't you?" observed the coach. Higby laughed. Win the game? Already the timekeeper was watching the fading seconds of the third quarter.

"So would I," answered the coach for himself. "I'd like to win it for you. Or should I say for what you stand for. Six weeks ago you weren't interested in football. You had no college spirit. That is what is wrong with Southmore. No college spirit. My call for football candidates brings out forty when there should be a hundred."

HE paused to make two substitutions as the quarter ended. "What do you think would arouse that spirit? A victory. Pulling this game out of the fire when it seems hopelessly lost."

Higby laughed. "Seems hopelessly lost?"

"That's right," said the coach looking directly at him. "And you're going to win it. What do you think I've had you throwing those hit-the-dime passes at Burnell for? Because you're going to do that very thing right now. Colford is so certain of victory that the team has let down. It can't snap back. Okay, get ready to go in."

Higby was flabbergasted. "But—but, does Burnell know about this?"

"No. He'd talk too much. And he'd stay up all night trying to make improvements. Tell him all he's got to do is to run like he never ran before. That bounding gait will fool the secondary and if you throw your passes at the top of one of those kangaroo leaps of his they'll never intercept. The quarterback knows what to do. I've posted him. And I've been drilling the team to give you protection while all the time they thought I was only trying to keep

down the size of the beating Colford would give us—oh, I know what the campus gossip is.”

The coach slapped Higby on the shoulder. “Okay, you have the college spirit. See if you can make it spread to the whole school.”

Higby ran out to the play, conspicuous in his clean uniform. Martell, the quarterback, ran off a play and then Southmore huddled.

Burnell glowered at Higby. “So you’re going to win a letter. You must fit.”

“I’m going to win the game,” said Higby. “And you’re going to help me. Play close to the line and wide and run like hell. Keep running and I’ll plant a pass right in your mitts.”

Southmore came out of its huddle. The ball came to Martell who dodged a bit as if uncertain and then tossed the ball to Higby just before a tackler dove for him. Higby had plenty of time. He let Burnell get well down the field and from his own twenty Higby let go.

Well beyond the midfield stripe the bounding Burnell turned his head. He saw the ball and reached up. Colford secondary had been caught flat footed. The safety made a belated chase but the bounding Burnell streaked the remaining yards for a score.

Martell kicked the seventh point. For the first time in the game the Southmore students had a chance to cheer.

Colford received, but with substitutes still in the game an attempted drive petered out and Colford punted. It was a good punt. It sailed over Martell’s head and was touched down on the five yard line.

Southmore huddled. Martell said, “Higby, go back as if to punt and hit Burnell with another of those passes.”

Higby went back, held a finger up to gauge the wind, cleaned his cleat, took the ball and held it as if to punt and then whipped the ball toward the rac-

ing, bounding Burnell.

The ball was high and soaring like a punt. Both the safety and Burnell raced for it. But the kangaroo hop proved faster. Burnell clutched the ball in stride and was by the safety even as the latter leaped through empty space.

With the stands cheering madly Burnell romped away from the pursuing Colford pack and bounded across for a second touchdown.

And now it seemed as if the Southmore side of the stands had awakened from a trance as a frenzy of yelling burst from students and fans too excited to remember the rehearsed cheers. Spectators starting to leave now turned back. Anything could happen.

And the Colford bench regulars who had considered themselves finished for the afternoon scrambled for helmets and threw off blankets. A swarm of first string players rushed out, but even their added strength failed to block the kick that made the count 20 to 14.

BUT Colford’s first team received. A tired but aroused Southmore line smothered the driving plunges of desperate Colford backs fighting to keep the ball until the final gun would sound.

A third down off tackle smash resulted in no gain and Colford had to punt. Amid the unceasing frenzy of the cheering fans Martell took the punt and was immediately smacked down.

Colford huddled quickly and snapped into formation. The ball came back to Higby. He saw a blur of crimson as the ends charged swiftly and his hurried pass went wide. Martell called for the same play and this time Higby was prepared. He whipped the ball away quickly and smacked into the hands of Burnell at the top of one his bounds.

Burnell was immediately tackled, but the pass was good for fifteen yards. Working swiftly Higby fired bulletlike

short passes. Several missed, but enough of them found haven in Burnell's hands. Down the field Southmore marched twelve and fifteen yards at a time until with only a minute of play Southmore stood in the shadow of Colford's goal.

Higby stood deep and waited for the ball. It was a tough spot for him and tough for Burnell, too. The ball came back. Higby drew bead. Burnell was covered so closely that Higby had to catch him at the top of one of his leaps. He fired. And the ball slapped into Burnell's hands as he crossed the goal line!

The score was tied and Southmore had its chance to cash in on the winning point. Martell went back to kick. Higby moved forward to block off the end. His work was done for the day. Carlow, the fullback, knelt for the ball. Higby watching the center thought he saw him sway. He had taken plenty of punishment.

The ball came back. The pass was bad. Higby saw it shoot past Carlow. Higby wheeled and raced with the

charging ends for the loose ball. An end made a grab for the ball and batted it and Higby lunged for it and caught it.

Wheeling quickly and cool in the frenzy of excitement he raced toward the sideline and looked for Burnell. But Burnell was covered!

Higby brushed off a tackler. The big fellow started running for the coffin corner. Crimson tacklers closed in on him, but the big boy was on the loose. Straight arming, head lowered and charging, Higby ploughed through a wall of crimson and plunged over the line for the winning point!

Southmore had won. A certain rout had been turned into a sensational victory in the closing minutes.

Teammates pounded Higby on the back. But he was looking at the Southmore student body, leaping, dancing and hugging each other. Higby smiled. They would be talking about this game until the next season started. Kip McDonald wouldn't have to worry about getting candidates next season.

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BLONDE BULLET

By GILES A. LUTZ

Author of "The Ice-King," etc.

HAPPY HOUR, manager-coach of the last place Rangers, gloomily watched the latest addition to his second line. Jerry Moad, new defenseman straddled the dasher, preparatory to entering the fray. His face was stretched in a broad, homely grin.

Hour had whistled in amazement when Jerry raced down the rink. Some of the league's shooting stars wouldn't beat this boy.

He had taken the boy on Fox Larue's recommendation. Larue, out of the wars for years, but with eyes still keenly



Lights glancing off the dazzling expanse of ice reflected in lively, blue eyes.

Jerry Moad, fresh from an amateur league, playing big league hockey. Carrying all the physical requirements of a rear-guard. Huge, with shoulders from here to there. Legs like strong tree trunks. Hands, large, capable. Weight in the right places. And skate—Happy

aware of future hockey material. Happy admitted Larue was right. This kid showed a definite stamp of greatness. He couldn't have made the long jump otherwise. But one thing was lacking. Fight. This game was fun to Jerry. Despite Happy's flaying, there wasn't the added effort, the on-your-toes alertness all stars must have.

SMASHING FEATURE-LENGTH NOVELETTE OF RINK-FEUD FURY AND TWO HARD-HITTING HELLIONS WHO DIDN'T KNOW THE MEANING OF FEAR!

Happy had just about given up. Already he'd sent out feelers for a new defenseman. If the Rangers didn't make the playoff this year—Happy set his jaw grimly. No one wanted the manager of an also ran. If he didn't pull the Rangers up, he was through.

the ice. Happy half-rose, sat down wearily. Leading by 1 to 0, in the second period, against last year's champion Eskimos and this kid still thought it was fun—

A handful of disinterested fans applauded half-heartedly the retiring de-



Cyclone Couture, the toughest puck-pusher in the big leagues, versus the Blonde Bullet, an ice-wise defenseman brought up on brain-busting blocks!

Through everywhere.

"Come on, Moad," he rasped harshly. "Get out there and make it good."

Unmoved, Jerry turned his head, grinned and leisurely skated out onto

fenseman. Happy couldn't blame their lack of enthusiasm. The fifth game of the year and the Rangers needing it to keep on the up side of .500.

The shrill blast of the referee's

whistle. Wood against wood, as the centers slashed at the disc.

Heck Blair of the Eskimos hooked the puck, started around the Ranger Center. A few choppy strides. His wings raced goalward, already intent on setting up a scoring play.

Another stride. Blair bent over the puck, rapidly going places. From out of nowhere, a deft stick flicked. Reg Hamilton, Ranger Center, was famous for his poke-checks. Blair dug in his points, changed direction. Hamilton was far down the ice, the disc nestled in the heel of his stick.

Finding his team-mates unable to shake the Eskimos tight guarding, he shot from far out. Dutch Strauss, the Eskimo goalie, made the save.

Happy shook his head impatiently. This club of his was ducking punishment. Hamilton should have been in closer. If Happy didn't know better, he'd say Hamilton was afraid of Cyclone Couture, the rough, tough and dirty Eskimo defenseman. Hamilton wasn't afraid. The club simply lacked spark, fight. Two straight years in the cellar killed ambition. He glared at the blond Moad. Happy had hoped Moad would strike that spark.

He remembered Moad's reporting. The big kid said diffidently, "Moad. Gerald Gordon Moad."

Iceberg Callahan, the husky net-minder had guffawed aloud. "If that ain't hell of a handle. I bet he ain't in the mood to play hockey. Mood Moad."

Everyone rode him. Their razzing carried a bite. When the riding grew too rough, Moad grinned his broad, homely grin, protested gently, "Aw, cut it out."

HAPPY didn't believe there was a spark of fight in the kid. Big, good-natured, all of the ability, none of the push.

Sometimes he thought handling hockey players was making him nuts. Or he was nuts to handle hockey players. On paper, this team was far better than the cellar. Reg Hamilton could hold his own with any center in the league. The wings, Wee Wee Lalonde and Baldy Horman. Lalonde, so called because of his size and his *Oui, Oui* to everything. One sports writer kidded, "He's the size of a chigger. And as hard to catch." Baldy Horman was an old, canny head.

The rear guard trio, Bumps Cathaway, Iceberg Callahan and Russ Gainor. Cathaway was expert at knocking opponents base over apex. Callahan, a goalie par-excellence. Age had finally trapped Gainor. Happy had looked to Jerry Moad to fill the gap.

He sat glowering as the play surged back and forth. Hold 'em you dogs. He'd howled so much the last couple weeks, he felt like one.

The crowd came to its feet as Moad started a solo dash. How that kid could skate. Puck glued to stick, he was through the front line. He rocked to the left, wobbled a little as a defenseman brushed him with a block, was clear. He fainted, hoping to pull the net-minder out of position. The goalie's eyes were warily glued on the puck. He knew the answers.

From the corner of his eye, Jerry watched the defenseman, he had just passed, cutting in. Frenzied yells from the audience, from his own bench warned him.

He continued his tantalizing puck-ragging, waiting. Waiting. Another feint at the goal, then swiftly slid the puck to the racing Lalonde. The burly defenseman had been neatly sucked on that one.

He stood relaxed, watching the new play. Lalonde cuddled the disc with deft sureness, whipped it on a line. The puck cleared the straining fingers of the

Eskimo goalie, bellied the twine, high in the corner.

Moad saw the red bulb flash, then all the rink and most of the crowd seemed to hit him. The red light's flash was black night compared to the lights flashing in his skull. He slammed forward, hit the ice, struggled to arise and fell back dazed.

His eyes refused to focus, his legs were wet macaroni. Lalonde and Hamilton held him erect. Cyclone Couture's grinning face swam and twisted through a sickening, hazy mist.

"The ape clipped you," Lalonde growled. "If you don't pay him for that, mom ami—"

Moad pushed his hands aside. Something inside him seethed. So Couture wanted to cripple him. He took a wobbly step forward. Couture was leaving the ice, thumbed to the penalty box by an irate official.

Happy sent in a substitute for Moad, who sank weakly beside him. Cleverly, he fanned the fire. "Toughest man in the league," he gloomed. "No one can stop him. Thought you would, but—" he shook his head. "It's too much to ask. Was it imagination? He could swear those blue eyes grew frosty.

As the period ended, Happy followed Moad, who clumped up the wooden ramp leading to the dressing rooms. He saw him pass Couture, heard Couture rumble, "next time, they'll drag you off."

Jerry Moad's face was harder than Happy ever hoped for. The kid struggled into a dry jersey, sat staring at his locker. Occasionally, he gingerly tested his shoulder. Make it work, Happy begged silently.

The third period trickled away. The Eskimos abandoned defensive hockey. Two goals behind, no good in saving a possible score. Three, four, even five men boiled around the Ranger goal. Callahan made save after save. An

animated jumping-jack, effectively plugging up the net's entrance.

COUTURE with the puck. He evaded the front line, whipped down the ice like a runaway locomotive. Lalonde was beside him, harrassing, annoying. Matching speed with more speed. Cleverly Lalonde turned him in. Always in. Couture doggedly refused to give up the puck. He didn't see Moad braced in his path. Didn't know he existed, until he found himself plowing the ice, ending with a crash against the dasher. Even Happy gasped at the body-check. If Couture got up from that—the kid had repaid his debt. Repaid it legally.

Lalonde grabbed the loose puck, streaked thru the startled Eskimos. Only the goalie in front. Moad aching from the vicious block on Couture, slowly followed. Yells. Screams. Why were they yelling? He didn't have the puck. He turned as the roof dropped on him.

He regained consciousness in the dressing room. Happy and the Doc worked over him. "Wh—what happened?" he managed.

"Couture busted you with his stick. You turned just in time to get it over the eye." He paused, said slowly, "Six stitches, Jerry. Every time you look in the mirror and see that scar, think of Couture. He's not the only tough one in the league. You gotta keep a jump ahead of them, Jerry. Or guys like Couture will run you out of hockey. Not dirty playing, Jerry, but hard playing. A couple teeth-rattling blocks will put respect in any man."

"It didn't me," Jerry said in clipped tones.

"Didn't it Jerry?" Happy asked softly. Jerry didn't see his grin.

A new Moad skated out for the Ranger's next game. One, who after playing two periods, brought forth an ad-

miring, "he's in the mood, tonight," from Callahan. Jerry Moad of the easy-going, soft playing had vanished. This hard-eyed, hard-jawed kid was a slam-bang, vicious checking demon. Before the game ended, fans howled vociferous approval. This was the kind of Hockey they paid to see.

Moad's checks and bumps jarred the innards of the opposing front line. Happy gave the defenseman two reliefs, both short. Why not? The fans wanted Moad. The team wanted and needed him. His playing was beginning to lift and carry every man on the club. Happy could have hugged him. The spark kindled.

In the third period, Moad slammed a wingman viciously into the ice. The wing climbed shakily to his feet, his eyes burning. His fourth hard block from this same green kid. He raised his stick, swung the butt in a sharp blow at Moad's jaw.

Moad jerked off a glove, stiffened the wing with a punch. Harrassed officials strained to prevent an open melee. Moad was thumbed out. The Rangers slowed down, played more cautiously after his ejection. No need for whirlwind playing. This game was literally and figuratively on ice.

Happy talked to Jerry Moad earnestly after the game. "Great going, son. But keep those hands open. We need you too much. Let the other guys get thrown out. Besides, those fines will put an awful nick in your check."

The blond kid opened and closed his huge fists reflectively. "I'll make you that promise, Happy. That guy was too little tonight, anyway. But not for Couture. I still owe him something."

The morning columns gave Happy's six quite a splash.

"Happy Hour, manager-coach of the beleaguered Rangers, has found a defenseman that may fill a gaping hole. Jerry Moad, until tonight an unknown

quality, played with dash and verve reminding this writer of Eddie Shore and King Clancey. His inspired blocking, his great stick-handling and terrific speed definitely put the Rangers on the right side tonight. His solo dash, in the second period, literally barging through both defensemen, was the winning score. Opposing teams will do well to watch the Blonde Bullet."

The name stuck. Under the impetus of Moad's driving, slashing play, the Rangers climbed in the race. Fans, who stayed away before, now packed the arena to the rafters. "Give us the Bullet. Give us the Bullet," they chanted.

FOR the first time in years, Happy's sour visage wreathed in smiles. This team had the feel of champions. If nothing happened to Moad. One swing around the circuit and every player and fan knew the Blonde Bullet. On enemy ice, he was booed and bumped. He came up grinning. On home ice, he was lauded to the skies and still came up grinning. Happy liked that. Nothing would turn the kid's head. He got his share of bumps, regardless of enemy or home ice. Stop the Bullet was the common word. And he could take it and dish it in copious quantities.

He packed a wicked shot, from center-ice or close in. The puck hurtling like a comet, never more than two feet from the ice, drove goalies wild. His stick-handling was superb, his strategy perfect. He could eliminate an enemy wing from the scene by skating him off into a corner and relieving him of the puck. He preferred the pitch and toss method. He sparkled from the fierce body contacts. They kept an inner fire burning.

No question about it. Jerry Moad was the Rangers. Happy was a little worried about the next meeting with Couture. If the kid didn't lose his head—

Couture gave the Bullet everything in the books. Hard body-blocks, elbows, high sticks and trips but never ruffled Moad's composure. Couture took three trips to the cooler, on fouls, hawk-eyed officials detected. The further the game progressed, the worse Couture played. This green kid was out-skating, out-playing, out-checking him. As the second period ended, Couture skated from the ice, lathered with sweat, his face savage. His reputation as the hardest defenseman in the league was wavering.

The third period was veritable warfare. The Eskimos trailed by a 2-1 count. Fighting to tie with the leading Rangers, they charged like maddened animals.

Moad, ably assisted by Bumps Cathaway, viciously broke up or turned aside, rush after rush. What few got through, Iceberg Callahan smothered and tossed out of danger. Couture endeavored again and again to break through the Bullet. In the press box, tense writers looked at each other and nodded. Cyclone was bowing his neck. Forgetting everything, in his determination to prove his superiority. His wild, bull-like rushes, thick, flying black hair, glaring, muddy eyes made him an awesome sight. The Bullet coolly judged, his twisting, shifting course. One step forward. Slam. Couture picked himself from the ice again.

A tripping penalty cooled his heels late in the period. Moad's satisfied grin infuriated him further. He waited, literally frothing to return to the fray.

Only seconds left, when he skated from the box. On the referee's flop, Hamilton's stick snaked out, cuddled the disc. He zipped forward, found himself blocked and flicked the puck back to Moad.

The stands were on their feet as Moad tore enemy goalward. The Bullet was off again. He stick-handled

his way around a wing, brushed past a reaching stick and headed straight for Cyclone Couture. He never hesitated. Gaining speed with every stroke, he plowed into the waiting defenseman. The crash was amply satisfying to the most gore-loving fan. Both down. The black pellet lying loose a few feet beyond. It was Moad who scrambled to his skates, reached the puck first and whipped it into the net, just as the final buzzer sounded. Two goals for the crazy, high-flying kid against last year's champs. Papers would be buzzing with the league's new sensation tomorrow.

Moad skated from the ice amidst wild acclaim from fans and team-mates. As he started to climb onto the wooden ramp, startled fans warned him. Couture had dropped his stick, gloves and was charging.

The fight was a beauty until they were stopped. Officials, players, policemen tore the struggling players apart, escorted them to their respective dressing rooms.

MOAD figured a cut lip, spat blood on the floor. "That guy Couture," he said slowly. "I hated his guts. Funny, I don't now. Most of the rough, tough guys I ever knew were a little yellow when pressed. He's not." He grinned, grimaced as his split lip protested.

"No," agreed Happy. "And kid, you're sure not." He was so tickled he could hardly contain himself. "You really beat those bums tonight."

"I wasn't the only man on the ice," Moad replied simply.

Callahan threw a sweaty jersey at him. "I bet you wish there were more of us around you when the battle started." No petty jealousies or bickerings. A whole unit, fused as solid as quartz.

By the middle of the season, the Rangers were leading a snarling pack by a

comfortable margin. The games between the Rangers and Eskimos were hockey epics. Standing room was at a premium when the Bullet and Couture met. The fiercest hockey feud waged for years, sporting columns agreed. The Bullet repeatedly came up with a tiny margin, driving Couture to wilder, more desperate measures. Penalty after penalty and he was still trying to break the green kid.

Twelve stitches were taken in Moad's leg when Couture's skate raked him, after he had fallen. The officials absorbed by rough high-sticking over against the boards missed that one. Moad was out for six games. The Rangers missed his playing, the Eskimos whittling at their lead.

Moad repaid Couture the first possible chance. A savage body-check lifted and threw the Eskimo defenseman into the boards. Couture spat three teeth on the ice. Blood streamed from his mouth, but he refused to leave the game. This feud was a bitter, driving, personal thing. Leave the ice and lose a valuable opportunity to cripple the grinning idiot across from him? Couture would have tried to play on broken pins.

Happy's smile was broad and constant these days. "You know," he confided to Lalonde, "I used to eat a meal and feel sour in my belly. Everything agrees with me now. I wonder how long it'll last."

He hovered over Moad like a hen with a lone chicken. Moad, his most important cog in a highly-g geared machine. Better keep him mentally and physically atuned.

During a game with the last place Hawks, the old, worried frown returned to Happy's face. Moad drifted along with the plays, was never an active part of them. Not one body check meted out the enter evening. He wore a grin, that Happy thought irritably was down-

right idiotic. The Rangers lost, when they were expected to sweep the ice. The Bullet's faulty, sloppy checking put men, time after time, on Callahan. Five electrifying saves, before they passed him. Another shot belied the twines. The man shouldn't have been even close.

"Get in the game," Callahan growled at Moad.

Moad only nodded vaguely and skated away.

"The damn fool acts like he's in love," Callahan told Happy after the game. "He ain't sick. Better get him going. Without the Bullet, this team just ain't."

Happy accused Moad directly. Received the same, idiotic grin. "Oh Lord, Happy, I've met the swellest girl. I'm bringing her to the game tonight. I'll introduce you." He refused to say more.

Happy's nervous, roving glances failed to locate the girl before game-time. During the game, the Bullet's mind was a million miles from hockey. At the end, fans rode him with bite in their voices. He never even heard them.

The team unravelled, became loose, jerky instead of Happy's closely-knit unit. Happy removed Moad, but the second-string defenseman failed to stem the tide. Another game dropped. The Eskimos won their tilt and crept to a hair's breath of the leading Rangers.

HAPPY bit through his cigar as the final buzzer sounded. Reached for another, broke it with angry hands and threw it on the floor in disgust. He turned to give Moad a verbal lashing. Moad was gone. The others had already clumped to the dressing room. Happy arose wearily. That's what you get for building around one, green kid, he thought bitterly.

There was Moad, coming down an aisle, still grinning like a damn fool.

Like — the worse thing Happy could think of—like they just hadn't lost a game. He strangled a gasp, as he saw the girl with Moad. Know her? He ought to. Nona Velmar, hockey widow of the league. Moad bringing her to a game. Hell, he didn't have to. She was always around.

The crazy kid would fall for someone like this. She probably told him how much she admired his playing, how much she admired his big muscles. He refrained from mirroring his disgust as Moad introduced her. One look at the dope's face told him words would be useless.

Nona's black eyes were cold, wary until she decided Happy would say nothing. Then she effused all over the place. "Oh Mr. Hour. I've so admired you and your team. I was just telling Jerry—"

Happy listened for a solid quarter hour before he could break away. He walked beside Moad into the dressing room. "Boy, ain't she wonderful?" breathed Moad. "And just think, she'd go with a lug like me."

Happy checked a snort. "Jeez," he said to Callahan. "I'm worried. I don't dare say anything to the kid. And if he don't snap out of it." He shook his head. "The Eskimos are in town tomorrow night. That so and so would have to get her hooks into him."

"That ain't nice language," Callahan reproved.

"This is serious," Happy growled. "Dammit—"

"I know it is." Callahan sobered instantly. "If the kid plays tomorrow night like he's been playing, Couture'll lay him all over the ice."

Callahan's prediction came true. Couture smashed over, around and through the Bullet. Made him look like the rankest of novices, had him backing up time after time.

Happy groaned, swore and raved.

The red bulb behind the Ranger's cage flashed so often, he thought an epidemic of crimson-colored fireflies had hit the rink.

Once, the Bullet crouched in old-time form. Shifted his stick restlessly as he awaited the onrushing Couture. He's after him, thought Happy exultantly.

"J-e-r-r-i-e." A shrill, feminine scream split the crowd noise. The Bullet turned his head apologetically, attempted to skate Couture into the boards, lost him. Callahan's brilliant save of Couture's hard, low-flying shot didn't help Happy's apoplexy.

Happy shuddered at the final score. Championship team? Hell, he knew of prep-school outfits that could beat this bunch. He backed Moad into a corner of the dressing room and verbally lashed him. "You're afraid of that big bum," he finished scornfully.

Some of the flame returned to the kid's eyes. "I'm not," he denied hotly. "But—"

"But what," Happy prompted.

"Well," Moad said weakly. "Nona doesn't want me getting hurt. She worries. She, I mean we, don't think you have to play that kind of hockey." He waxed eloquent. "Look at Wee Wee. He never gets slammed all over the ice. You don't see him sitting in the box. That's the kind of hockey, I'm going to play. So Nona'll be proud," he finished stoutly.

"Lalonde's small and fast," Happy patiently explained. He's clever enough with his stick, he don't have to smash 'em. He's not hired to smash 'em. You are. Beside," Happy was roaring now. "Who's running this team? Me or—" He sputtered helplessly. "That—that girl?"

"I gotta do something," Happy moaned to Callahan. "Moad's off his nut. A couple more games like the last and we're headed for our old seat around the furnace. I got burned too

much last year," he added plaintively.

THE Rangers dropped another game. Then another. Luckily, the hapless Hawks rose up in wrath and tossed the Eskimos for one. Every time Moad got set for his famous pitch and toss, that thin, shrill voice came, "J-e-r-r-i-e." Every time Happy heard the voice, he jumped. His hands worked convulsively, his face twitched.

"Sounds like she's hired to keep the kid from playing," Callahan said darkly.

"Naw," Happy answered disgustedly. "She's got herself a star athlete. She's gonna see he stays wrapped around her finger. Iceberg, I gotta do something."

Callahan left him sitting slumped on a locker room bench.

Happy blessed the three, open days. If this team didn't collect its wits— He wondered if his plan was working.

During the pre-game warmup with the Cougars, Moad's face was a brown study. He kept watching the crowded seats and shaking his head. His practice sniping was abstract, listless.

"Listen, kid," Happy pleaded earnestly. "Play me a game like you used to. Smash these guys down. We need this one."

"Nona didn't come tonight," Moad muttered. "She's been acting funny lately. All last week—"

Happy shook him roughly. "Will you get in there and play?"

"Oh, sure," Moad answered despondently.

His playing was better. The shrill voice didn't stop him when the action grew toughest. Almost, but not quite the old Bullet. The Rangers eked through by the sweating margin of a goal rifled in by Hamilton late in the last period.

They took a long swing around the circuit. Moad's playing was definitely

better on the road. They even gained a little on the out-in-front Eskimos.

Four home games left. Three of them needed for the championship. Happy wanted the top. He wasn't content with the playoffs now. Two tough ones left with the Eskimos and those babies would count.

Moad came to Happy the afternoon of the opening game. His face was strained, dejected. "Nona gave me the air. She wouldn't say who for. I'm gonna get plastered." He left hurriedly, before Happy could stop him."

Happy spent the afternoon frantically searching bars. No Moad. What a hell of a plan. When he entered the dressing room again, his eyes popped open in amazement. Moad was calmly pulling on his green and white jersey. Happy stared helplessly.

As Moad clumped out to the ice, he paused beside Happy. "You know, Happy," as if he had made a great discovery, "I think I've been a damn fool. When I left you, I didn't really want to get drunk. I got to thinking and I was kinda relieved. Boy, could she cling. Kinda cramped my style." He grinned, embarrassed.

"Where you been all afternoon?" Happy finally gasped.

Moad looked surprised. "Home, sleeping. I want to really go tonight."

THE Bullet ranged far and wide. He made the opposing goalie's life a nightmare. Puck-harriers shrunk from coming down his lane.

"That's the Bullet, all right," a gray-haired veteran reporter nodded in the press box. "For awhile, I was afraid he was just a blank cartridge. Musta been off his feed."

Three games remained. Scattered over two weeks. The next, with the Eskimos, one with the Hawks, finishing up with the Eskimos. All three would look good in the win column.

When the Eskimos skated out, Couture wasn't with them. To all queries, no one learned his whereabouts. Funny, there had been no report of injury. Only Happy seemed unconcerned. "You know something," Callahan accused.

"Who me?" Happy looked surprised. "What're you kicking about? That's a break for us."

Without Couture, the Eskimos hung and missed fire. Ranger wingmen had a difficult time keeping ahead of the Bullet. The home crowd was in ecstasy at the final score, 5 to 2.

No trouble with the Hawks. Right down to the wire, neck and neck, the Rangers and Eskimos. This final game telling the story.

"Couture'll be back tonight," Happy announced to Callahan and grinned. "Last time this year, the kid meets him. Wonder what'll happen."

"You're smirking like you enjoy the thought," Callahan grumbled. "Remember last game?"

The partisan crowd on seat's edge as the game progressed. Couture's beligerant attitude seemed dampened. Twice, he missed his man. His goalie did yeoman work behind him.

"Move over, guys," Happy instructed his reserves. "This guy really oughta have a suit." He made room for the keen-eyed, white-haired man. "Jim, you did it."

"Looks like it," Jim Blake, writer of hockey's most pertinent column, slid into his seat. "Wanted to see the finish from here."

"There! He's away, Happy," as the Bullet soloed down the ice. "At Couture. Now what happens?"

The lightning flick of hips. Blades flashing almost too fast for eyes to follow, the Bullet was across center ice, through the first line. At Couture. Without swerving. Picking up speed.

Couture crouched. A thin, shrill

voice tore out of the crowd bedlam. "T-o-m-m-i-e. Tommie." High, commanding. Couture straightened, poked weakly with his stick. The Bullet was past, rifling one at the nets. It passed the Eskimo goalie before he could move a hand.

Jim Blake looked at Happy, nodded solemnly. "I hope Couture enjoyed his honeymoon. He ain't going to enjoy this."

Happy guffawed in glee. "I couldn't worked it without your help, Jim. I said she'd take a star instead of a green kid. When you told Couture nobody could take Moad's girl, it worked. He would have to outdo the kid and she took him. Look! Moad's through again. Oh, sweet," as Moad passed crisply to Lalonde. "Chalk us up another one, Jim." He slid down on his spine, sighed blissfully. "This is one game I'm gonna enjoy."

It wasn't a hockey game. It was a rout. Four Ranger goals in the first period. Two more in the second. Cyclone Couture was gone. In his place, T-o-m-m-i-e Couture.

Happy relieved Moad in the second period. The Blonde Bullet was bursting with news. "You know where Couture's been? On his honeymoon. He's the guy Nona threw me over for." He stopped, his brows wrinkled. "Gee, I feel kinda sorry—"

Happy straightened hastily. "Sorry? I thought you was glad she was gone. You said she cramped you too much—"

"Oh her," Moad interrupted with a wave of his hand. "I wasn't thinking of her. I was thinking of Couture. It won't be much fun playing against him now. I'm gonna miss all that fun."

Happy thought of all the bumps, the bruises, the high-carried sticks, the elbows this kid had taken from Couture. "Hell's fire," he grunted helplessly, pushing Moad towards the dasher. "Go out and shoot me another goal."

SUBSTITUTE FOR AN ALL-AMERICAN

by COSMO BENNETT

Author of "A Great Man Bats," etc.



He forced himself to greater efforts, the roar of the mob like thunder in his ears!

Shoulders of concrete and arms of steel stood in Roy Waner's path to gridiron glory, and he was substituting for an All-American cannonball!

ROY WANER jammed his helmet on his kinky blond head. The firm line of the sophomore's jaw set grimly. The blue eyes gleamed with the flash of battle. This might be a practice session to others, but to Roy Waner it meant his chance, his crack at what meant so much to him.

Off to one side stood two men wearing sweat shirts over baseball uniforms. Budge Hoffman, Blakely's assistant coach, turned to his superior, Coach Jonas Barton.

"Watch Waner, Chief. He's the kid I was telling you about."

Barton's dark eyes frowned. It didn't seem in the cards that he should hear good news. This was just one of those years. The newspapers, alumni and even the students were saying he had outlived his usefulness. On paper he had great material. But with only two

games to go he was still experimenting.

Now he had mixed up his teams as he practiced Ardale's plays. Team A's backfield lined up behind the B line and the B backfield behind the A line, with a few scrubs added. Roy Waner was one of these scrub backs.

The Ardale reverse was clicking. Once again a swiftly forming wedge smacked into Riggs Talbert. Last year some selector had mentioned Talbert in his All-American guard choices and this year Talbert had needed an oversize head guard.

Once again the interference brushed Talbert aside. But the ball carrier didn't get very far. A blond cannonball flashed into the breach. Shoulders of concrete smacked the carrier. Arms of steel wrapped around the legs. A lift and a charge tossed a very much surprised first string back, Mal Heav-

ing, for a loss.

Heaving smacked the turf, stared up at Waner, and then smiled. "Nice going, kid. I thought a freight train hit me."

Waner felt embarrassed by the praise. "Oh, you shouldn't have gotten as far as you did. If Talbert carried his charge lower he wouldn't be taken out—"

"What's that?"

Waner turned to find Talbert, with cockiness and now anger written all over his dark features, crowding up on him.

"Are you trying to tell *me* how to play *my* position, sophomore? Listen, it's a good thing you are behind me and not trying to carry the ball through me. I'd slap you down."

Waner flushed with anger. He did not like Talbert. Talbert had expected to be elected captain. But he was too unpopular to win that honor. Judging from his play this year, Talbert sulked like Achilles, safe in the knowledge that Blakely had no fit candidate for his position. And Roy Waner had no use for a shirker.

But before Talbert could reply, Coach Barton thrust himself into the knot of players. Sarcasm dripped from his lips. "So we have actually reached the stage where we are passing out challenges. All right, Heaving, swap places with Mister Waner. We want to see how good Mister Talbert is at stopping that play."

Roy Waner felt the hair curl up on the back of his neck. He had worked so hard for this opportunity to show Coach Barton that he had the goods, and now he had probably booted his chances by getting into a jam with Talbert. He went into the opposite backfield aware of sly grins. He had no desire to battle with Talbert. Football meant far more to him than settling a grudge.

He couldn't back out of the assignment, however. He took the ball and he cracked Riggs Talbert on the line of scrimmage. Talbert came forward with a charge and lift that was more like the Talbert of the previous year. Roy Waner was belted hard against the yielding turf.

TALBERT rose with a smirk on his face. Waner shook himself and went back to position. When Waner carried again it was he who charged low, arm out stiff, piano legs pumping in high knee action—and it was Talbert who was knocked flying.

A third time it was the terrible irresistible force meeting the immovable object. Both of them flopped on the line of scrimmage and lay there for a good moment.

Barton's whistle shrilled. "All right. You two go in and cool off. If I had a little more action like that on Saturday we might get somewhere."

Waner and Talbert turned toward the sidelines. All anger had vanished from Waner's makeup. He offered his hand to Talbert, but the latter refused it with a sneer.

"Are you trying to play me for a sucker? I know your game. You hoped to attract attention to yourself by taking advantage of *my* reputation as a player."

Waner burned the color of a sun-roasted brick. "Listen, Talbert," he said, "you're a false alarm, an accident. You're actually such a rotten guard that I could take your job away from you if I wanted to."

Talbert roared and stood and glared at Waner until the latter burned to a crisp.

"You take *my* job away from me? That's the laugh of the week. Wait until I tell that to the gang. You—take my job as guard. Boy, what a pip."

Waner's ears as well as his cheeks

should have been burning, because at the moment he was the subject of discussion.

Budge Hoffman, looking after the well set up figure of the young sophomore, said to the coach, "Chief, how do you like my discovery? Haven't I got something in young Waner?"

"Yes, for next year, perhaps."

"Next year?" exclaimed the assistant.

"Yes. I've got all the backfield stars I need. What I want is linemen. That's always the way it is in football, one year you can't put your finger on a good center and you have a dozen quarterbacks. Next season you haven't a quarterback and you're lousy with centers. This year it's guards. That is why we don't click. What's the matter with our alumni, anyway? We were going to have such great line prospects. MacCusland, Fowler, Bates."

"Yeah," agreed Budge, scratching his head. "MacCusland went to West Point, Fowler—no one knows what became of him, maybe he joined the army—and Bates couldn't pass the Board exams." But he saw that the coach wasn't listening, so Budge fell back on his initial request.

"This Waner kid—I think you ought to give him a chance, Chief. I never saw a kid so eager to be a backfield star."

"Maybe," mused the coach. "He has a football name, anyway. Remember Jim Waner, the great Yale back?"

"Yeah. He wrecked his stock broker firm and committed suicide, didn't he?"

"No he didn't," snapped Barton. "That was the impression when he died. But afterwards it was found that his firm was solvent and that death from pneumonia as a result of overwork was the true verdict. However, that's got nothing to do with us. Take over the squad and give them some forward passing work. Ardale may take to the

air on us Saturday."

The grapevine thrives handsomely on the college campus. It wasn't long before Roy Waner's threat to oust Blakely's only All-American mention from his position began to sweep through the dormitories. Eventually the story came to the coach.

When the squad reported the next day Waner was the object of pointed remarks. The comments were humorous or sarcastic according to whether the man disliked or liked Riggs Talbert. Roy Waner kept his lips tightly compressed as he realized that he had talked too much for his own good.

Out on the field Coach Barton drew him aside. "Waner," he said grimly, "I understand you told Talbert that you could beat him out of his position if you had a mind to."

Waner looked over to where the squad was watching him. They might be out of ear shot, but they had a pretty good idea of what the coach was saying.

"I was a little upset I guess," said Waner somewhat apologetically.

"You wouldn't make that statement unless you had some idea of how the position should be played," snapped the coach.

WANER looked wide eyed at the coach excited by the level gaze. Did the coach suspect? Did he *know*? Waner felt his heart pounding, his temples throbbed, his lips felt dry and he licked them with his tongue.

"I—I played some at school," he gulped. "Filled in—I mean."

"That's what I thought," rasped Barton. His keen eyes ran over the splendid physique of Waner. "You've got the build of a guard. I'm turning you over to the line coach."

"No," protested Waner in alarm. And then as Barton wheeled back to him, his face storming with anger, Waner softened his protest.

"I mean I want to play in the backfield."

"*You* want to? Who is running this squad? Sure, everyone wants to be a back. They want the applause and the headlines—"

"That isn't my reason," insisted Waner.

"I don't care *what* your reason is," cracked Barton. "You're a guard—or nothing."

Waner reported to Debs Feely, the line coach, and did everything Feely asked him to. But Feely had reason not to be satisfied. He had been tipped off by Barton that Waner had protested being shifted to the line. Feely rode Waner, but that didn't help. Waner wasn't lying down. He loved football too much to dog it intentionally. But his heart wasn't in his work. It was *so* important to him to be a back. At least, he thought so.

To make matters worse the word got around that Waner had come out for guard because of his threat to take Talbert's job away from him. Talbert, an All-American—and a rookie was going to take his job. What a laugh.

Talbert and his cronies watched Waner work whenever possible and no attempt was made to guard their criticism. Waner burned inwardly at their jibes, but sometimes he thought there would be greater relish in actually going through with his threat to supplant the Great Talbert. No, he mustn't let his emotions sway him.

Despite the fact that he had not shown enough in his line practice sessions to warrant his transfer from the backfield squad, Waner was placed at guard in scrimmage on the Thursday before the Ardale game.

The teams lined up. Roy Waner lunged through the line—and a back went through his position only to be smacked down by a secondary. On the next play Waner was properly scissored

and another gain was made through his spot.

Riggs Talbert came over and gave him the horse laugh. "And you were the guy who was going to take my job away. Or was it two other fellows?"

Roy Waner bit his lip while inwardly he seethed. How he longed to teach that leering Talbert a lesson. What a humiliation it would be to have a sophomore, and a converted back at that, beat out the man who couldn't forget that he had been named as an All-American.

But Roy Waner caught hold of himself. He must not yield to temptation. He must get back on the backfield squad as soon as possible.

Waner failed to show any better on the offensive than he did on the defensive, and Barton's style of play called for the left guard to come out of the line and lead the interference.

It was because Waner had revealed both speed and hard hitting power that Coach Barton had hoped he had found an answer to his problem.

On Friday the squad eased off for its game with Ardale. At the beginning of the season Blakely figured to take Ardale with ease; but Ardale had shown better football than had been expected by the experts.

In contrast, Blakely's ragged performances to date had the hammers ringing. Because of its backfield strength the Blue had rolled up an impressive score. But other teams rambled over the Blakely goal line as if they had a mortgage on it. Blakely had won three, tied two and lost one. And the two really tough games lay ahead—Ardale and Kenniston.

A COOL, crisp day found Roy Waner in his usual spot—on the bench. Narrowed eyes watched as Blakely won the toss and took the south goal with the wind behind it. Would

Barton relent and stick him in the backfield on the strength of what he had shown earlier in the week and forget all about the guard business? If he could only get in that backfield for five minutes he would show the coach something.

But the breaks went against Blakely immediately. On the first play from scrimmage, Waner saw Talbert fail dismally. On the snap of the ball the Ardale center, playing in the line, hurled himself at the self-satisfied Talbert and flattened him. A secondary came through the hole and cracked Heaving before the Blakely back got a real hold on the ball given to him on a reverse.

The ball plopped free and a swarm of Ardale players fell on the bounding pigskin on Blakely's twenty-six yard line!

Waner had leaped to his feet along with other players on the bench. A man next to Waner exclaimed, "Look at Heaving. What's he got—butter fingers?"

"That wasn't Heaving's fault," exclaimed Waner. "Talbert let the man through—" He checked himself. He saw he was talking to one of Talbert's friends. He sat down and turned his attention to the field. Blakely players stood limp with discouragement, all but the strutting Talbert. Ardale players hopped around joyously over the break and huddled quickly.

They came out of the huddle. Waner saw them shift. He saw an end tense himself. It was on Waner's lips to yell, "Watch for a pass!"

No dice. The ball snapped back. The passer drifted. The ball shot from his hand—and down on the Blakely eight yard line the end leaped up to grab the pumpkin!

Blakely called time. Barton sent in new men—to no avail. On the next play Ardale powered through Talbert's position to send the ball over the goal

line!

Blakely received but failed to get going. Barton made more changes. Talbert came out, but his successor possessed obvious faults. Waner saw Barton's eyes linger on him speculatively, and then pass on to Talbert.

"Okay, Talbert, go back."

A satisfied, almost gloating smile played on Talbert's lips as he ran back to his position. He turned on the heat, crashing through the Ardale line spectacularly even if he usually lunged at open space. The half ended without Blakely scoring.

The team trudged disconsolately into the dressing room—and the sickest man of all was Roy Waner. He was seeing himself in a new light, and the sight was far from pleasant. What a fool he had been.

The returning Blakely team received a cheer that warmed the cockles of Roy Waner's heart and lent power to the purpose that had been forming within him. Who was he to set his personal desires above the welfare of the college? In his heart he had been critical of Riggs Talbert for failing to give his best because he had not been elected captain. Well, was he any better?

The referee's whistle shrilled and the starting elevens ran out onto the field. Riggs Talbert was in the line of blue that raced down under the kick-off. Blakely pressed hard. Blue jerseyed bodies crashed in on the Ardale formations. It seemed that Blakely had at last awakened.

Ardale was forced to kick, and Petersen, lanky Blakely end, all but blocked the kick. Waner watched the Blakely machine function with a smoothness that ironed out some of the wrinkles on Coach Barton's leathery face. And then the machine missed fire.

Ardale had been hitting Talbert hard. Waner had been watching the guard on every play. Everything that

was legitimate had been tossed at him. Whether the play went through Talbert's position or not a husky Ardale forward or two smacked him and smacked him hard. Well, it's strategy to find a weak spot and then work on it.

ROY WANER saw the wrinkles return to Barton's face. He saw the coach look over the bench. Waner got up and crossed to the coach.

"Coach, I'd like to go in—as guard."

"Guard?" questioned Barton frowning. "On what you showed this week?"

"I didn't show you my best," confessed Roy. "I can play guard. I am Roy Fowler."

"Fowler?" repeated the amazed coach. "You mean you're the All-Inter-scholastic guard who never showed up here?"

"I've been here. You see, I wanted to play in the backfield—"

"Oh, you wanted to play in the backfield," repeated the coach through clenched teeth. "So, all the time we have been needing linesmen you've been masquerading under a phony name. And you had to take the name of a great back at that. All right, Mister Roy Waner-Fowler, I'm sending you in—into the club house. Take off your uniform."

Waner stared incredulously. "But you don't understand. I'm sure I can plug up that hole on the defensive and lead the interference as running guard."

Muscles rippled in the coach's lean jaws. "Sure, you'd like to make headlines. Well, not on my team. I'm fed up on you glory grabbers and grandstanders. Go on. Into the club house before I lose my temper."

Ray Waner turned and left for the club house with head down. Across the way Ardale fans were cheering another Ardale drive.

If the coach would only let him explain. Sure, he had been wrong. But

not for the reasons the coach implied. He wasn't seeking glory. Not for himself, anyway.

Blakely was beaten 37 to 7. It was the worst slaughtering in the history of the oldest Blakely grad. Under-graduates and alumni went scalp hunting. If Ardale could beat Blakely by such a score, what would Kenniston do on the following Saturday?

Abuse and criticism rained down on the luckless head of Coach Barton. But the hungry hammer wielders wanted to swing at some player too.

Someone remembered that Roy Waner had been kicked off the bench and sent to the club house. A sub with alert ears had tuned in on the bawling out. It seemed that Waner wasn't Waner at all. He was the famous Roy Fowler. But he didn't want to play in the line. He wanted to be a half back or nothing.

Roy Waner heard the whisperings and saw the dark looks sent his way in class and on the campus walks as he traveled alone. But the line of his jaw set grimly. He wasn't the first man to be condemned without a hearing.

The Blakely squad went about their preparation for the season's objective game with Kenniston like so many men in the death house awaiting the day of execution. Roy Waner did not even attend practice.

A cool, crisp November afternoon found the Blakely Stadium filled with fans who never missed this annual classic. Gloom, or at best, a forlorn hope, shrouded one side of the stadium while across the way floated the confident orange pennants of Kenniston.

THE two starting elevens took their positions. A hush settled over the thousands leaning forward. A shrill whistle shattered the stillness. The long line of blue moved forward.

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Blakely squad a uniformed figure appeared. He squeezed himself into the rear row of subs. Startled faces stared at him, and then turned toward the field.

A wave of Orange moved up on the scattered Blakely players. A crescendo yell rose from across the way as the ball carrier fought through blue arms and finally reached the thirty-eight yard line on a great run back.

Roy Waner, sitting unnoticed in the back row of subs, saw Kenniston come out of a huddle. He studied the positions of each man. He saw the reverse unroll. He watched as the ball carrier cut sharply into the line. And where Talbert should have been blocking the way there was a yawning gap.

The ball carrier shot through, cut back, swerved and wiggled his way for twelve yards to midfield.

Orange players leaped off the ground smartly. Kenniston was keyed up. This was their day. Nothing could stop them. Perfectly executed running plays ripped the blue line. First down piled up on first down and Kenniston went over in less than five minutes of play.

Blakely received but the Orange wave engulfed the running attack. Blakely had to kick. Waner saw Kenniston take the ball on its forty, run back the kick twenty yards and then power over again for a second score.

On the goal line play time was taken out and Talbert limped off the field. Maybe it was one of those leg injuries that are cured by the final whistle.

Killion went in, and did a fair defensive job when Kenniston took over the ball again, which was soon enough. But at the turn of the quarter the orange tornado blasted over for its third score.

Trailing by three touchdowns, Blakely made an effort to get going again, but once more failed to get as much as a first down. Heaving got off a good kick and a diving tackle by Peterson pinned the receiver on the Kenniston thirty-

three.

On the next play, a power buck through the weak side buried Killion. Blakely took time out again. Coach Barton looked around for a replacement. Roy Waner came out of his place on the top tier and descended to the coach. Barton glared at him.

"I thought I told you to take off your uniform."

Waner answered calmly: "That was last Saturday."

Barton stared at his man. Waner stared back.

Barton was the first to waver. "You must have had some reason for concealing your identity," he said.

"I had a very good reason."

"Never mind it now," snapped the coach. "I'm ready to play a hunch. Go in for Killion."

Waner raced out onto the field and the referee's whistle blew. Waner reported. Killion went out. The Blakely players stared at Waner.

Waner went into his spot in the line and went down on one knee. Kenniston came out of the huddle and shifted to the right. Waner found himself confronted by a pair of guards. He sensed that they were going to try to scissers him. Waner watched the ball out of the corner of his eye.

AS the ball left the center's fingers Waner shot forward. He hit one startled guard and lifted him out of position. Using his large hands legitimately, Waner banged the other man aside.

Behind the line Kenniston's effective reverse was forming. A streak of blue broke in on it. A pair of arms encircled the ball carrier about the knees and crashed him for a five yard loss. The Blakely fans had their first chance to cheer, and they really yelled.

Again Kenniston huddled. The Orange came out. Watching closely,

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Waner saw Felton unconsciously pick the dirt from the cleats on his right shoe. Yet he wasn't in punt formation. A quick kick? Waner took a deep breath and felt he had called the play.

The ball shot back from the center. But something else shot along with it. That same streak of blue that had been in the backfield a moment before. Felton backed up for his quick kick. The ball pumped off his foot, but a wall of blue loomed up in front of him.

Waner felt the ball bounce off his chest. His charge carried him forward. As his feet hit the turf he looked up and saw the ball dropping in front of him. Waner lunged. His outstretched hands grabbed up the pigskin.

Felton took a shot at him. Waner spun around, recovered balance and got under way. A Kenniston back gave chase, but Waner pivoted. He shot off at a tangent and threw off pursuit. Then he straightened out. Fresh into the game, his winged feet gained speed, and he breezed over for a score.

The half ended a few seconds later. And the teams went off the field with Kenniston leading 19 to 7.

And the Kenniston rooters could discount that Blakely touchdown. It had been scored on a fluke. Fluke? Well, maybe.

Coach Barton didn't think so as he faced the group of tired players in the dressingroom.

"I was going to give you a fight talk," he said. "I intended to flay you alive in the hope I might put some pep into you. I've changed my mind. Maybe that touchdown we got looked like an accident. Maybe we were lucky. But that's football. The breaks are there if you keep your eyes open. We can still win this game."

The second half started with Roy Waner still in at left guard. With Waner leading the attack, Blakely began to roll off sizeable gains. Kenniston

forgot that lopsided score they were going to pile up. Instead, the Orange played strictly defensive ball.

Blakely kept driving the Orange back, but it was not until the closing minutes of the third quarter that they had Kenniston in the shadow of its goal as the result of a coffin corner kick.

With the ball on the six yard line, Felton went back in the end zone to punt out of danger. The Orange line stiffened. Roy Waner tensed. Carefully his blue eyes sought a weak spot in that orange line.

Roy glared at a guard. The ball snapped, but even as it left the center's fingers Waner swerved and went in over the center. A back took a shot at him, but he wheeled aside. An up-flung arm hurled itself in the path of the kick. The ball bounded off the flat of his hand.

A roar went up from the frenzied fans as the loose ball bobbed around the end zone. It seemed as if a dozen bodies lunged for the oval. But when the referee unpeeled the players it was Roy Waner resting on the ball!

BEFORE a cheering mob of aroused Blakely fans, Heaving kicked the extra point to make the score Kenniston 19, Blakely 14. There was less than a touchdown difference between the teams in a game that was expected to be one-sided.

Kenniston received as the final quarter began. With shadows creeping over the gridiron, the Orange tried desperately to smother the ball. Long boots helped by the wind compensated for the Blakely drives that powered over tackles with Roy Waner swinging out of the line to lead the interference.

Repeatedly Judson called his power plays. Time after time the tired Roy Waner came out to lead the attack. The average fan saw Heaving or Melton roll over the Orange for sizable gains. But your expert fan knew that Roy

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Waner battered down the defenses.

Roy Waner provided the artillery that blasted the holes in the enemy line. The backs, one of which Roy Waner had hoped to be, made the gains.

Down by the Ardale goal line, the Orange took time out again. And when play started again the Orange changed its style of play. Tip Condon, the Kenniston coach, decided that the best defense was a good offense.

Kenniston suddenly opened up with its first quarter scoring plays. An unexpected lateral swept the Blakely right end for a fifteen yard gain. A line play failed, but then the lateral was reversed and a swing around the Blakely left end went for seventeen more.

Blakely took time out. And now the Kenniston cheer leaders had a chance to pull out some real Kenniston yells.

The whistle shrilled and the two teams came back into position. Only a minute or two of play remained. And Kenniston had the upper hand. Attention was focused on the ends. Roy Waner, crouching in the cleat-torn turf saw where attention was directed by his mates. And suddenly the blood rushed hotly through his veins. He had an idea.

As the Kenniston quarterback chirped his signals, Waner seemed tensed to swing out to back up his left end. But out of the corner of his eye he watched the fingers of the Kenniston center on the ball.

Even as those fingers tightened and the ball moved, Roy Waner sprang like a coiled spring. He shot straight through the line into the Kenniston backfield. The ball snapped back into the quarterback's waiting hands. Ahead of him moved the tail back, ready to take a lateral. Twenty yards away from him was pay dirt in the Blakely end zone. But even a gain of three yards would give him a first down and a new series of downs. And before those downs could be run off the game would be over

and Kenniston would win.

All the tail back needed to do was grab the ball. But even as he reached back for the lateral a pair of blue clad arms sprang high into the air. Large hands clasped about the pigskin.

The hands came down with the ball—and without breaking stride, Roy Waner leaped away on an interception.

A sudden silence stilled the wondering spectators. And then from the Blakely side came a roar of joy. A Blakely man had the ball. A clear field deep in shadows stretched ahead of him.

Cleated boots pounded behind Roy Waner. He glanced over his shoulder. Desperate Kenniston men were in pursuit. Waner drew deep of the November air. He gritted his teeth. He wasn't good enough for a halfback. He was only a running guard. Well, he'd show them some running.

MEN fresh into the game were on his heels. Legs that were tired from incessant blocking lifted and fell. Every muscle strained. His helmet fell over his staring eyes and he yanked it off.

The midfield stripe passed under his striding legs. The pounding feet sounded closer. He forced himself to greater efforts. The roar of the mob was like the thunder of surf in his ears. Forty yards to go, thirty, twenty—

Something hit him from behind. He staggered, recovered and stumbled on. Another crashing body smacked him about the hips. Again he staggered. Ten yards to go. A smashing blow on his back. Arms and dead weight dragging him down. Arms about his right leg. He pulled, staggered. Five yards. He flung himself forward—and dropped across the line.

Blakely 20, Kenniston 19. Roy Waner smiled, and closed his eyes.

Inside the clubhouse, Roy Waner's jubilant teammates finally gave him a

respite. Riggs Talbert came over and held out his hand.

"I was going to apologize," he said. "But instead I want to offer you my thanks. You taught me a lesson, before it was too late."

Waner took the hand and grinned. "I guess I taught myself a lesson. I wanted to be a halfback or I wouldn't play. Maybe that is what football is for—to teach us lessons." He turned and found Coach Barton smiling down at him.

"I'm glad you two got the right slant," he said. "And I'm glad my hunch on you was right, Waner. Maybe now you'll tell me why you took an assumed name."

Waner looked away soberly. "Waner is my real name," he said. "Or it was. An uncle brought me up and I took his name. My father was Jim Waner."

"Waner of Yale?" exclaimed the coach. "Why, Budge Hoffman and I were only discussing him last week."

"And I bet," said Waner, "you said my father committed suicide."

"No, I told Budge that there was a retraction of that story—"

"Sure. But people forget the retractions. They remember only the false original story. Now you know why I wanted to be a back. I wanted to get publicity. I wanted people to know whose son I was. And then they would remember my father, and remember the truth."

Barton rubbed his chin. "You wanted publicity," he mused. "As a back. Listen, son, all over the country today halfbacks scored touchdowns. But are the papers going to play them up, or are they going to play up the upset game where *all* the touchdowns were scored by a guard?"

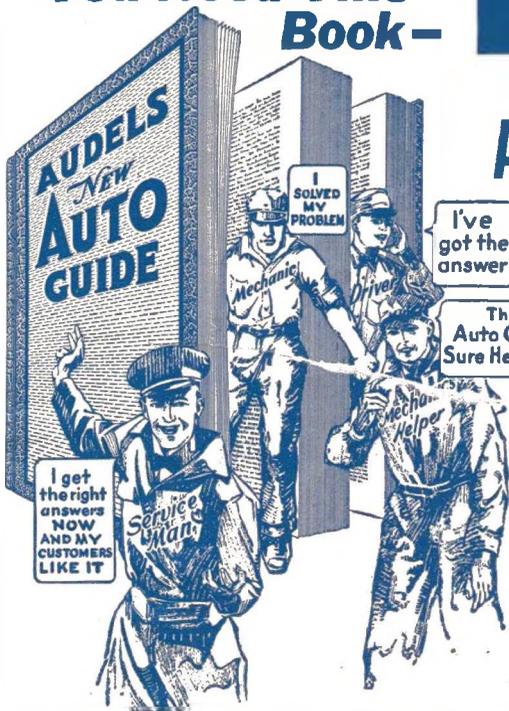
Waner's eyes widened. "Gee, that's right. I did score all the touchdowns."

"And son," grinned the coach, "that's something. If you don't think so, read tomorrow's papers."

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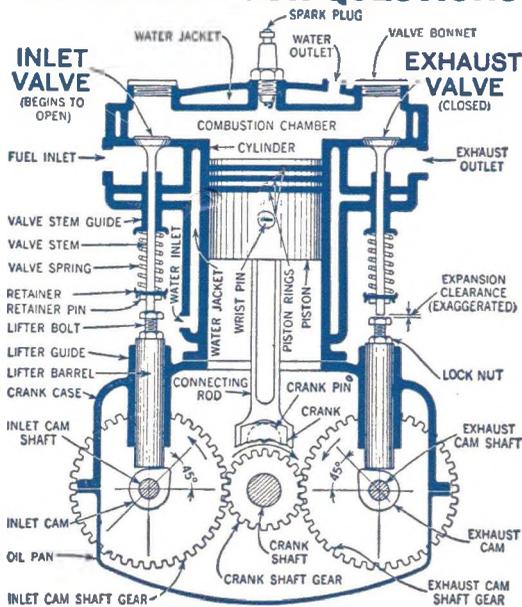
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