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DIME SPORTS
MAGAZINE

Vol. 14

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A. H. NORTON, Editor

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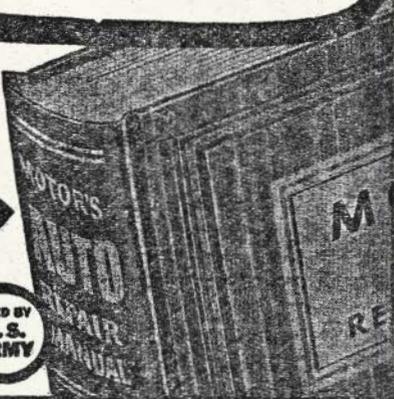
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THE SCORE BOARD

BEHIND FISTIC HEADLINES

TOM SHARKEY walked toward Jim Corbett. They were on the stage of a theatre in Jim's home town, San Francisco. Jim had returned in triumph, the new champion of the world and the folks were to see him against rough, tough Tom Sharkey, who had first made a big record in the Navy and then knocked out his first eight opponents in the professional ring.

Tom was standing straight up, a pose that amused Jim. Most of his ring foes tried to crouch or go into a turtle-shell defense against the slashing Corbett left and the murderous Corbett right.

Sharkey led with a left and a right to the head. Corbett easily swayed out of range, then let go five lefts. They all landed. Sharkey's left eye was cut and bleeding in the first flurry of blows. The crowd laughed and roared for Jim.

Sharkey walked in again, swung eight straight punches without a return or landing any. Corbett let go a right to the mouth. It staggered Tom.

He walked in again, straight up. Corbett put both hands on his hips and swayed away from the punches. Tom leaned forward to reach him but Jim straightened him with two right uppercuts, both swung from his hip.

At the next round, Tom walked over to Corbett and let go a right. Corbett, without seeming to watch the punch at all, ducked it and pivoted toward Tom, landing his right with a hard, pivoted slap. The backhand punch was legal in those days.

Tom was knocked halfway across the ring, but walked in again, pumping his

straight-armed punches at the head. The crowd was a bedlam of clamoring men, expressing their derision for this dub. Corbett was having fun, too. The bell came again, and Tom walked back to his corner, his face a bloody mask.

At the bell Tom rushed across the ring. He got close to Corbett, too close for bobbing or weaving. Corbett hooked his left to the body to drive Tom back but Tom would not go back. Windmill style, he swarmed all over Corbett. He locked Corbett's arms in clinches, wrestled his own arms free and let Corbett work on his midsection, while he landed showers of terrific hooks to the head.

Tom was not supposed to do that. This was to be a Corbett show and the referee tried to help Corbett by pushing Tom back. Tom pinioned Corbett in a corner on the tightly strung ropes and held him there.

Round four came up and Sharkey walked in to meet Corbett who turned loose a couple of lefts, then stepped aside to avoid being caught in a corner. Tom stepped with him, walked through the lefts and got in close. No one could understand how Tom could see Jim through his puffed and bleeding eyes, let alone hit him, but Tom got his head on Jim's chest and kept it there. No matter which way Jim moved, Tom moved with him. The bell ended the fight, with Corbett a badly tired and beaten man.

Sports writers have spent years alibiing Corbett for that fight. Jim had eaten a heavy dinner and drunk two

(Continued on page 67)



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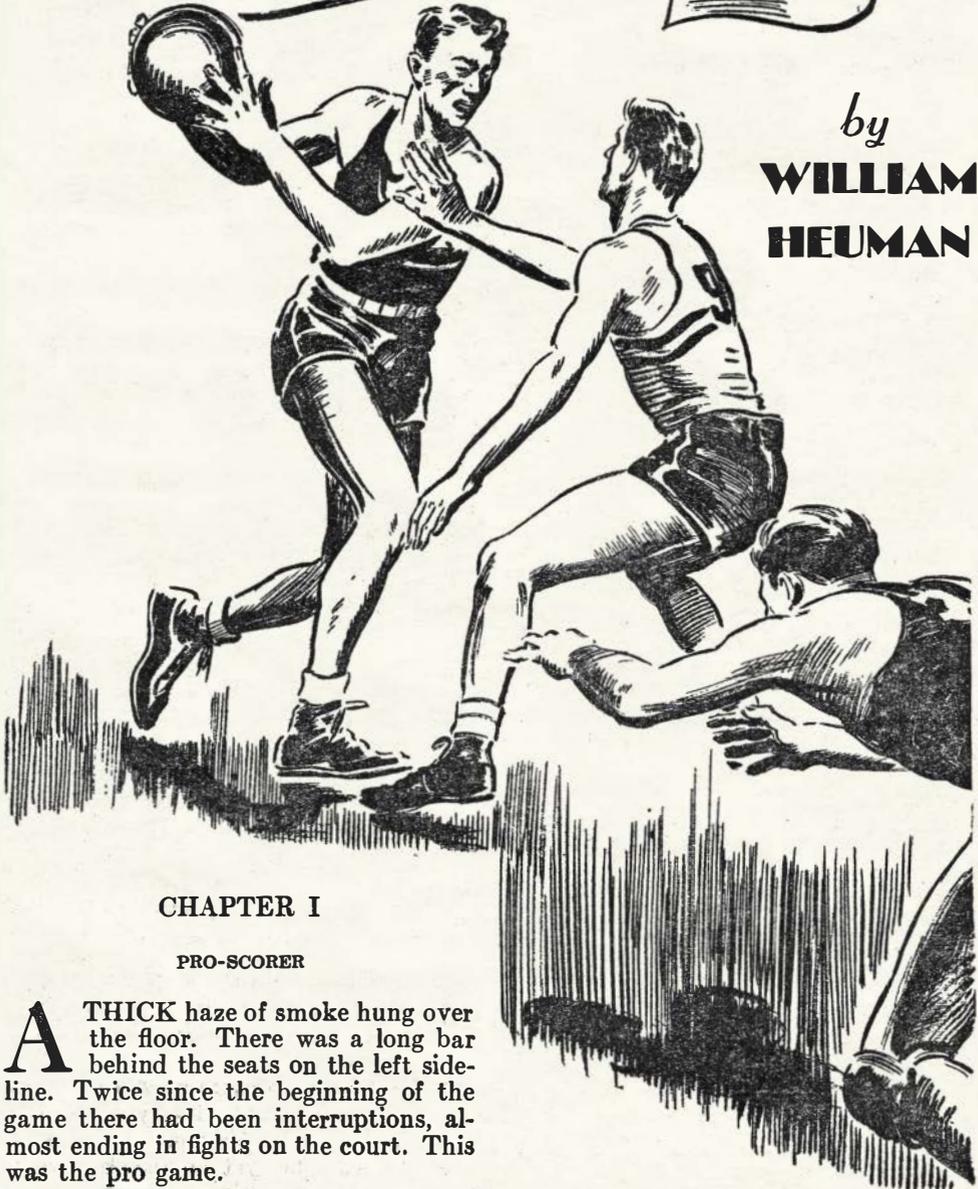
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HARD WOOD HURRICANE

by
**WILLIAM
HEUMAN**



CHAPTER I

PRO-SCORER

A THICK haze of smoke hung over the floor. There was a long bar behind the seats on the left sideline. Twice since the beginning of the game there had been interruptions, almost ending in fights on the court. This was the pro game.

Grimly he went out for that last bitter court battle—the basket wizard who could do everything—except make his team believe in him!

Tip Harrigan, Bulldog captain and right guard, moved down the left alley, ignoring the man falling back in front of him. The Bulldogs had the ball, crisscrossing it as they moved up. Pete McGill, Bulldog center, moved in to the bucket outside the foul lane.

Tip watched him out of the corner of his eyes. Ike Slater, sturdy Bulldog forward, shot the ball down the middle to McGill without looking at him.

The dark-haired Bulldog captain went into action. He feinted to the left and then streaked around the right side of the blond-haired man guarding him. He had two steps on his man when he passed McGill.

Big Pete grinned and handed him the ball. Tip heard the roar from the packed seats. They needed this basket—these two points. He went up high, reaching beyond the blond Triangle's hands.

The ball touched the backboard lightly and then fell through the net. It was thirty-three to thirty-one for the Bulldogs. They had three minutes in the second half.

He was having one of his good nights and he had to be stopped.



The whistle shrieked and the Triangles from Midtown called for time. Tip walked back with the rest of the Bulldog crew. McGill slapped his back. He was over thirty—the oldest man on the squad.

Tip looked at them quizzically. None of them were kids. Every man on the team had been playing the pro game longer than he, yet he was the captain and they were using his system!

"We got 'em," Slater growled. "These monkeys won't score a point from now on!"

Tip grinned. He looked at the others—Tommy Brigham, his own chum from the steel mill, Snipe Craddock, swift-footed forward, McGill of the lantern jaw.

"Don't let them pull you out," Tip said. "They'll throw it away quick enough."

He heard the song then from up on the top row. About twenty of the boys from the mill were ranged along the bench. They were out to all the games and they backed him with their money and their enthusiasm.

"H-a-double r-i-g-a-n—

*Spells Harrigan!
Proud of all the Irish blood that's
in him—"*

The crowd laughed and Tip reddened. They liked him. He played his game and he was usually high scorer of the night. Sam Wellman, the Bulldog manager, paid him ten dollars a game. It helped out at home. He was able to purchase that English Correspondence Course and at the same time keep his young brother in high school.

The whistle blew again and the Bulldogs dropped back toward their own basket. The pro season was just getting under way and they needed every game to keep in the running.

Tip dropped back to the guard position beneath the basket. He watched the three men in front of him fan out and shift back and forth across the center of the court. It was smooth, and a thrill of pride swept through him. That shifting first line of the zone was something he'd worked out himself.

Sam Wellman had recognized talent and had wisely stepped aside. Wellman had been coach as well as manager until Tip signed up and made a few casual remarks.

"Where'd you learn this stuff, kid?" the rotund, bald-headed man asked.

"I've been playing a long while," Tip grinned, "since I was ten. We had a peach basket rigged up in the back yard. I read books after a while. I had three years of high school basketball."

He didn't tell Wellman what a disap-

pointment it had been when he had to quit school in the last year and take the job in the mill. He wanted to go on to college but Pop Harrigan had taken sick and he had to become a breadwinner.

"I never liked the zone," Wellman told him, "but this is something different."

"We could try it out," Tip said. He'd been with the Bulldogs for six games then and they knew he had the stuff. He had taken his initial batterings in the league games and he'd given as much as he took. He didn't complain and the Bulldogs accepted him.

The zone defense was an innovation. Tip had worked it in high school when the coach wasn't around. You moved the first line. In the old zone the five men were stationary. They shifted, covering their own particular sections of the defense territory, but it wasn't enough. There were too many weaknesses in the old zone.

The shifting front line was confusing. It didn't look like a zone with the three front men moving back and forth across the center line, picking up men and leaving them as they went through to backcourt.

"These guys don't know they're workin' against a zone," Wellman said in delight after the first Bulldog victory with the new system. The players looked upon the younger man with new respect. In four years, working the shifting zone, the Bulldogs had grabbed first place two years and finished second the other two.

THE TRIANGLES were moving upcourt, the ball zipping back and forth. The Triangles were a smooth outfit. They knew about the shifting zone but were unable to work anything against it.

Tip Harrigan watched the ball and he kept his eyes on the tall Triangle center coming down toward him. The Triangles had a few minutes to tie up the score, and they wanted this game.

Up front, McGill, Brigham and Slater drifted back and forth following men and letting them go by. The Triangles never knew where those three front-line men were going to be. Quite suddenly, they'd bob up in front of a pass and it would be Bulldog's ball.

The Triangle forward feinted and tried to dribble through. McGill made him cut back and then pass hastily. Tip saw the ball coming down toward the Triangle center cutting in from the left. He darted in front of the man and picked the ball out of the air.

Slater yelled suddenly from up front and streaked down the sideline. Tip bounced once and then looped the ball downcourt. Slater took it over his shoulder like a football forward pass, dribbled like a fiend for the basket and made the score. It put the game on ice.

Two minutes later the gray-eyed Tip Harrigan led his men from the court. The Triangles followed, grim-faced. Both teams dressed in the same room—a large warm basement room beneath the building. The Bulldogs, the home team, used one end, and the visitors the other.

"They ain't feelin' good," McGill said quietly as he followed Tip down the stairs.

Tip shook his head. The game had been characterized by the usual pushing and pulling, and plenty of rough stuff. The referee was lenient because the crowd liked a little roughness and disliked the constant blowing of the whistle.

Ike Slater and Tommy Brigham stamped down the stairs behind Tip and McGill. Slater was grinning broadly. There was going to be a fight. It would not be the first fight held in the Bulldog dressing room. This thing had been building up since the first five minutes of the game when Slater had been slammed up into the bleacher seats after a drive at the basket.

"They're askin' for it," Slater chuckled. "I'm takin' Joe Barelli."

The players walked toward the lockers at the end of the long room. Sam Wellman hustled down, slapping men on the back. Wellman wasn't aware of the impending fight.

Brigham got Tip in a corner. The Bulldog guard had gotten Tip in with the team. They'd worked side by side in the local steel mill and Brigham suggested he try out for the town basketball team.

"Why don't you clear out, kid?" he whispered. "This ain't your fight."

Tip Harrigan grinned. He didn't have

any quarrels with the Triangle players. He never indulged in the roughness on the court, and other teams respected him for it.

"We got enough men here to handle 'em," Brigham urged.

"It's my team," Tip pointed out.

Barelli, of the Triangles, threw the first punch. Passing Ike Slater on his way to the shower room, he made a remark.

Slater looked at Tommy Brigham across the room. Pete McGill carefully stowed away his new leather bag into the locker and straightened up.

Tip Harrigan grimaced. Sam Wellman caught on immediately. The manager stared at the Triangle players coming up from the other end of the room and yelled, "No fightin'." Then he made a break for the stairs.

Tip heard Slater speak, but he didn't catch the words. Barelli shot a punch for the short man's jaw. Slater went under it and smashed Barelli in the body.

The eight Triangles raced up and the fight was on. Tip found himself beside Tommy Brigham. He took a punch to the head and then got in close to Dick Hammond, the Triangle guard. Hammond was grinning broadly.

Up at the top of the stairs Wellman was bellowing for the police. Barelli and Slater were on the floor rolling frantically. Hammond threw a punch for Tip's jaw and then Tip hit him in the stomach. Hammond gasped as he staggered away.

"Give it to 'em!" Pete McGill roared as he locked with the Triangle pivot man.

Tip pulled one of the Triangles off Snipe Craddock. Another man jumped him from behind and he went down.

Three blue-coated officers were piling down the stairs, night sticks in hand.

"Police!" Ike Slater yelled and the fight was suddenly over.

The Triangles retreated to their end of the room and the blue-coats remained in the dressing room till the Triangles dressed and left with their bags.

WELLMAN came down the stairs and puffed toward Tip Harrigan and Tommy Brigham who were resting on the bench. "Feller named

Brewster to see you," he said. "Says he's from the mill."

Tip looked at Tommy Brigham. They didn't know anyone named Brewster in the shop. Brigham suddenly straightened up.

"J. T.!" he gasped.

Tip Harrigan's eyes widened. Brewster was the head of the mill in which they worked. They'd seen his picture and heard his name mentioned—the fabulous Brewsters of Rhode Island.

"The boss was in for an inspection today," Brigham mumbled. "He may have decided to stay tonight for the game."

Tip dumped his uniform and sneakers into the bag and made for the stairs. If it was really J. T. Brewster waiting to see him, what was his reason?

The hall was nearly deserted, but there was a crowd over near the bar. Tip saw two men sitting on the first row of the bleacher seats. One of them motioned to him.

Tip gulped. It was really J. T. Brewster, tanned from his recent Florida trip. The Bulldog captain walked toward them slowly.

Mr. Brewster grinned. The gentleman with him chewed on a cigar and watched Tip closely.

"Harrigan," Brewster said. "I'm glad to know we have a basketball player in the mill."

Tip nodded. "Brigham is with me in the mill," he said. "There are some pretty good players—"

Brewster waved a hand. "I was asking Wellman about you. He says that shifting zone is your idea."

Tip stared. He didn't think the head of a steel mill would know anything about shifting zones on a basketball court.

"I worked it out," Tip said, "with the help of the Bulldogs. They're experienced players."

J. T. Brewster nodded. "You know the game pretty well," he said quietly. "Like to coach men?"

Tip smiled. "I've made a study of basketball," he admitted. "I guess I know it pretty well."

The second man spoke up for the first time. "That shifting zone," he said,

"is the sweetest thing I've seen on the basketball court."

Tip Harrigan flushed with pride. J. T. Brewster queried him more about himself. Tip answered frankly.

"I wanted to enter college," he explained, "but other things came up. There are a few courses I want to take up—engineering, drafting. I figure I can go higher than a mill hand."

J. T. Brewster studied him leisurely. "I'm on the athletic board of Wharton College," he said quietly. "Wharton's my school. We've just lost our basketball coach. Do you think you could teach the boys that shifting zone?"

Tip stared at the two men.

"You could probably swing in a few courses on the side," Brewster told him, "if you wanted to. Wharton has an excellent engineering course. I took it myself."

"There are special night classes now," Brewster's friend stated.

Tip Harrigan found his voice. "You mean I'm to coach a college team?" he asked.

"That's it," Brewster grinned. "Report Friday if you like it. I'll arrange for your discharge from the mill."

"I'll be there," Tip swallowed, "with bells on."

"Leave the bells behind," the man with the cigar grinned. "Wharton has had some pretty good basketball squads. They take the game seriously and they expect to have a winning team."

Tip walked home in a daze. He didn't even know where Wharton College was; there was no mention of a salary. The details were very vague. Mr. Brewster had insisted upon one thing. Tip had to play on the side with the Brewster "Specials."

"The Specials?" Tip asked curiously. "How do I get in there?"

Brewster himself explained that one. The "Specials" were a pro five he'd organized. They advertised his "Special" breakfast food. J. T. was proud of his team.

"You'll fit in well," he told Tip, "and there'll be plenty of time for it. The Specials play one night a week in the Eastern League; there's twenty-five dollars a night extra for you besides your

salary as basketball coach at Wharton."

"I'd like to play," Tip said. He was still young enough for active playing and the Specials played a high brand of pro basketball. He'd seen accounts of their games in the papers but didn't know they were owned by J. T. Brewster.

"When you come to Wharton," J. T. Brewster told him, "see Mr. Aldridge. He'll arrange everything. I'll wire him that you're coming."

CHAPTER II

KNOCK 'EM DEAD

TIP'S kid brother, Eddie, located the school from a directory. It was in Rhode Island. Tip could reach it with the jalopy in about seven hours.

"Must be a swanky town," Eddie grinned. The other members of the Harrigan family gathered around.

"You'll need clothes," his mother told him.

"Don't worry about a thing," Tip grinned. "I'll take care of myself after I get settled."

"It'll be good to get out of the mill, John," Mr. Harrigan said quietly. "I never wanted you there to begin with." The father was able to get around but he couldn't go back to work. The small pension he received wasn't enough to support the family.

Tip left on Friday morning. The jalopy had a trunk in the back and he piled his bags into it. The fenders were painted orange. He'd started to do a paint job on them, but had never been able to finish. The car rattled and banged as it swerved into the main highway, but the motor was good and Tip knew it wouldn't break down.

Sam Wellman and the Bulldogs were sorry to see him go.

"It's an advancement," Wellman said, "and we're glad to see you get a break, kid. Make good."

"We'll watch your name in the Special lineup," Tommy Bringham laughed. "Knock 'em dead, Tip."

The jalopy rolled into the college town of Selby at three o'clock in the after-

noon. Tip Harrigan's mouth opened. There were tall, old elms on either side of the main avenue; beautiful dormitories of field-stone brick were set back well off the road. He passed the school buildings up on the slopes with green lawns running down to the street. It was as Eddie Harrigan said—swank!

Two students came down the walk and one of them pointed to the jalopy rattling along the right side of the road. Tip Harrigan was conscious of it for the first time. The jalopy had had plenty of like company in the mill town but it was out of place in Selby.

There were cars parked along the curbs here and there. They were of the latest makes, sleek, shining with chromium. The orange-painted fenders on the jalopy stood out in brilliant contrast. Mentally, Tip resolved to paint them immediately. Later, if things worked out all right, he could swap the old tub for a later job.

He slowed down so he could see as much of the school grounds as possible, without running into another car. He was coming to the main part of town.

Tip saw the maroon roadster suddenly swing out into the road from the curb. Frantically he tried to turn the jalopy away from it.

There was a grinding sound as his front bumper grated against the polished fender of the roadster. Breathing heavily, Tip sat back against the seat. He had been moving slowly or he would have hit the roadster head on.

A sleek blond-haired kid hopped from the roadster and came toward him. Tip saw the girl in the seat. Already a grinning crowd started to gather. A group of students came out of a nearby ice-cream parlor and stood on the curb. They grinned at the jalopy and Tip Harrigan bit his lips.

"Can't you see?" the boy snarled. He was about nineteen, with light blue eyes, a fine chiseled face, and a spoiled mouth.

Tip looked at the crowd. He didn't want any trouble with the student body the first day at Wharton. His own car wasn't injured, and it wouldn't cost more than a few dollars to take out the scratches and the dent in the fender of the other car.

"I was coming slow," Tip said softly. "You pulled out pretty fast."

The boy's eyes swept the crowd. The girl with him had stuck her head out the window and she was listening in. He spoke loudly so the crowd could hear him.

"They ought to run these junk boxes off the road," he sneered. "They're a menace."

The boys on the curb laughed and the girl in the car giggled.

Tip Harrigan took a deep breath. The boy was a typical spoiled college kid. His father had given him an education and an up-to-the-minute car to go with it. He never had had to work in his life; he'd never had a worry.

A policeman pushed his way through the circle and looked at the damage.

"It ain't much," he told the kid from the roadster.

The boy laughed coldly. "I'm not making any charges," he said. "He probably hasn't got a dime."

"You forget," Tip snapped, "it was your fault." Anger was flaring up inside of him. He wanted to get out and knock the boy down but he checked himself. Already he was creating a bad impression among the students.

"Let's drive along," the officer said softly. "The kid's up in the air. I don't want to have to make an arrest."

Tip turned the key and started the motor. The kid walked back to his own roadster. He was explaining himself to the girl friend as Tip rolled the jalopy past. It was a bad beginning.

He located the gymnasium and found Mr. Aldridge after a few minutes' search.

"You look kind of young," the director told him, "but I guess if Mr. Brewster thinks you're all right, it'll have to go with us."

"Is Mr. Brewster a basketball fan?" Tip asked.

Mr. Aldridge, small and dapper, with a bald head, nodded. "His kid is the star here," he acknowledged. "J. T. sees all the games." He picked up a pad from the desk. "There's a phone call for you, Mr. Harrigan." He gave Tip the number: "This gentleman's been after you all morning."

Tip made the call from another phone

in the office. It was from Chuck Brennan, coach of the Brewster Specials.

"We've been waiting for you, Harrigan," Brennan said over the phone. "One of my boys turned up with a sprained ankle. Can you get down tomorrow night for the game?"

Tip blinked. "Sure," he said. It was rushing things. He had no room and he hadn't seen his team at the school.

"Get around about eight o'clock," Brennan said. "At Conway Hall in town."

"Okay," Tip told him. He hung up the receiver. Aldridge was looking out the window at the jalopy parked near the building.

"Yours?" he asked with a grin.

Tip Harrigan nodded grimly. "So what?"

Aldridge opened his mouth and then shut it again. "I didn't mean anything, Harrigan," he said quietly. "I'm sorry."

Tip smiled. Aldridge was all right.

He learned where his quarters were to be; he got the facts and figures on the Wharton College basketball team. Wharton took basketball seriously. It was a small, moneyed school and most of the boys were from the swank prep schools. They'd had a good season last year and they expected a better one this year. The first game would be in a week against Carlton Teachers.

Tip unpacked his stuff and then parked the jalopy in the corner of a parking lot at the end of town. He took a look at the big gym, had his supper and went to bed. Wharton College was high class. He was beginning to get a little worried.

HE WAS on the court with the Specials when they took the floor at nine o'clock the next night. Tip stared at the crowd. Selby was rather a small town and he hadn't expected anything like this. They had come in from all the small towns in the vicinity. The Specials had the tough Trojans on the schedule and the Trojans were third place in the league.

"We'd like to knock these guys off," Chuck Brennan said in the dressing room. The Special coach was a big man with a square jaw and hard blue eyes.

He watched Tip appraisingly as the new Special player dressed.

The Specials were younger men than the Bulldogs. Some of them had played college ball. It would be a tremendously faster game than the pro affairs in the mill town.

"We work a pivot around Stretch Baggett," Brennan explained. "You keep an eye on Stretch and have the ball moving all the time."

Tip nodded. It was the kind of game he liked and the Specials were geared for speed.

Out on the court he got a look at the Trojans. They were a hard bitten lot—typical high-class pros with years of experience, much slower than the Specials, but making up for it by their superior knowledge of the game.

Stretch Baggett took the tap and pushed the ball toward Doc Studwell, the Special right forward. Tip Harrigan broke for the basket with the Number Three Trojan, a stocky, bow-legged chap, moving with him.

The pass from Studwell was fast and

true. Tip reached for the ball as he cut under the basket. The Number Three Trojan pushed his elbow and Tip missed the pass completely.

The ball went out of bounds and Tip stumbled into the lower bleacher seats. He picked himself up and grinned at the Trojan. It was the same pro game and he knew all the tricks himself.

The referee blew the whistle for an outside ball. In the college game it would have gone as a foul.

"Like it?" the Trojan Number Three whispered as they went upcourt together.

"I don't mind," Tip said. He slipped in front of a pass a moment later and then dribbled down the court at top speed. He ran away from the Number Three man and whipped in a pass to Jack Redmond, Special guard. Redmond bounced a pass back to him and Tip pushed it through the net for the first score of the game. It was lightning fast.

Baggett slapped him on the shoulder as he retreated up the court and the

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Trojans took the ball under their own basket.

The Specials were working an airtight, man-to-man defense. Tip stayed with the Trojan. The bow-legged man took a pass in under the basket and tried to dribble his way out for a shot. Tip snaked in a hand and took the ball from him. He feinted his man out of position, passed to Georgie Meade, Special right forward, and sped away.

The crowd gave him a hand as he came down the court working the ball with the four Specials. Baggett slipped into the bucket and Redmond fed him the pass. Tip Harrigan streaked in from the sideline. It was the identical play he'd used with the Bulldogs.

The Number Three Trojan tried to keep up with him but Tip had the extra half step. Baggett passed and Tip leaped for the rim. The Trojan grabbed at his right arm and the referee blew the whistle. That had been too flagrant. They gave him one free throw and he made it.

"You got it, kid," Jack Redmond said.

Tip saw J. T. Brewster sitting on the Special bench and grinning broadly. The big mill owner waved a hand.

The Specials piled up the score. Redmond dropped one from the middle. Baggett sank a pivot and then Georgie Meade pushed in a lay-up from the right side. It was nine to nothing for the Specials and the bewildered Trojan team called for time.

The Trojans held a conference in the middle of the court. Tip watched them whispering and he knew what to expect.

"They're playin' you, kid," Baggett said softly. "Watch your step."

Tip nodded. He had been in the pro game long enough to see the symptoms. The Trojans realized he was sparking this Special attack and they had to stop him. They'd work on him till he started to punch and the referee took him from the game.

The Number Three Trojan started the fireworks. Meade fed Tip the pass as he was sprinting toward the basket. The bow-legged chap pushed with both hands. Tip missed the pass and smashed in among the spectators. He remembered the setup at the Bulldog games.

He'd gone into the crowd dozens of times.

The spectators booed and the referee gave him a free throw. It was ten to nothing for the Specials. The Trojans came back with two long throws from out in the middle. They dropped in two fouls when Baggett tried to protect Tip under the basket. The game was on in earnest.

Twice in succession Tip Harrigan was slammed into the crowd beneath the basket. He came out grinning and made his shots good.

"You got no guts?" the Number Three man snarled.

"Come around after the game," Tip told him. He saw the respect in the older man's eyes.

In the second half they let him alone and he piled up eight more points. The Trojans put on a spurt and tied up the ball game in the last five minutes. The shooting of the visiting team was phenomenal. They set themselves out in the center and flipped the ball for the rim.

With thirty seconds to go, Tip Harrigan knifed in on a Trojan pass under the basket. He got the ball upcourt and passed to Meade. The guard crisscrossed to Studwell, who then smashed it in to Stretch Baggett in the pivot station.

The big man faked to Tip streaking by and then pushed the ball toward the net himself. It went through for the deciding score. It was thirty-nine to thirty-eight for the Specials.

The Number Three Trojan stopped Tip on his way to the dressing room.

"No offense, kid," he grinned.

The new Special player took his hand. "Nice game," he said. Stretch Baggett and Jack Redmond took him by the arms and hauled him away. He was in solid with the pro boys.

Up in the balcony the gambling element was paying off. Tip Harrigan eyed them speculatively as he walked toward the dressing room. It was the one bad feature of the pro game. The gamblers followed it as avidly as they did horse racing. It had been the same home.

J. T. Brewster was waiting for them in the dressing room. He shook hands with Tip and then slapped Chuck Brennan's shoulder.

"What did I tell you?" he asked the Special coach.

"You can pick 'em," Brennan admitted.

CHAPTER III

PAYOFF ZONE

IT WAS a different story on Monday afternoon in the Wharton College gym. Tip Harrigan sat on the platform with a basketball in his lap and waited for the men to come in from the locker room. He heard them talking and laughing as they dressed.

Three boys came through the door and moved toward him hesitantly. Tip grinned and nodded. He could get along with basketball players, if he could forget that these kids came from wealthy homes.

"Who's the captain?" Tip asked them. They knew he was the new coach. He'd posted the notice on the bulletin board for the opening practice session.

A red-headed, pug-nosed kid with a good-natured grin, nodded toward the locker room.

"Larry Brewster was elected last year," he explained. "He'll be out in a minute."

Tip Harrigan moistened his lips. He remembered Mr. Aldridge telling him that J. T. Brewster's kid was the star of the team.

The others trooped through the door. There were about twenty of them and others still inside.

"Hi, Larry," the red-haired boy called out.

Tip turned his head. His jaw tightened. The boy coming toward him was the blond kid who owned the maroon roadster!

Recognition was mutual. Young Brewster's eyes hardened as he strolled up slowly.

"How's it?" Tip said. He was willing to forget the whole matter.

Larry Brewster nodded. The others waited for the new coach to speak. He paused for the right words. Brewster's cold blue eyes were fixed on him; his face was set in a surly smile.

"We have a long season ahead of us,"

Tip said. "We want to make it a good one." He paused. "I don't know you fellows very well so, for the time being, we'll use most of the regulars from last year's squad on the first team. I want to give every one an equal chance."

Larry Brewster cleared his throat and lifted his eyes to the ceiling. Tip flushed. He became a little flustered. He wanted these men to like him.

"I have a few ideas I'd like to work out," he finished lamely.

"We'll be the guinea pigs," Brewster said. "Let's go."

"I don't mean it that way," Tip Harrigan said tersely. He felt the eyes of the other men upon him. They were watching him curiously. He was the unknown quantity. They'd heard he was playing pro ball with the Brewster Specials.

He explained to them as best he could the shifting zone he'd worked out with the Bulldogs. Chuck Brennan had been highly interested in it and they'd discussed the thing for over an hour after the Trojan game.

The Wharton boys listened but they were watching him closely and wondering. Tip saw the speculation in their eyes. The other coaches they'd had didn't play pro ball.

The workout was mechanical with not too much enthusiasm displayed. Larry Brewster definitely "dogged" it all the way. Tip divided them into teams and set one against the other for ten-minute periods to get a line on the men.

There was talent at Wharton if he could ever utilize it. Brewster was plenty fast and he had a good eye. The red-headed kid, Red Crandall, held down a guard position with the regulars. He was uncanny at intercepting passes and breaking up plays.

Near the end of the afternoon Tip went into detail with the shifting zone. Most of them listened attentively. They tried it out and there was a great deal of confusion. These college boys weren't the Bulldogs or the Specials.

"It'll take a little time," Tip explained. "This is something new."

"Do we have to use it?" Larry Brewster asked innocently.

Tip Harrigan looked at him. "We'll try it," he said quietly.

They worked out the remainder of the week and Tip organized his first team. Young Brewster had the most class and he knew it. He had a habit of hogging the ball and dribbling excessively. You could break up a good team with one ball hog. Tip had seen it done.

He had five good men on the floor for the opener against Carlton. The shifting zone was still rough. Constantly, the front line was getting mixed up and as a result one or the other side of the court was left open.

"It'll get better all the time," Tip explained. He saw the disbelief in Larry Brewster's eyes.

Last year Wharton College had taken Carlton by fifteen points. Tip was anxious to make comparisons. He sat on the bench as the team took the floor, resplendent in the scarlet and gold outfits furnished by the athletic department.

Carlton promptly ran through them for ten points, smashing the zone to bits. Tip Harrigan watched the debacle. Larry Brewster, one of the forwards, was up in the front. Though terrifically fast on his feet, he was constantly in the wrong place, moving deep back into the second-line territory and leaving his position wide open.

With the score sixteen to five for Carlton, Tip sent in substitutions. Brewster came out of the game. He stalked toward the bench, the perspiration on his face, the fight in his eyes.

"You were coming back too fast," Tip told him. "I want you to shift with the men in front of you, but up front only."

"It's no good," Brewster snapped. "Why don't you get smart?"

The Wharton coach bit his lips. The crowd behind the bench had heard the boy's remark. They were listening curiously as the game got under way again. The other substitutes on the bench glanced down the line.

"Sit down," Tip said coldly. He didn't look at the hot-headed boy in front of him.

Carlton scored twice more. The red-headed Crandall found the range near the end of the half and dropped three in a row from the floor. It was twenty-three to fourteen at half time.

Tip Harrigan looked at the row of grim-faced boys before him in the locker room. They'd had enough of the shifting zone and they wanted to go back to their own game.

"Okay," Tip said slowly. "Maybe the zone needs more practice."

"Maybe we can kick it out the window," Brewster told him bitterly.

They got going in the second half and nearly tied up the ball game. Crandall led the attack. The redhead's floor work was marvelous, but Larry Brewster broke it up with his solo dashes down the court. With five minutes to go in the game, Tip benched the blond youngster.

Brewster came in, his face black as a thundercloud. Picking up his jacket, he strode toward the dressing room without another word. It was forty-one to thirty-three for Carlton at the finish.

Nobody said anything in the dressing room. They left silently. Young Brewster had already dressed and was gone. A disillusioned Wharton College student body went home resigned to the fact that their five was mediocre.

IT WAS still rather early in the evening and Tip went to his room to get a little more studying before retiring. He'd already registered for several evening courses and he had plenty of time to work at them. The setup was exactly what he wanted, but everything depended on his making good with the Wharton basketball team.

Aldridge of the athletic board came in as he was getting out his books.

"What happened?" the dapper man asked.

"We lost," Tip said flatly.

"I mean with Brewster," Aldridge persisted. "The kid hadn't been benched since he made the varsity."

"I don't have to tell anybody why I bench a man," Tip stated, then paused. "You worried about Mr. Brewster?"

Aldridge grinned. "He's the last one. J. T. always wanted the kid put in his place. He'll approve of this, if anything."

Tip waited.

"Brewster isn't the only one to consider," Aldridge said slowly. "There are other members of the alumni body on

the board. J. T. Brewster persuaded them to give you the job, but if the team doesn't function, they'll over rule him."

"Then I'm out," Tip said quietly.

"It wasn't losing," Aldridge said. "It was the way. Wharton teams have lost before, but the alumni saw that kid Brewster walk off the court. They'll be asking me what's the matter."

"The kid hogs the ball," Tip said grimly. "He's benched till he learns to work with the other four men."

"Okay with me," Aldridge grinned. "I want to see you make good, Harrigan. This is just a little warning. You'll have to work out your own problems."

The Specials took on the Centaurs from New York the following night. They gave Tip a hand as he came out on the floor in the preliminary warm-up. He noticed several of the Wharton players in the front row seats. It made him uncomfortable. He hadn't seen any of them since the game the preceding night. There was no practice on Saturdays.

"Let's work these guys over," Stretch Baggett said, as he poised himself for a shot at the rim.

Tip glanced back at the Centaurs. They didn't seem to be as old as the Trojans, or as experienced, but they had the height and they'd control the backboard most of the night. It was an important thing.

"They'll set Marty King on you," Chuck Brennan told Tip in the dressing room before going out. "The Centaurs know what you did against the Trojans. King's a tough man."

Tip picked out the sandy-haired, flat-nosed King wearing number five. The Centaur was a big man with long gorilla-like arms. Tip tried to slip away at the tap-off but King was at his heels. He stopped, feinted to the left and cut for the right, moving at top speed. King kept with him.

"You're handcuffed tonight, kid," the Centaur grinned at him. "You ain't no high scorer this game."

Tip Harrigan smiled at him. He slowed down, turned as if to start back up-court, and then whirled and raced past the astonished Centaur. King yelled for another man to cover him. He had a full step on the number five player.

Jack Redmond had the ball out in the center of the court as Tip let loose for the basket. A Centaur player tried to cover him in a cross-switch, but he was already out in the clear.

Redmond slammed the ball into his hands and he went up high, reaching for the rim. The ball fell through the cords for two points.

"Get a bicycle, Marty!" Stretch Baggett yelled at the Centaur guard.

King reddened. He kept his eyes on Tip all the way, ignoring the ball. The Special star slipped down under the basket, pulled a perfect "sleeper" on his man and netted the ball for two more points. The play worked to perfection with Georgie Meade looping the pass over King's shoulder. Tip Harrigan was grinning in Marty King's face when the ball dropped in his hands. He got it off again before the pop-eyed King could lift a finger.

"Take that old man out," Baggett roared. Tip heard later that King and Baggett had played together on one pro outfit. They were old friends and friendly enemies.

The Centaurs took possession of the ball and came upcourt with it. Tip Harrigan watched the crisscross making a vague pattern across the hard wood floor. The Centaurs were well drilled. A cut down the left side with a screen block on Studwell paved the way for the first Centaur score.

Stretch Baggett looped a shot from the corner and made it good. The Centaurs caught up with them in five minutes. Tip faked King off balance again and broke for the basket. Eluding the switch man, he netted the ball with a one-hand twist shot which caromed off the backboard.

Coming back up the court he caught a glimpse of the silent Wharton boys directly off the floor. Behind them, the crowd had gone wild. The shot put the Specials into the lead again.

It was tied up at half time, and at the start of the second period the Centaurs grabbed a quick lead. The New York boys worked a beautiful floor game; they were careful with their shots and when they threw, it was usually a basket.

"Let's break this," Baggett growled. He moved into the bucket and crouched, hands hanging near the floor. The rangy Centaur center stuck to his back like a leech.

The Specials worked the ball in and out from the pivot man. Georgie Meade finally crashed through for a lay-up with two Centaurs smashing at him as he went up. The shot was good.

Tip Harrigan dribbled through and pushed in another from center court. The Centaurs came back fast and hard. With two minutes they had tied it up. With a minute and a quarter they had a one-point lead.

The Special fans were going wild as the precious seconds ticked by. The Centaurs had control of the ball and were freezing it inside the ten-second line. The flawless ball handling of the New York pros had the Specials cheering in admiration.

It was Jack Redmond who finally broke up the "freeze". Redmond smashed in between two Centaurs, slapped the ball free and dived for it. Tip Harrigan yelled and cut downcourt.

Redmond was in no position to make a pass but he managed to push the ball toward Stretch Baggett. The big center wound up and hurled the ball downcourt into Tip's outstretched hands. Marty King leaped for him as he went up. He felt King's fingers on his shoulders. The pro was willing to give him a free throw if he could stop this play from the floor.

Tip got the ball up as the whistle blew. It rolled on the rim and dropped through for the score. He made the resultant foul shot giving the Specials a two-point lead. They held it.

In the dressing room Chuck Brennan handed Tip a check. The Wharton coach looked at it. It was for one hundred dollars.

"What for?" he asked.

Brennan shrugged and grinned. "Arnold Black sent it," he said.

Stretch Baggett came over and looked at it. He grinned also and slapped Tip's back.

"Money in the bank," the center said.

"What's it for?" Tip repeated. "Who's Black?"

Stretch explained. Black was the big gambler who followed the Specials. He'd probably cleaned up on the game and he wanted to show his appreciation. Several times he'd sent checks to the dressing room to individual players.

"It's okay," Baggett said. "The money's good and you might just as well have it as Black. He's made plenty on your playing."

Tip placed the check into his wallet. It was not a question of ethics, but he wasn't sure what to do with the thing. The gamblers had never sent tips to the players in his own town.

ON MONDAY afternoon the Wharton squad met again. Larry Brewster didn't show up. The others were strangely quiet. Tip Harrigan watched them and he knew it was the beginning of the end. They didn't have confidence in him. Benching the high scorer, Brewster, hadn't helped matters.

He sent them through a series of drills and then worked on the zone again later in the afternoon. The workout was dull and lifeless. They had a tough Tech five on the schedule the following Thursday and they weren't ready for it.

Red Crandall put up a question near the end of the practice session.

"This zone doesn't seem to help us," the red-headed boy said quietly.

Tip Harrigan shook his head. "It takes a little time," he explained. "I was wrong using it against Carlton when we weren't ready. We'll work on it a few weeks and then try it again in another game."

"It doesn't seem to fit our style," Crandall persisted.

Tip's eyes hardened. The zone had worked great for the Bulldogs; Chuck Brennan had been coaching the Specials in the zone and was highly enthused. The pros were opening up with it against the crack Bisons the following Saturday.

"I think we'll try it," Tip said. He watched the squad troop into the locker room. There was no laughing and no cheering. After a while Crandall came into the office. He had in his hand Tip's wallet.

"We found it in the locker room," the redhead said quietly. "Sorry we had to look inside, but there was no identification card."

Tip took the wallet. It was a brown leather affair his mother had given to him years before. He'd lost the wallet in the locker room when he went in to get out the basketballs. It had probably fallen from his coat pocket.

"Thanks," he said. "I hadn't missed it, Crandall."

The redhead nodded and went out. His lips were set tight. Tip Harrigan watched him curiously. The workouts were worse the next few days. On Thursday they faced Tech and the speedy visitors outclassed them, winning by fifteen points.

Dumbly, Tip Harrigan sat on the bench and watched the debacle. Tech could have gone higher but they sent in their second and third string players the last fifteen minutes of the contest and the score was held down.

Aldridge, the athletic director, sat on the bench. He had little to say. Last year Wharton College had played good ball. They had most of the men from the previous season, but they weren't clicking.

"It's not good," Aldridge said.

Tip looked at the floor. He saw the whole thing crumbling beneath him. He had wanted to get into college; he wanted to quit the mill. If the coaching job fell through, he'd have to go back.

J. T. Brewster was at the game. He approached Tip when it was all over. The big man was worried. Wharton had shown nothing on the court. They were lifeless.

"What about that zone?" the mill owner asked.

"We're practicing it," Tip told him. "It takes time."

He went into the Bison game with the thing like a weight on his mind. Chuck Brennan noticed it immediately. He spoke about it in the dressing room before the game.

"Those kids will pick up," he said cheerfully. "You're a new man at the school, Tip. It takes a little while to work in your system."

He had lead in his feet the first five

minutes. Three times he missed easy lay-up shots and the crowd watched, stunned. Tip Harrigan was reputed the star of the Specials.

After ten minutes, with the Bisons leading by six points, Brennan pulled him out of the game. Tip walked to the bench and picked up his jacket. For the first time he saw the line of boys across the court in the second row of the seats. Practically the entire Wharton team was present!

"You take a rest, kid," Brennan said. "A guy can't play the game with a load on his mind. You got to be relaxed."

The Specials pulled the game out of the bag in the second half when Meade went on a scoring spree and ran up ten points in a few minutes. It was forty-three to forty for the Brewster Specials. Tip Harrigan was on the bench when the gun cracked.

Baggett and Redmond expressed sympathy.

"You had an off night, kid," the center grinned. "Forget about it."

Tip went back to his room. He didn't know when he'd played a worse game.

On Monday afternoon he sat in the gym and waited for the squad to come in. The locker room was strangely silent. Practice was at three-thirty sharp.

After a while he got up and went into the locker room. It was empty! He came out to the floor again and Aldridge came toward him. The athletic director had a slip of paper in his hand. He handed it to the Wharton coach without a word.

Tip read the statement. He felt the tightening sensation in his throat. The Wharton basketball team had gotten up a petition. It was signed by the entire squad. They would like a new coach.

"I'm sorry," Aldridge said quietly.

Tip nodded. "You have my resignation," he said gruffly.

"I'll call a meeting of the athletic board," the man proposed. "We'll see what they think."

"No," Tip said flatly. "Let it go. I'm through." If the team didn't want him, that was that. He went downtown to see Chuck Brennan. There was no use hanging around in Selby. He could get

a train tonight. The jalopy had been sold for junk a week ago.

Brennan listened to the story quietly.

"I figured I'd leave tonight," Tip Harrigan told him. "I don't have much to pack."

"Do me a favor," Brennan said. "We play the Spartans Thursday night. Stick around for the game."

Tip hesitated. They wouldn't object to him occupying the room the remainder of the week. If he wanted to, he could insist upon the terms of his contract and remain till the basketball season was over, but it wasn't worth it.

"We'll be short men," Brennan urged, "and the Spartans lead the league."

"Okay," Tip said. "I'll stay." He owed that much to Brennan—a square-shooter.

Back on the campus he ran across Larry Brewster. The blond kid saw him coming and tried to turn away. Tip waved to him and Brewster waited.

"You know I'm leaving," Tip Harrigan said slowly. "We didn't hit it off together and I'm sorry. No hard feelings." He held out his hand.

Brewster reddened. He was evidently flustered by the gesture. He shook Tip's hand and then walked away hurriedly.

CHAPTER IV

TWO AND TWO MAKES—FIVE!

THE SPARTANS had a reputation for roughness. By brute strength they had pushed themselves to the top of the league. They were big men and they knew the game.

Tip Harrigan watched the league-leaders taking set shots down at the other end of the court. They were gaudily arrayed in purple and white outfits. Four of the five regulars were well over six feet in height.

"They'll control the board," Chuck Brennan said in the dressing room, "and you know what that means." He paused for effect. "When you take a shot in this game, make sure it'll be good. We must keep the ball as long as possible."

Tip saw the group of boys coming through the door. Brewster was among

them, the first time the kid had come out for a Special game. Tip Harrigan stared at the entire squad. It didn't make sense. Officially, he had resigned from the job as Wharton coach. Alldridge had accepted his resignation and he was to leave on the morning train for home.

He didn't have much time to think about it. Chuck Brennan had him in the starting lineup and the men were taking their places. They had a capacity crowd, the Spartans having brought along bus loads of their own rooters.

"They'll try to throw you up in the bleachers," Stretch Baggett whispered to Tip before the opening jump.

The ex-Wharton coach nodded. He didn't think he'd have his heart in this one. It had been a bad week. He tried to keep up with his studies although realizing that the whole business was crashing around his ears.

"We want to take this one," Brennan had told them. Tip Harrigan knew he owed the man a good game. Brennan had always played fair with him.

Stretch Baggett lost the jump to the Spartan center, and the visitors had the ball. The Specials fell back with three men out in front and two in the second-line defense. Brennan had decided to try the shifting zone in the first half.

Tip watched Baggett, Studwell and Georgie Meade up in the front. The three pros ranged back and forth, following and shifting men. As the Spartans slipped through toward the basket, Tip or Jack Redmond covered them.

A Spartan pass down the middle was slapped down by Redmond. Tip scooped it up and dribbled up the side. Meade was in front of him, cutting in toward the basket. Tip looped the ball upcourt. Meade took it, flipped it back over his head to Baggett driving in, and the center made the shot. It was two to nothing for the Specials.

Tip Harrigan grinned. This was a ball game and the Spartans a worthy opponent. He had to forget his own troubles and give all he had. It was a debt a man owed to his fellow players.

Grim and determined, the Spartans moved upcourt again in possession of the ball. The five big men shot the ball

back and forth, smashed it in to the pivot man and then out again. A set shot was short of the mark and Redmond managed to take it off the boards.

"Keep it moving," Stretch Baggett howled. The smaller Special team made the ball fly. Brennan had been specializing in bounce passes in preparation for the Spartan game. It was almost impossible to fire the ball over the heads of the league-leaders.

They worked a set play with Redmond, Tip Harrigan and Studwell moving into positions. Tip and Redmond cut in from the side, cross-switching as they ran. One of the Spartan players was blocked out in the mêlée under the basket. Tip cut back toward the center, took the pass from Studwell and let fly with a one-hand shot over his left shoulder. The ball dropped off the white backboard and fell through the cords.

Tip heard the roar from the bleacher seats around the big hall. He saw the grins on the faces of the Wharton boys. It was a little confusing.

The Spartans roared back, moving the ball with terrific speed. They stormed the boards with shots. Stretch Baggett came back to help fight for possession. In three minutes the Spartans tied up the score and then went ahead.

Tip broke in on a pass before the zone was set up. He tried to drive through to the basket with it, but two Spartans hit him from the side. The ball spun away out of bounds and Tip landed in among the spectators. The referee awarded him a free throw and he made it good.

"The better you look," Richmond said, "the more you get it in this game."

"They'll get it back," Tip said grimly.

"Count me in," Richmond grinned.

IT WAS ten to seven for the Spartans after eight minutes of play. Twice Tip had been smashed into the bleacher seats. He came out the second time with a bad limp. His left knee had hit the edge of the seat. The pain was terrific.

Again and again the Spartans piled down the court. The zone was working beautifully, but the Spartans made their scores by bombarding the backboard.

They shot from the center of the court and three big men sprinted in after the ball. Tip Harrigan, Redmond and Baggett tried to hold them off. The Spartans came in with elbows and knees high.

Jack Redmond picked himself from the floor after one affair and shook his head ruefully. The zone was stopping the Spartans from getting in close, but those long shots and the follow-ups were putting the Specials out of commission.

The Spartans scored twice more from out in the middle of the court, and then Meade sprinted through for a score in under the hoop.

It was fourteen to nine for the Spartans. Redmond took an outside ball and the Specials worked it smoothly. Baggett moved into the pivot spot and waited for the pass, a big Spartan man on his shoulders. Studwell managed to get the ball in to him. Baggett passed out to Tip Harrigan. He feinted with his eyes and shoulders to the left and then cut right.

The Number Two Spartan player hacked at him as he went by. Tip let his arms grow limp and the ball was free in the air. He plunged in between two Spartans dribbling low. As he spun upward toward the rim with the ball in his right hand, another Spartan hit him from the side.

He felt himself flying through the air again. The men in the second row behind the backboard tried to catch him as he crashed. They partially succeeded. His right elbow hit the boards and the pain shot through his body.

They were grinning and roaring in his ears as he picked himself up. The shot had been good and the whistle had blown for a free throw on the foul. They only awarded a man one throw on a foul under the basket in the pro game. He made it good.

"Keep in there," Baggett said quietly.

Tip moved back up the court, rubbing his arm as he ran. The Spartans would give him everything from now on. He was having one of his good nights and he had to be stopped.

It was twenty-one to fifteen for the Spartans at the end of the half when the teams moved off the floor. Tip Harrigan had eight points for the period.

"How do you feel?" Chuck Brennan asked in the dressing room. Tip sat on the bench, still rubbing the right forearm. Needles seemed to be shooting through it. He could move the arm, but something was the matter with it.

"I can go," Tip said. He went over to the fountain for a drink. There was a certain satisfaction in knowing that the zone was definitely good. Every one of the Specials had expressed complete satisfaction with the defense.

"They've been lucky," Georgie Meade said, "and they got the height under the basket."

Tip didn't say anything. The Specials all knew the zone was his own invention—a modification of the old system. As experienced pros, their commendation meant something. The Spartans had scored long shots from outside the zone, and the other points had been made on follow-up shots.

They went back on the court and the crowd gave them a hand. Chuck Brennan had to win this game to stay in the running with the Spartans. Earlier in the season the first-place club had knocked them over.

Tip Harrigan drifted down the sideline when the Specials took the ball after a wild Spartan shot. He tried to ignore the pain in that right arm.

Studwell dribbled up the middle and passed to Meade. They worked it criss-cross in front of the Spartan defense, hoping for a pick-off along the line.

Tip crossed under the basket. He took a pass from Baggett and then tried to slide in between the Spartans. He had the opening and he was through with the ball but they hit him from behind and he plunged forward on his face. It was a flagrant foul and the referee gave him the throw.

"You better stay back, kid," the Spartan center told him. "We mean business."

Tip laughed at him. The stubborn spirit of his Irish ancestors was coming to the fore now. He tried the identical play two minutes later, feinting to the right and cutting left with a low dribble. Brennan had advised him to dribble more when the Special passing attack was stalled. He was faster on his feet

than the Spartan player guarding him, and he'd been getting around the man all night.

Driving through to the basket, he stumbled and pushed the ball back to Redmond coming in behind him. The Special guard made the shot. It was twenty-one to eighteen for the Spartans.

He took a pass from Meade a minute later and then aimed a set shot for the basket. As the ball slipped from his hands, two Spartans crashed into him, driving him into the crowd again. He saw Georgie Meade's face as the Special forward raced up. Meade didn't say anything but his fists were moving. He hit one of the Spartans twice in the face before the referee piled on his back and dragged him to the floor.

Baggett raced over and let fly a punch at the Spartan center. Redmond took a flying dive at the Number One Spartan guard. Chuck Brennan yelled from the bench and came across on the run. Three policemen darted from the main entrance of the hall and separated the players with the help of the two referees.

Tip Harrigan crawled out of the bleacher seats, his face white and the sickness inside of him. He saw Larry Brewster out on the court, fists balled and eyes hard. J. T. Brewster himself was standing with the youngster. It didn't make sense.

"They ain't gettin' fresh with us," Baggett growled.

"What about that basket?" Tip wanted to know.

"It was good," Baggett said. "We're catchin' up."

THE shifting zone was getting tighter all the time. Time and again, the Spartans had to throw the ball away in wild attempts to break through. The Specials retained possession until they were in shooting distance. Baggett scored from the bucket; Meade dropped one from the coffin corner. Redmond made a free throw. They were in the lead by a point. It was twenty-seven to twenty-six with the half nearly over.

Tip Harrigan kept on the run all the time. The Spartans had been more careful after the flare-up, but they were getting rough again. Studwell was

pushed into the crowd as he came down the sideline. Baggett took an elbow in the face and had to call time.

Two long shots by the Spartans cut the cords giving them the lead again. It was disheartening. The Spartans started to freeze with five minutes to go. They made the Specials come out after them and then the big men got through for another score.

"Take it down," Baggett roared.

Tip Harrigan got through for the first score. Meade piled the ball in to him as he was crossing under the basket. He got it up and it went through the cords.

Again the Spartans started to freeze with the minutes fleeing by. Baggett came out of the zone to break up the play. The big man plunged headlong toward his man and knocked the ball away. Studwell scooped it up and passed to Meade. They were off.

It moved back and forth across the court. Tip threw it into Baggett's hands in the bucket and Baggett heaved it back to Redmond. The guard faked a dribble and passed to Tip Harrigan cutting in for the hoop. Hands slashed at him from both sides. He got in with the ball, leaped, and passed to Meade driving in from the other side. Georgie had a clear shot for the rim. It was in, thirty-two to thirty-one for the Spartans.

Tip gripped his arm as he ran up court. A wild scramble under the Special basket and he was knocked back into the seats again. He got up with the whistle screaming and the blood sliding down his left leg from a cut on the knee.

The ball was in play under the Special basket again with the Spartans smashing from all directions. Baggett came down with the ball and was knocked to the floor. He got it away to Studwell and they went up the court.

Tip Harrigan listened to the noise. He cut in front of his man, slashing away the hands trying to hold him. Always in the pro game the referee was lenient with the men who didn't have the ball. He looked the other way.

Meade passed to Redmond. The guard gave it to Tip Harrigan and Tip low-

ered his head. It was like a football charge over center. He saw the hole and he went through. Falling forward to the left of the basket, he pushed the ball up with his hand. He saw the hard iron supports of the bleacher seats coming toward his head. He tried to get his hands in front of him but it was too late.

Chuck Brennan was bathing his face when he came to in the dressing room. The cold water felt good. The Specials were gathered around the rubbing table looking down at him. The sweat was still on their faces.

"That one go in?" Tip asked the coach.

Brennan grinned. He looked at Baggett.

"A looper-doooper," the center said. "The whistle blew on it."

Tip looked at the ceiling. They had won and it was some consolation. He'd feel better going back on the train tomorrow morning.

"There's a bunch of kids outside," Brennan told him. "They're waiting to see you, Tip."

"Who?" Tip Harrigan asked.

"The Wharton team," Brennan grinned. "It looks like they're signin' another petition out there. They want you back." He paused. "They had things a little mixed up last week. I went down to talk to 'em. I told Aldridge all about it."

"About what?" Tip asked.

"That check from Arnold Black," Brennan said. "The kids saw it and they had the wrong idea. They thought Black was paying you to let up—like a bribe. You remember the Bison game?"

Tip Harrigan nodded soberly. He remembered the boys had found his wallet in the locker room and they'd had to look inside of it.

"They got things mixed up," Brennan said again. "They put two and two together and they got five!"

Young Larry Brewster stuck his head through the door. "It's four now, Mr. Brennan," he said.

Tip Harrigan grinned. "Okay, kid," he said softly.

**SEND HITLER THIS CHRISTMAS MESSAGE:
"I'M BUYING MORE WAR BONDS."**

BUSHERS DON'T WIN

by

DANIEL WINTERS



His arm was a living, throbbing flame.

BIG JOE NEELY finished the coffee and poured himself another cup. The late morning sun was streaming through the kitchen window, and Joe decided he didn't feel too bad, although he was far from happy. There was a fuzzy taste in his mouth and a vague, as-yet-unfulfilled promise of pain in his head.

This was going to be quite a day. Win or lose, this was the day to which, for so long, he had looked forward with dread. He could no longer postpone events.

Today he would have to talk things over with Mary, tell her what he had decided. And suddenly he knew that it might not be so difficult as he had imagined. She had probably thought things out for herself, had a plan of her own.

He went into the bathroom and shaved. He was almost finished when little Joe came in to retrieve, from the half-filled tub, a cruiser that had convoyed him during his morning bath. The kid was seven, Joe reflected, seven next month. Little Joe said, "You gonna work today, Pop?"

Joe shook his head carefully. "I don't think so, kid. I worked for a couple of innings yesterday. They gave me a going over."

He had gone in at the start of the eighth, with a one-run lead, to relieve Hedron, who was tiring. In the beginning of the ninth the Cats had banged him for three straight hits that were

One inning was left in his weary pitching arm, one bitter round against the hardest sluggers in baseball—to hold back the last savage attack of the team that had blasted him out of the big time.

good for two runs. It had been the ball game. If he had held the lead, the series would have been over. The clubs were tied up, now, with three games apiece. Today would be the last one.

He finished shaving and dressed, and it was just noon. He couldn't get yesterday off his mind. If it had been any club but the Cats, he wouldn't have minded so much. It was just an example of the way things were running for him lately. You go in against a club you hate, and they knock your ears off.

He went into the living room, and his wife looked up. She was slender and lovely and her eyes were very honest. Ten years had hardly changed her at all. He didn't want to talk with her now. It would be tough enough later. He tried a grin, and it worked pretty well. He said, "I'll be home just as soon as it's over. Couple of things I want to talk about."

She nodded and smiled. "All right, Joe. If you work, good luck." She always said that.

He rumbled little Joe's hair and told him, "Be a good kid." Tuffy, the wire-haired, barked and ran for the door. Joe eased his lean bulk through and closed the door before the dog could get his nose out. He went down the stairs of the apartment house and got a cab. It was a twenty minutes ride to the ball park. He lit a cigarette and leaned back on the cushions. He was a little nervous from last night, but he'd had a wonderful sleep.

Doc Lewis would have to pitch Blake today, he knew, and the Cats would murder Blake. His stuff was made for them. But there was no one else. Hedron had pitched yesterday, Lawson the day before. And this wasn't a game you could entrust to any of the kids. Blake was tired after the long season, losing his stuff. The Cats would kill him.

The damned Cats! They were only part of his trouble.

AFTER today, he knew, he was through. He was thirty-eight years old, and his arm belonged in a glass case. He could pitch with anyone in the league—for two innings. He had been up there for a long time, com-

paratively. Big Joe Neely, the guy with the real swift—the high, hard one nobody could touch. And that burning fast ball had stayed with him until one raw autumn afternoon, three years ago, when Jimmy Sales had sent him in cold, right off the bench, to try to save a game against the Giants. The bases had been loaded when he had gone in. He had to bear down right away. And he killed the arm. It had been a dead piece of meat ever since.

That had been the start of his trouble. His baseball trouble and his trouble at home. They had gone hand in hand. All he knew was baseball, and when he realized that he was on his way out of it, the knowledge frightened him. He bolstered the uncertainty in himself by a few drinks, and a few led to a few more. It kept him out late most of the time. Kept him away from evenings at home with Mary and little Joe, the things he knew he was going to lose, was so afraid of losing.

As his faith in himself began to dwindle, grow smaller, he could feel the same reaction in Mary. She had never said anything, had never indicated by word or mood her knowledge, but he was aware, nevertheless, that she perceived the slow break-up that had been going on within him.

He stared out the window of the cab. A man was not a man when he couldn't take care of his wife and son. He was glad that Mary had a little money of her own. It made things a lot simpler.

He thought of yesterday, when the Cats had mauled him. He hated them for the way they had tossed him on the heap, the way they had sold him off the moment his value to them had decreased. He had pitched them to four pennants in eight years, winning thirty games, two of those seasons. But they had junked him at the first sign of trouble.

Doc Lewis, who managed the Sox, had put in a bid for him and the Cats got waivers from the rest of the league. And until a few months ago, he had been sure of a job. Lewis would sign him on as a coach, he knew, when he was through pitching. That would have been fine. Coach for the Sox for a couple of years, then pick up a club of his own. That was

what he had been counting on, but not now. Doc Lewis was going into the Army, as soon as this series was finished, as a sports coordinator and someone else would be managing the Sox. It was a very strong and reasonable rumor that placed Pep Thomas, the Sox left-fielder who had been with the club for years, in Doc Lewis' shoes after this season.

And that put Joe right out on the street. For he and Thomas didn't get along. There had been no incidents, no fights or arguments. They were just different people and were smart enough to avoid trouble.

THE place would be jammed, Joe saw, as the driver threaded his way through the crowded streets near the ball park. It was a beautiful day, soft and clear, not a cloud in the sky. It was the sort of a day he liked to work—no blazing, scorching sun that took the strength out of you by the quart, but warm enough to loosen a man up, to let him work.

He went into the dressing room, and there were only a couple of men there. The rest of the club was out on the field. Pug Willis said, "Hi-ya, Joe," and Ted Piper looked up and said, "Hello, Neely. How you feel today?"

Joe looked at him sharply but Piper didn't mean anything. He said, "Okay." He couldn't have blamed Piper if he'd tried to be smart. A lot of sure money had flown out the window yesterday, and tho' it was still perched on the sill, chances of grabbing it didn't look so good.

Joe Brolley gave his arm a good rub, and he finished dressing and went out. He'd been right about the crowd. There were about sixty thousand people in the stands and they were in a fine mood.

Some of them started giving him the bird when he walked out on the grass, but it wasn't bad. Joe didn't mind them. He had a long acquaintance with bleacher jockeys. They had their fun; they didn't do you any harm. He grinned at them and waved a hand.

And when he came near the bench, he got a real riding, and it was one that bit into him, one that he did mind. It came from the Cats' dugout. They really got

astride and shoved the spurs into him. He felt a cold, hard wave of anger rise in him, but he went over to his own bench and had a mouthful of water. He didn't see Doc Lewis.

He said to Sonny Breen, the kid back-stop they'd just brought up from Louisville, "You want to catch a few, kid?" He wanted to get rid of yesterday's kinks. The kid picked up a glove and they went out to the bull-pen.

He worked easily. He just lobbed them up there, loosening muscles that were no longer young, that felt the strain of even two innings of pitching. He took his time, chucking them into the big glove, and when he felt the sweat coming, he nodded and said, "Okay. Thanks, kid." He went in and sat on the bench again.

The Cats didn't leave him alone. They were hot, cocky, after their win of yesterday. They thanked him for that, asked him if he was going to work today. Joe sat there and took it and hated them. He saw Jimmy Sales, the man who had brushed him off so quickly once his effectiveness had become questionable. Sales was grinning at the sallies of his bench jockeys.

Joe looked up at the crowd in the opposite stands. There was a great deal of noise, a lot of color in the fall attire of the women. He wondered if Mary would listen to the game on the radio. A long while ago, he had asked her not to come to the park. He had taken an unmerciful lacing from the Reds one day, and she had been in the stands. Since then he didn't want her out there, watching, when he had his ears pinned back.

Doc Lewis came into the dugout and dropped his short, compact figure into his usual place at the end of the bench. The Doc was a great one for making notes before a game. He never referred to them once the game had started, but he never failed to make a number of them, right up to the first pitch.

Joe knew that Lewis must have spoken to Blake before the game, for the big left-hander was warming up now with Pete Rogers, over in front of the wire screen which protected that part of the lower stands near the plate. The crowd was loud in its opinion of Lewis' choice.

He sat there until it was game time, until Blake went out to the hill and Tremaine, who led off for the Cats, walked up to the plate. The stands were roaring with suppressed excitement, and Joe felt a part of the thrill himself. This was always a moment that put you on the edge of your seat, no matter how many times you experienced it.

Blake took his wind-up and threw it in there. The ball game was on!

JOE watched it up until the fifth. Lewis had sent young Masters down to the bull-pen to work, in these early innings, and Joe was just a spectator. Half his mind was on Blake, sensing the approaching weariness, the slowly encroaching fatigue that would spell the end of his effectiveness. The other half of his consciousness dealt with the talk he and Mary would have that evening.

He created and reshaped phrases in his heart, and none of them seemed quite satisfactory.

And in the fifth Blake began to go. The Cats got to him for two hits, clean, solid shots the infield couldn't stop, and the third out was a terrible line drive that Red Raines, in right field, caught without taking a step. Ten feet to either side, it would have been a triple. The Cats were on the march. They were hit-

ting Blake solidly. It wouldn't be long now.

Blake's face was gray and streaked with lines of tiredness as he came in from the field. Doc Lewis called down the bench. "Joe, you better get working. It looks like trouble."

Joe took his glove and said, "Okay, Doc." He caught Breen's eye, and the pair of them walked down to the bull-pen. As soon as he quit the shelter of the dugout, and the Cats caught sight of his big frame, the howls started. He felt himself flushing as he walked beside the kid. "They're friends of mine," he explained to Breen. "Very fond of me."

The kid said, "Yeah. So I notice."

Lewis would use him now, Joe knew. There weren't too many innings left, and Blake would fade. Joe had seen the unmistakable signs. Blake had given up no runs so far, and the Sox had managed to nick Sam Vallo, the Cats' hurler, for a single counter on a walk, an error and a single in the third. Joe felt a small flame of fear within himself. The same setup as yesterday. The same design for heartbreak.

He warmed up easily as the Sox went down in order. Vallo was big and young and very good. He could pitch all night, if he had to, and the chances were that the Sox wouldn't touch him again. He always started a little slowly, then got

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tougher as the game went along. The Sox were lucky to have bagged themselves a run.

Starting the sixth, Blake walked the first man up. The second man hit cleanly over second, and Joe began to lean into his pitches. The arm was loose and warm. He felt good. And the third Sox batter rammed a clean single down the third base line. Pep Thomas came in from left field and made a nice play on the ball and held the runner on third. The sacks were loaded.

Doc Lewis, on the bench, gave Joe the wig-wag. He wanted him in there. Blake was leaving the mound.

Joe started for the hill, and the kid Breen said, "Take it easy in there." This was something he didn't want. Yesterday was too fresh in his memory and the knowledge that this was the last day he'd be out there was too heavy in his mind.

The Cats greeted him with glee. There was a riot in their dugout, and the plate umpire had to go over and quiet them. Joe took the hill and threw a couple down to Pete Rogers, and Benny Noblock, the Cats' first baseman, stepped into the batter's box. Joe pitched to him, low and inside. Noblock didn't like them there and so Noblock promptly rode his bat into it, slammed it back through the box. It almost took Joe's leg off as it went by. The man on third scored, and the runner from second made his turn and headed for the plate. Freddy Burke had the ball in centerfield, now, and he cut loose with that beautiful arm. Rogers straddled the plate and took the throw. The runner was out sliding.

The crowd roared out, and the Cats came off the bench to beef about the decision at the plate. The Cats were like that. They fought every inch of the way.

Joe looked around, and there was bitterness in his mouth. Noblock was on second, and Karris on third. The Cats quit the field and went back to their bench. They thanked him jeeringly, told him to stay in there and get himself killed. He buttoned up his anger and pitched to Kelly. He got the Cats' short-stop to pop out to Warner, at second. Reynolds grounded out to end the inning.

He walked in to the bench. He was

lucky to get away as lightly as he had. If Burke hadn't made that lovely peg, it would have been a different story.

The Cats came onto the field. They shouted after him, laughed at him. Tremaine, the center-fielder, said, "And how's the Nothing Ball King?" Joe throttled the anger that rose in his throat. There was no sense getting tough about it. He'd last maybe another inning, if he was real lucky, then they'd drive him out of there with a barrage of hits. They were right when they said he was through. This was the last day, the last time out, and he had no heart for it.

HE WAS almost to the bench, now, and something prompted him to raise his eyes over the roof of the dugout. He never looked at the stands when he was walking in to the bench, but he did now, and he stopped short.

Mary and little Joe were sitting in a box directly behind the dugout. They were only ten or twelve feet away. He stared at them incredulously, and Mary winked at him and smiled, and little Joe said, very seriously, "Hi-ya, Pop."

He made a weak, instinctive gesture of greeting with his hand, and then his numbed legs took him down the steps to the bench. He pulled on his wool and leather jacket and sat down trying to figure things out. When the surprise had worn off, anger took its place. Things weren't bad enough, but this day she had to disregard his wishes and come down with little Joe to see the Cats make a clown of him. He hadn't thought she'd do this to him.

Then it was time to go out there again. Slater, Rogers and Thomas hadn't been able to do a thing with Vallo's slants, and the Cats were in on their bench again, calling for Cousin Joe.

Chase, the Cats' catcher, was the first man up. Chase had caught him for two years, but they had never been friends. Chase was a tough apple. He called to Joe. "Throw that blooper up here."

Joe threw it up. He pegged one at Chase's head, and the man went into the dirt. Then he threw him a nice, soft ball, a little low, and Chase lifted an easy fly to right field.

There was fury in him now, compounded of his old feeling for the Cats, his displeasure at Mary's appearance and the way the breaks were going against him. He pitched to Reynolds and the man grounded out to short. Vallo lifted an easy fly to left field, and Joe walked in again to the bench. He looked at Mary and she grinned at him and Little Joe waved. His anger permitted him only a nod; then he was sitting down, safe from their eyes.

He went through the eighth and the ninth, and in the tenth he gave up a hit. Karris got a scratch single down the third base line, with one out, but he died on first when Joe struck out Noblock and made Kelly fly to the infield.

The Cats were riding him hard now. It was just about time for him to bust wide open at the seams. He'd been in there for almost five innings, throwing that pill in there where they didn't like it, putting a hook on it now and then, occasionally fooling them with the ghost of his old fast ball.

And he was beginning to enjoy it. The anger that had supported him through the first few innings had given way to a sense of pleasure that was still cold, still holding a heavy hint of the rage that burned in him. They'd probably beat him, he knew, and Mary'd see him licked, perhaps, but she wouldn't see him slaughtered.

As he worked, and the sweat rolled out of him, the weight of his troubles peeled away, too. Sure, this was the last one—the last bundle of baseball he'd see for some time. Tonight he'd talk to Mary and they'd arrange some sort of a separation.

The Cats had sold him down the river, and there had been no more mercy in them then than there was today, and today they were cruel with a fierce frustration. Well, he'd make them work for a run. They'd caught him with his head in his bag of grief, yesterday. Not today. Today he was working at the only thing he knew, the trade he loved.

THE SOX went up there in their turn, and Vallo set them down. He was young and strong, and his stuff was still with him. They got hits

off him, but he kept them scattered and no one came across the plate.

Joe dragged out all the guile, all the knowledge he'd been storing through the years. He pitched craftily and cagily, never giving them anything decent to hit at. He chucked it in there, hooking for the corners, never giving the hitter a good piece of the ball.

In the tenth they started bunting at him, and he grinned. He threw them in there just a bit high, and he fielded two successive bunts easily and quickly. Sales should have known better than to use such methods on him. For ten years he'd been the best fielding pitcher in either league.

In the eleventh, Morton, the Cats' second baseman, caught hold of one, with two out, and lined it against the right field fence for a double. Terris, a dangerous hitter, followed him to the plate. Joe was beginning to feel the bite in his arm, now. The ache was there, heavy and insistent. He didn't know how much longer he could keep it up. He got up on the hill, took his stretch, and got the signal from Rogers that Morton had a long lead. He whirled in that easy, deceptive motion, and threw to second. Warner was there to take the throw. They had the outraged Morton by five feet.

And when he went in to the bench this time, and Mary grinned at him, Joe felt his own race break into a big smile. He was just about one inning away from a fine shellacking, but he felt fine. This was the good way to go out.

The twelfth and the thirteenth were tough. He just about got through them. His arm was a living, throbbing flame, and on every pitch he made, it would not have surprised him greatly if his arm had followed the ball to the plate.

After the eleventh, Doc Lewis had walked down to Joe. He had looked at him with those gray, unreadable eyes and had asked, "How you feel, Joe? How's the whip holding up?"

"I feel all right," Joe told him. "The arm'll be all right if I can just keep it tied onto my shoulder. I'll let you know when it starts to go."

Lewis had gone back to his own end of the bench. It was the only time he had said anything.

He went out for the fourteenth. This time he turned to the box before he went to the mound. He grinned at Mary and said, "Overtime." He looked at little Joe and said, "Buy him a hot dog. He must be starved."

Mary shook her head. "He's had seven of them."

Terris was the first hitter up in the fourteenth. Joe didn't like this setup. Terris, Karris and Noblock, all in a row. Heavy wood. He pitched carefully, his arm alive with pain. Terris hit a slow roller down to short and beat it out.

He threw them in to Karris, all high balls. Karris tried to bunt the second pitch and popped an easy little fly to Joe. Noblock came up there swinging his big club. They weren't doing much talking, now. Just trying to get the hits. Noblock let a low curve go by for a strike, then doubled on the next pitch. Terris was held at third. The stands came to their feet and the terrible noise of their shouting ripped at the late afternoon sky.

Joe felt the shadow of intense disappointment creeping over him, but he fought it off.

He got a strike on Kelly, then wasted two. The Cats' shortstop hit at the next pitch and raised a fly into short right field for the second out. The runners stayed where they were.

He pitched to Reynolds. He was a little too careful, a little too cautious. He walked him on five pitched balls, working for the corners. The bases were crowded with Cats.

The crowd was out of its mind, the noise beat down on Joe like hail, oppressing him. He kicked at the rubber and jerked at his cap with a big hand. He glanced at the bench, and the Doc was there, upon the first step, an inquisitive look on his face. Joe shook his head. He didn't want anyone else coming in here. This was his apple and he'd eat it.

Chase, the catcher, stepped into the box again. He was a great clutch hitter. He called to Joe, "Throw that cripple in here, Cousin. We all want to go home." He always kept his mouth busy.

Joe got ahead of him with a low curve that was called strike, but the next was wide. Joe wasted one more, then Chase

fouled one behind first. The next pitch was close in, right on the corner, but it was a ball. This was the money pitch.

Joe took a short wind-up, and Terris, Noblock and Reynolds were moving, on the run, and the park was crowded with the terrific noise. Joe brought the tired arm way down in back of him, then let it go. He had never thrown a faster ball in his life. It seemed to rip his arm right off the hinges. It was a white blur going in, right across the letters. Chase barely got his bat off his shoulder, swinging at it hopelessly. It was the third strike, and Joe laughed, in spite of the pain in his arm and back, at the expression on Chase's face.

Mary had a big smile for him, over the dugout. She was using a handkerchief on little Joe's face. The kid looked green around the gills. Joe said, "What's wrong with him? He looks sick."

Mary replied. "It can't be the hot dogs. He just got rid of them—all seven. Too much of excitement."

The rest of it was lovely. The Sox had been making Vallo pitch to them, and he was tired, now, and his attitude spoke of discouragement. It had certainly looked as if there had been a run for him in the first part of the inning.

Willy Warner went up there for the Sox. He was a tall, stringy kid with a great pair of hands. He hit the first pitch into right center for a clean single, made his turn, then went down to second when the return to the infield looked a little slower than it should be. He slid in safely. The crowd went crazy.

Red Raines went up there, knocked the dirt out of his spikes with his bat, and Vallo threw to him. Red poled the pitch on a line over first base. Warner scored from second standing up.

That was all there was to it. The simplicity of the thing stunned Joe, and he sat there on the bench and swore. "Five innings ago they could have done that, but they had to wait until now."

But the joy in him was great. He was going out of this game the right way!

HE ONLY had time to turn and yell to Mary, "I'll see you later!" before he was mobbed. He caught her wave and little Joe's slightly

unenthusiastic gesture. He rode on the shoulders of a thousand roaring fans to the clubhouse.

In the dressing room it was not much better. There was a shout and a bottle of beer in every mouth. Joe grinned and let the happiness of the moment engulf him.

He managed to get a rub and a shower, and dressed with difficulty. The place was crowded with sports writers and photographers, and flashlight bulbs ripped the room apart with their silent lightning.

Pete Rogers, dressing next to him, said, "Nine innings you went, Joe, and they got all of four lousy hits." He shook his head. "You been loafin' Joe. You coulda been startin' games all season."

"I could have started one," Joe told him. "Just one. That was all there was in the basket. One game."

He was dressed when Doc Lewis colared him. The Doc said, "In the office, Joe. I can't hear myself think, in this mob."

The small office was a shelter from the bedlam. It was quiet, here. Too quiet. Joe suddenly longed for the uproar of the dressing room. He had been safe, there, for a little while.

The Doc sat behind his desk and waved Joe to a chair. He said, "I don't suppose it's any secret. You know I'm leaving the club right away."

Joe nodded. "I heard about it. Things get around."

"I'm sorry to go," Doc said. "I've been with the Sox a long time."

"I know how it is."

"They had to get someone else to run the club—" Joe could hear the ax whistling through the air—"and I told Mitchell you'd take the job."

Joe looked at him. He felt his hands begin to tremble. Mitchell was the owner of the Cubs.

He said, "Give that to me once again, Doc. And easy."

Doc smiled, "You know the game as well as I do. You're smart. He couldn't get anyone else to do the job as well. I should have mentioned it to you before, but this series had me crazy. Couldn't figure who the hell I could pitch, and I

wanted to beat those damned Cats more than I want to see tomorrow morning."

It was a terrific bundle of news to digest.

"You can go down to Mitchell's office in the morning," the Doc told him, "and sign a contract. Three years. Nice terms, too. I saw it."

Joe said, "Well, this is a—"

The Doc pulled a bottle out of a drawer. "Yeah. Quite an occasion. Let's have a drink on it."

They had the drink. Joe managed a few words and then he found himself in a cab, heading for home. It was a different trip than he had planned. The thing had soaked into his head, now, and there was a warmth in him not caused by the Doc's bottle.

He paid off the cab and went into the house. His long legs took the stairs easily.

Mary was sitting in the living room when he went in. Joe said, "Hello. How's the kid?"

"He's all right," she told him.

Her voice seemed a trifle strained, but her eyes were steady and warm, and Joe knew she was trying to read something that was in his own.

He asked, "How come you were out at the game today? I thought I'd said something about that, a long time ago."

"I've seen every home game since we've been married," she told him steadily. "I've been back in the stands every time you've worked. I've a right to share the losing games as well as the winning ones. I don't like you to be alone when you get hurt."

He looked at her, and her blunt statement was a truth of which he was very proud. He lit a cigarette. "Think you could mix us a drink? I've got something to tell you."

She didn't move for a moment. "Is it the same thing you had on your mind this morning?"

He shook his head. "This is different—a lot different. Things have changed quite a bit since this morning."

She nodded, then, and her face relaxed into even lovelier lines. "In that case, I'll mix you the biggest, the best drink you ever had. And I'll have one a little larger."

THE ARMY WAY

He was surprised that he could take it and come back for more.

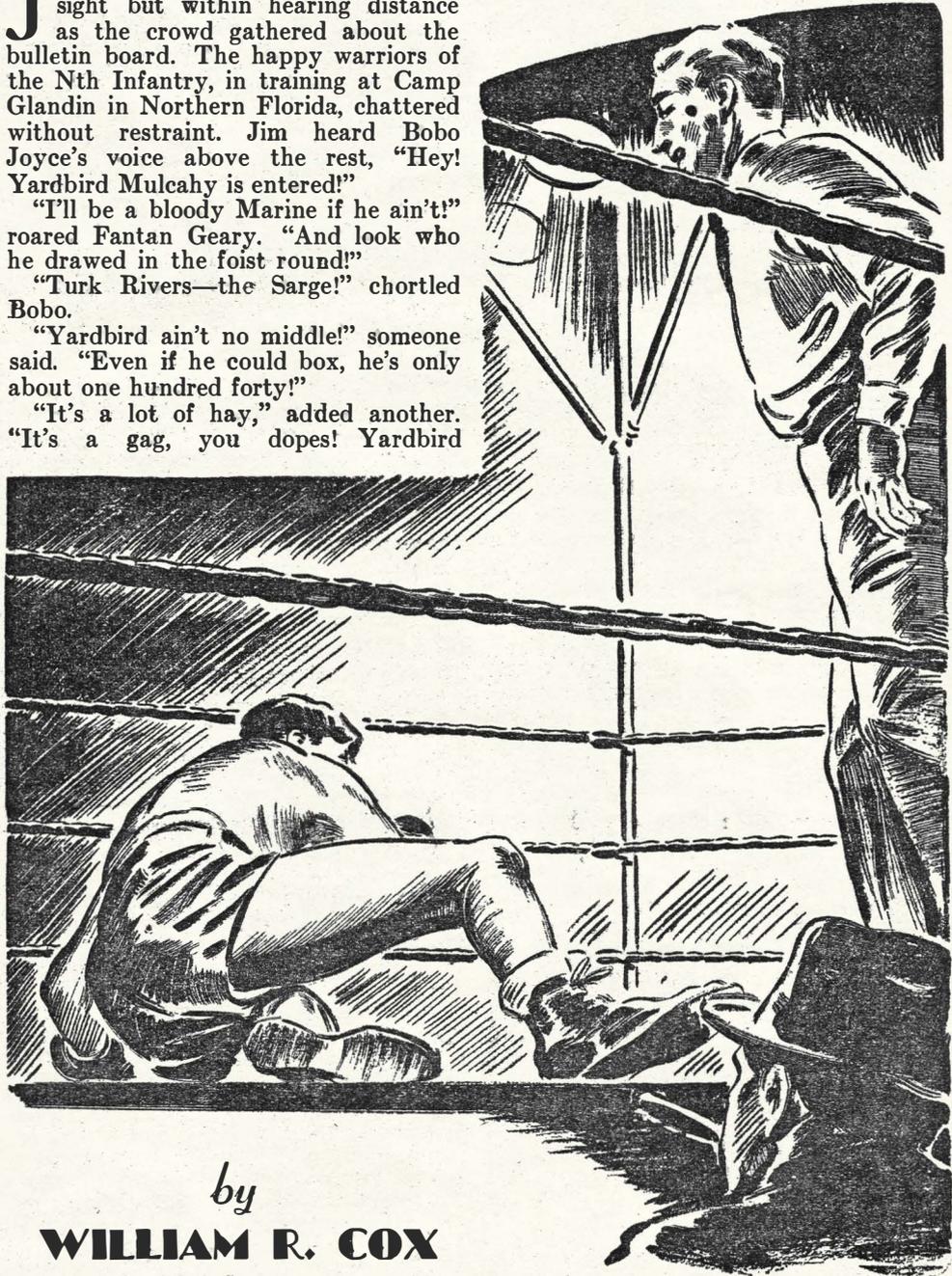
JIM MULCAHY lingered out of sight but within hearing distance as the crowd gathered about the bulletin board. The happy warriors of the Nth Infantry, in training at Camp Glandin in Northern Florida, chattered without restraint. Jim heard Bobo Joyce's voice above the rest, "Hey! Yardbird Mulcahy is entered!"

"I'll be a bloody Marine if he ain't!" roared Fantan Geary. "And look who he drew in the foist round!"

"Turk Rivers—the Sarge!" chortled Bobo.

"Yardbird ain't no middle!" someone said. "Even if he could box, he's only about one hundred forty!"

"It's a lot of hay," added another. "It's a gag, you dopes! Yardbird



by

WILLIAM R. COX

wouldn't fight a mosquito if it started to carry him off to the swamps!"

Jim Mulcahy moved softly away. He was a slim soldier of medium height, with dark, somber eyes and a thin face set in long, dour lines. Major Knight snapped him to attention.

Major Thomas Knight was an infantryman of the third generation out of West Point and Fort Benning. He was at Glandin to whip into shape foot troops which were to meet, one day, the flower of the Nazi Army.

Major Knight said, "At ease, Mulcahy, I want to talk with you."

A resistance crept into Jim's taut body, his hard face. He said, "Yes, sir."



"The Army can do a lot of things for you, soldier. But it can't teach a man to fight—unless you got a fighting man's heart to start with!"

The Major went on, "Mulcahy, you don't like the Army."

"No, sir," replied Jim flatly.

"You have a wife," meditated Major Knight aloud. His blue eyes were sharp, not unkindly. "I've investigated, Mulcahy. You see, I don't like discontented soldiers in my outfit. You were drafted over your application for deferment."

"Yes, sir," said Jim. He had never denied it. He had wanted to run his insurance business and raise a family, and Alice had wanted him to stay. War was only for the irresponsible, single youths who craved excitement.

Major Knight said, "I'm no Fourth of July officer, Mulcahy. I don't preach of God and country. But can't you make the best of it? Can't you do the job like the rest?"

Mulcahy replied, "I try, sir, but I'm no good at it."

The young officer considered. He had an understanding heart and he knew men. He said softly, "You are not trying, Mulcahy. I can't prove that, but you're dogging it, hoping to be left behind. You won't be left, Mulcahy."

Jim said, "Yes, sir. I know that, sir."

"Very well, Mulcahy. That is all."

JIM walked around behind the row of tents. He was not afraid of Major Knight. He was not scared of anything. Tomorrow night, in the ring, with the regiment looking on, he'd show them.

He glimpsed Turk Rivers—the toughest sergeant in the Army, they said—talking with Bobo and Fantan. They were all trying to figure out his own entry in the boxing tourney. Turk shrugged and threw out his hands. Turk didn't know anything except that he was going to murder the yardbird with a punch.

Turk was a pro, of course. He was headed for a bout with World's Champion Danny Colvin, if the regiment didn't go overseas too soon. Turk had licked the best in the country, excepting Danny Colvin.

What Turk did not know was that Danny Colvin and Jim Mulcahy came from the same home town and that, while Jim had been too busy at Tech to box a lot, he had won three amateur

titles and had gone hundreds of rounds, just for exercise, with Danny Colvin. And that gruff Danny, who was no sentimentalist, had once said, "Look, Jim, if you ever wanta turn pro—see me first. You got the eye and you got the legs and speed. I'll back ya, see?"

Jim had been a light welter, then, and the other thing Turk did not know was that the course in sprouts which he had heaped upon the head of Yardbird Mulcahy had added muscular weight to the deceptively lean frame of that vindictive young gent. Upon secret scales he had hit last evening exactly one hundred fifty-five pounds.

He threw himself upon his bunk and gave over to more dismal thoughts. Alice was hard put to it to run the business. He had just started when the draft caught him. If he had piled some capital to go ahead on, Alice could have managed. But with the baby coming and everything, it was tough— He was almost glad to see his tormenting tent-mates, Bobo Joyce and Fantan, come in.

Bobo said, "What is the joke, Yardbird?"

"Yeah," said Fantan, his dish face thrust forward. "Who you tryin' to make a chump out of, huh?"

Jim said, "Go to hell, will you?"

"Come on, now," said Bobo. He had been a tackle on a fair Yale team and looked it, towering over the lath-like Geary. "Let's not get into more trouble, Mulcahy. You've got enough bad marks against you. After all, you can't get into the ring with Turk. He'll kill you."

"Then I won't have to stop a bullet," said Jim.

"You'll disgrace this company!" Bobo snapped.

"You'll make dopes outa us!" roared Fantan.

Jim said to Fantan, "You can't kill a dead dog." Fantan didn't get it right off the bat, and Jim turned to Bobo. "I have a full month's pay coming. I'll bet you Rivers doesn't knock me out."

"I'll lay you two to one!" said Bobo angrily.

"Done," said Jim. Chow sounded and he lounged to the door, happy to have infuriated his twin nemeses.

At that moment Fantan woke up and

yelled, "He called us dopes! Him and his dead dogs! Lemme at him!"

He pawed the floor, waving his arms. Jim went on, without accelerating his pace in the least. It was strange, but with all the KP, with all the extra guard duty, with all the picayune humiliations they had put upon him, none had yet descended to attacking him physically. There was something in his slim defiance, something in his dark eyes, that held them at bay.

THE noise of the crowd of uniformed men, alike as peas beyond the glare of the lights, was frightening at first. But in a second or two he was over it. He sat, breaking the gloves as Danny had taught him. He looked down and sneered at Fantan and Bobo.

He could not yet figure why they had volunteered to second him when Knight had insisted upon corner men. He had been willing to care for himself, without aid. He only wanted one crack at Turk Rivers. He only wanted to try that shift Danny Colvin had shown him upon which he had improved through the months of secret workouts and which alone made Army life endurable.

Then he would get on his bicycle and stay away. He had superb confidence in his ability. Danny himself had called him "featherfoot" and growled at his superior speed. Of course the champ had weighed one hundred sixty then, and Jim was a light welter..

Bobo said, "The bet's off, you know. Wouldn't be sporting. I don't see how you are going to fight him, Mulcahy."

"With a head swing to the floor," growled Fantan, but his hands on the bucket were unsteady. "Can't you slug him one time and go out like a gent, Mulcahy?"

Jim said, "Get out of the ring, you jerks. I'm doing this." He hated them. They were like Rivers—all sold on the Army and wanting to fight a war.

The referee was an old-timer. He squinted at Turk's bunched muscles. Turk was from the slug-'em-and-drag-'em-out school, a very busy two-handed man, with a sharp timing and good legs. Turk had no right in the tourney, but

he needed work if he was to fight Danny Colvin, and the boys had agreed to let him in. That was the way with the Army—loyal to an ugly plug like Turk Rivers.

The referee said, "Shake hands now and come out fighting."

Turk extended his gloves. Jim pushed them aside negligently, curling his lip at the sergeant. He went back and his knees shook a little as he tried the ropes. His face was white and he saw Bobo and Fantan, mouths open, watching him. He was off-handedly professional, stamping in the resin. His seconds stared at one another, then back at the yardbird.

Turk came out at the bell. He held his hands low, weaving and snorting. He did not understand why the yardbird was silly enough to get into the ring but shrewdly suspected it was Mulcahy's only chance for revenge. He was determined not to take a single punch from the despised buck private.

He started throwing them, to the body, then switching to the head, marching in, his round legs bent, heels flat. There was a kayo in every wallop.

Jim Mulcahy grinned again, not pleasantly. He swung to left, then to right, in a pattern he had worked out in the solitary hours of lonely shadow-boxing. As Danny had said, he had the eye. Every motion Turk made was telegraphed a split tenth of a second ahead. Jim slipped three lefts and blocked three rights. He moved away and his feet glided with the grace and swiftness of a ballet performer.

Jim's limber left stabbed out. The glove was like a paint brush on Turk's face. Jab, jab, with cutting emphasis, went the worn brown leather.

Turk stopped dead, disbelieving. Blood ran from a cut over his eye. Jim slammed his right in a cross which bounced off Turk's chin. Turk went into the ropes.

BOBO and Fantan were stunned. There was no round of cheers, no applause. Major Tom Knight sat bolt upright, his eyes shining. But the men of the ranks were hurt, they were let down. Their popular hero, aspirant to the middleweight championship, was

being foxed by one they believed a tyro, an unpopular yardbird.

Then Turk was growling deep in his throat, hurt now, recalling his skill and experience, stalking forward. He was trying with the hook. He would have to wear down this elusive and unexpectedly acute novice, then rock him to sleep at his discretion. He had fought fancy dans before.

Jim tincanned, stalling. He saw Turk's right glove drop an inch and hurtle forward. He planked his left on the cheek, high up and his right flashed like a scimitar in the lights, crashing, smashing, all his deceptive weight pivoted behind that blow. It was a punch for all he had suffered, a blow for the underdog, the men who did not want to go to war.

Turk caught it on the button. He hit the middle rope with the small of his back and was catapulted forward on his hands and knees. He stayed there, like a wounded bull, shaking his head.

Jim, in a neutral corner, was tense, his lips thin. He crouched a little, waiting. The referee counted slowly, his arm going up and down, his round face puzzled. The silence was profound and Jim leveled one deadly, scornful glance at the banked tiers of infantrymen.

"Nine—"

Turk wobbled up. Jim walked forward. Disdainfully he flicked the pitiful defense of the tough sergeant to one side, and brilliantly he snapped his own left to the head. The right uppercut was a perfect semi-circle, swishing and slamming to the mark. Turk took one step forward, still game, but his legs were rubber. He fell down like a man stumbling in the dark and lay all disarranged upon the canvas floor.

Jim walked to his corner, climbed through the ropes and went past his completely befuddled seconds. He went up the aisle as scattered, belated cheers began to mount. He was in the make-shift dressing room when the storm burst.

He had off his gloves and was towel-ing himself when Bobo and Fantan entered softly, like conspirators. He ignored them. Within him a triumphant paean was giving solace to his bruised being. He donned shirt and pants and

bent over to lace his clumsy GI shoes.

Bobo said, "It was—you were superb, Mulcahy!"

"Gee, you kayo'd him!" Fantan said with round eyes.

"You're the champion already," predicted Bobo. "We made a big mistake about you, Mulcahy. You can fight if you want to."

Jim finished tying his shoe. He said coolly, "I'll never be champion because I'm defaulting the next round. I've proved my point. Now Turk can bully me some more when I can't fight back because he wears stripes, but he'll never enjoy it again!"

He walked past them and went to his bunk. He was not quite happy. He had accomplished that which he had set out to do, but there was something lacking. He had not expected any applause, knowing soldier psychology as he did, but somehow he was not satisfied with his deed. He would have to write Alice and maybe work it out on paper.

TURK RIVERS had a black eye.

He also had a swollen jaw, but he inspected the tents with undiminished dignity. Jim stood at attention beside his bunk and looked neither right nor left nor at Turk's bruises. The day went by without incident, other than the occasional congratulations from the guys of the company.

In the evening he started to write to Alice. It was hard to get it all down. He hated bragging most of all. He stopped and looked up as Bobo, Fantan and Turk Rivers entered. They sat on the other bunks and stared at him.

He said, "Well—start in. Give it to me."

Turk cleared his throat and Jim was startled to see that the hardboiled topkick was actually embarrassed. Turk said, "I never knew you were a pro, Mulcahy."

"I'm not," said Jim shortly.

Turk blinked his eyes. Fantan said, "I tole you so. How could he be a pro? He's an insurance guy!"

"You're good enough to be a pro," said Turk.

"That's what you think. Danny would have murdered you. Now go away and leave me alone."

Turk showed no sign of leaving. He folded his arms on his thick chest and said sternly, "Mulcahy, you beat me fair and square. You knocked me out a championship bout."

"So what?" said Jim savagely.

"There is a big campful of men expectin' us to show in that bout. You got to fight Colvin!"

Jim put back his head and laughed. "Are you dim in the head entirely? I know Danny Colvin. I wouldn't fight him for ten thousand dollars!"

Turk exchanged glances with Bobo Joyce. Then Bobo said softly, "Would you box him for twelve thousand?"

Jim opened his mouth, shut it again. Over and over in his mind he counted the money and what it could do for him. Then he put down his fountain pen and said, "Talk turkey, men."

Turk was eager, all animus gone. "I'll train yuh, Jim. Major Knight said I could take extry time. Think of it, Jim. You might cop him like you did me! You got a kick like a mule! A lucky one—and we got the champeenship!"

Danny would do it, Jim knew. It would be a breather for the veteran champ, and he would be glad to help out an old neighborhood boy. Danny had a perforated ear drum, but was giving all his services to the various war funds.

"We'd be the talk of the Army," Turk was saying. "If you just give him a good fight, we'll be able to sneer at them other chump outfits."

Jim said impatiently, "You can have the honor. All I want is the money. Okay, I'll do it!"

They rushed off to spread the news, like three high school boys, Jim thought. They were what makes great armies. They had one objective—to get to grips with the enemy and fight it out. They feared no bullet, no death in far-off places; they thought only of ultimate victory.

He picked up his pen and continued writing to Alice, explaining carefully what he was doing and why. He ended: "I love you so it hurts me all the time to be away. Please, darling, keep well whatever happens. I'm going to give you some money at long last—for little Jimmy and darling you. . . ."

ONLY in communication with Alice did he ever quite dare let loose. She had always been able to bring him out of himself, even when they were kids together. Life would have been lonely for orphaned Jim Mulcahy had it not been for Alice and her large, happy-go-lucky family. Two of her brothers were in the Navy and two others in the Marines.

But Alice was sweet, tender and understanding. Through the ensuing weeks he kept her fair face always in his mind, as he went through the training regime with ungentle Turk Rivers and other roustabouts of the camp. He was never let off army duty, either, to do his training. Trust Major Tom Knight for that.

It was hellish, but in one way it was merciful. He forgot to lounge through his military affairs. He was edgy as he got into superlative condition on the regular food, hours and boxing regime, but his work was good. It was sharp, from gun-drill to the short maneuvers around the camp. Of this he was not conscious, thinking only in terms of twelve thousand dollars and that he must make a fight to earn it.

Jim was positive he could not win but he hoped he could make a showing. He had heard of boxers' purses being held up if they did not perform well enough. He spoke to no one about this—but he knew Danny Colvin of old. He had boxed too many rounds with the old fox not to be fully aware of his own limitations against such skill and experience.

Turk Rivers had little to say. The tough top sergeant had changed a lot. Each time they boxed Turk grew more thoughtful. They swung hard, clean blows at each other and Turk did not spare the horses. There was no necessity of rating Jim, as he performed his duties capably and that left nothing about which to quarrel or hate each other.

Time passed swiftly and they were upon the eve of the fight at the ball park, when Jim Mulcahy of the Nth Infantry was to meet Danny Colvin in a match advertised as:

Middleweight Championship
Of The World
Ringside—\$25.00
Proceeds for War Funds

Truthfully, until now Jim had never thought of the fight as a real encounter, with all the fanfare and fuss of a title bout. He had thought of it only in terms of twelve thousand dollars for Alice and of Danny Colvin, his mentor and master from the home town. Now that they were actually going, he sat inert, biting his upper lip.

The others were also strangely silent. They came to the place of the meeting and went to a large and airy dressing room. Fantan and Bobo fussed with corner paraphernalia and Turk wound and unwound bandages. Jim undressed and lay down upon the table. His nerves had him to the point of complete exhaustion and he tried to relax.

He sat up abruptly as the door opened. Major Knight came in and Jim hit the floor, rigidly at attention. The stooped, gray man behind the major wore two stars. . . .

The General said quietly, "You are wearing the colors of the 'fighting Infantry,' Private Mulcahy. You're a soldier; you know what we expect."

He saluted Jim. He actually gave the old West Point snapperoo. He bowed and departed, a grim man of no fuss or feathers. Jim sat back weakly on the table.

Turk, Bobo and Fantan surrounded him. They were solemn as owls. Jim swallowed and said, "It's my funeral, isn't it? I've got to face the foxy old guy, haven't I?"

Turk choked a moment. Then his hard hand gripped Jim's shoulder. He said in a low voice, "You're sure a funny guy, Jim. You made us all mad, at the start. We rode you plenty—all of us." Bobo and Fantan nodded wordlessly. Turk went on in the strange voice, "I got to tell you before you go in there. Win or lose—and I boxed with you every day and I know—you're a clean, straight, hard-shootin' guy. You ain't never beefed since I knew you. You showed us you could perform and you done your work and stayed off KP so you could train for tonight. I apologize for anything I ever done I shouldn't and I know you're good enough to give old Danny hell!"

Jim's mouth dropped open. Bobo and

Fantan were nodding agreement. They were all moist-eyed, offering their hands. They had completely misinterpreted his selfish motives. They thought he had come over to their side.

He managed to grip the proffered hands. Outside the door a boy called derisively, "Come and get it, Mulcahy!"

HE FOLLOWED them numbly down the way to the ring as cheers mounted. He saw uniformed men standing on chairs, heard them screaming his name. He had entirely skipped the play the newspapers had given his victory over Turk, the excited interest of the people who came to see the new-sprung Army champion. It was like a spur, bringing him alive.

At ringside he saw Major Knight, and then the big and final surprise—Alice, her eyes shining, standing beside the handsome major, cheering and clapping her hands like a pleased infant. He had never thought Alice would make it.

He went into the ring dazed completely and almost forgot to go over and greet Danny. He saw the shaggy brows, the deep gray eyes, the scarred cheek of his old friend and mumbled, "I got no right here, Danny."

The champ held him off, looked him over. He said, "You got the beef, now. Be easy on me, chum!" He laughed and shoved Jim away, almost affectionately.

He sat down on the stool and all the while they were introducing challengers, champions and ex-champions he kept thinking that it was like back home, boxing in the gym, that Danny wouldn't hurt him. He could take one, after a while, and go out. When Danny warmed up he certainly didn't want to be in there catching it.

He had seen Danny work out on others in the past.

He looked up at Turk and the first shadow crossed his thoughts. Turk was scared. Bobo and Fantan were shaking. Turk whispered, "Maybe it's better it's you, Jim. You're cool. With the General and all sittin' there I might blow."

He had forgotten the General. He had forgotten Tom Knight and the boys back at camp, glued to the radio. He had even forgotten Alice!

He stared down at her. Her eyes shone with pride as she looked up at him. Her brothers were all fighters. Her Dad was an old ruffian of a bricklayer and she knew about fights. She called something and he knew she expected him to win.

He drew a deep breath. In one blinding instant he was aware of an awful fact. He was thinking only of himself!

He had been planning and scheming to take care of Alice in his way, with his business, with his money. Everything had been self. His dislike of the Army was personal, because he hated war and hated the routine of manual work.

He opened his eyes wide, looking at the assemblage of people who had paid from twenty-five dollars down to see him, Jim Mulcahy, the unknown, box a champion. Why, this was America, sporting enough to pay for a mis-match like this, just to help the Army Fund, and Jim Mulcahy's pocketbook. And Danny, risking a fluke which might rob him of his title, had nothing to gain, not even the purse he had donated to the fund.

He went out in a trance to take instructions from the great referee. He recovered as it ended, when he touched Danny's gloves. He looked into the deep eyes and said, "Danny, I'm coming at you and I'm tougher than hell."

Danny said, "I can see that, chum. Come ahead!"

Jim went back and was calm, now, staring down at Turk, Bobo and Fantan. Turk said through stiff lips, "Box him, kid. You got the speed. He's kinda old."

Jim said, "Thanks, pal. You're a real guy."

He grinned at the others to relieve their feelings. He waved once in the direction of Alice. Then the brassy bell gave voice and he was turning, advancing, his sharp eyes upon Danny's rhythmic tread.

He remembered now, in sharp-etched pictures, the tricky, unpredictable strategy of Danny Colvin. There was no way of knowing which direction it would take. Right now Danny stood erect, upon the balls of his feet, his left hand

extended, boxing pretty. Jim ducked and weaved and shuffled a little. He evaded a long jab, going under. He chopped a right and left to the ribs and knew he had got home with authority because Danny backstepped. He pushed forward then, eager, a little too brash.

Danny's down-chopping right nailed him toward the ropes. Danny's hooking left, as Danny went into a swift crouching weave, proved that the old fox still held his head. Jim's head spun, he tasted blood within his mouth. He tried to run but the chop-punch had slowed him.

He saw Danny throw the long right and tried to get inside. He fell weakly forward and the blow landed on his ear instead of his chin and he went sideways, rolling over the canvas ingloriously, his elbows scraping. He lay still with panic full grown in his heart and heard the inexorable sound of a count, *One, two, three. . . .*

He got up, frightened, and Danny was ready, coming like the wind to nail him to the ropes, swinging both hands. Danny was not wasting any time. A resentful ire arose in Jim Mulcahy.

Danny was working over his ribs, now. The strong, durable washboard on his front stood the going—that was Army food and exercise. Danny pummeled away and Jim took it and rested, his arms on Danny's shoulders. Danny backed away, puzzled. Jim threw a left and right, short punches, which sent Danny reeling.

And then the champ was frowning, boxing as at first, and his left hand was an artist's etching tool carving upon Jim a bloody message to the Army. Jim ducked, blocked and rode it out. It was the works and he was taking it.

HE COULD have quit any time in those first three rounds. He was staggered, he went down, and again he took a short count. He fought doggedly, like a beaten regiment. He retreated along strategic lines. He was getting a terrible shellacking at the hands of a master and he knew it full well. Yet he took it, uncomplaining and soon he knew very little of it, save that the General and Alice were down there. No longer was he thinking of

himself. There was a fight to be made, somehow, some day. . . .

He awoke from his lethargy of mind and looked up. There was Turk, swinging a towel while Bobo gently used the styptic pencil on a cut over his eye. He breathed, "What round?"

"Fifth comin' up," said Turk thickly. "Cheese, pal, he's givin' it to you."

Fantan was white and weak. He poured water over Jim's head, combed back his hair. He said, "I never see nobody take so much and still fight back."

Bobo said, tight-lipped, "The cuts are not deep. You're in shape, Jim. Does it hurt much?"

"No," said Jim. "It doesn't hurt. I'll bet the General is disappointed, huh?"

Turk said, "Like hell! We're fightin', ain't we?"

Jim said, "Yeah. We're still in there."

He looked over at Danny. The champ's chest was heaving and he did not look pleased. Jim grinned crookedly. The whistle blew and he took another look at Alice. She clenched her hands in the pug's salute. She looked all right.

The bell for the fifth sounded. Jim got up and went out there and raised his hands. He recovered himself just in time to see that Danny was again trying the rush act. There was meaning and perfection in the swift barrage of blows coming from the low crouch. What had Danny once said?

Keep your head lower than the other guy's, always!

Jim broke and ran, then did a right turn and got low. He matched weave for weave, so that they were like two bulls breathing blood and defiance. He saw Danny's snarl and knew the old neighborhood days were long forgotten. Danny's pride as a workman was at stake.

He threw sodden gloves at Danny's head. He took a punch, another. He shook them off and bored in, fighting, using his speed against the champion's skill. He bulled Danny to the ropes and knew that he was stronger.

They came around, head on, fighting. The crowd was screaming itself sick. Jim wiped the blood from his eye and found Danny coming from the left. He pivoted on his right leg and stood firm.

He met Danny at ring center, throwing those arms, not conscious of weariness or hurt. He was getting hell batted out of him and somehow it was clean and glorious that he could take it and come back for more.

He got through the sixth, the seventh. In the eighth Danny was stalking him, flat-footed, feinting. Jim wobbled a little and Danny came in. Jim peppered him with the paint brush, trying to smear it on Danny's face.

To his amazement, and for the first time, he succeeded. He rat-tatted with six or eight of them and Danny's head began to hit the timing of Jim's punches. Danny's right lashed out as he attempted to come back, but Jim had found the range. He boxed then, refusing to fight. He cannily kept that paint brush in there and the carmine dripped from Danny's nose.

In the corner Turk was suddenly tense as he whispered and crooned in Jim's ear. Bobo was steady and efficient with the patches. Fantan's hoarse voice begged, "Try it on him, pally! You got dirt behind your ears, Infantryman!"

Jim bit the mouthpiece and went out. Through the ninth and tenth he was very busy, concentrating with the new toy, the left which worked. He forgot everything, using his coiled right for feinting and blocking only, just slapping it to Danny with the left. And Danny couldn't seem to get out of its way. Into Danny's eyes came a desperate, hungry look as he stomped around, seeking to get set, to again carry the fight to the challenger.

In the eleventh Danny finally maneuvered into position. He caught Jim momentarily off balance. He belted home the hook and followed it with the right which went shrewdly between Jim's hands and raked alongside of his jaw. It was Danny's Sunday punch, but it only sent Jim back on his heels.

Jim bounced like a rubber ball and threw his own right. It caught Danny flush and knocked him away. Then Jim went in and gave the old one-two a workout. It racked Danny and tumbled him.

The champion of the world sat on the rear of his breeches and all the Army

men went insane. The referee lifted his arm and let it fall, and the Army counted with him in roaring cadence.

AT THE count of nine the old lion arose, with a murderous look in his eye. He walked up and threw punches. Jim evaded them or blocked them, no longer fearing them. Old Danny was mauling.

The eleventh ended. Turk was chewing gum and his jaw muscles worked into white bunches. He said to Jim, "It's yours, chum. It's your fight, now."

It was the twelfth and last. Jim counted and figured he had certainly lost the first seven rounds. He could not hope to win a decision. He eyed Danny and began to box. To his chagrin there was no one to meet him. Danny was away with the hares. The wily champion had conserved enough strength to tincan this round away.

It was wonderful strategy and beautiful timing.

A great rage entered Jim. He thrust away the groping hands. He bent himself double to avoid the clinch. He weaved away and Danny came in, confident, staying close, smart.

Jim butted against the hairy chest before him. He brought up his left from underneath, an unorthodox blow. He arched it into the belly just below the chest against which he leaned, as Danny's arms enfolded him.

Then he was chunking the right and the left and the right again. Danny was not holding so tight now and Jim was going forward, one foot after the other. It was dock brawling; it was not pretty and certainly it was not boxing. He wound them up and chucked them, like any novice. He landed a right on Danny's jaw and Danny staggered.

Jim leaped in. He fastened Danny to the ropes with the long, straight, accurate left. He threw an overhand right, going up into the lights where Danny's weary eye could not follow. It came down and socked against Danny's jaw.

Jim danced away. Dan folded, slowly, like an old tent.

The count went on—and on. It reached nine!

Danny was up, a glorious, brave figure,

still grinning, beckoning that he was ready. He did a little jig step to show he was not hurt, though everyone knew his innards were shaken.

Jim stared, went reluctantly in. He pawed again with the left. He threw the right, mercifully, to the jaw.

Danny turned, grabbed the ropes. He went down again. He hauled at the strand and the count mounted.

Suddenly Danny was up and running! He had used the two counts to gain his wits and legs. But Jim was also running, hurrying, eager. He launched himself in mid-air, battling, flailing.

The sound of the bell was a knell to hopes. Jim stood there, his mouth open. Danny's seconds were in the ring, lugging him to his stool. Jim braced himself. His arms dropped, his hands unclenched. His bloody head high, he walked over and grabbed Danny's right hand. He lifted it high—in token of defeat.

Danny said, "You're tougher than you know, chum. A little smarter and you would've had me."

Jim said, "Maybe I'm glad. I'm no fighter."

He went back to Turk, Bobo and Fantan. The referee was collecting the slips. Jim sat with his head still taut upon his shoulders. With everything else, a man had to take defeat. . . .

"Unanimous . . ." cried the announcer. "The decision"—his voice ascended to a shriek—"a draw!"

THE GENERAL had Alice on his arm. He said to Jim, "I have never seen a more gallant fight. Mulcahy, you are a true infantryman. I expect to see you apply for OCS, Mulcahy!"

Jim stood, clad only in his trunks, his face slightly bloody. He looked at Alice and then at Major Tom Knight, who was grinning like a kid.

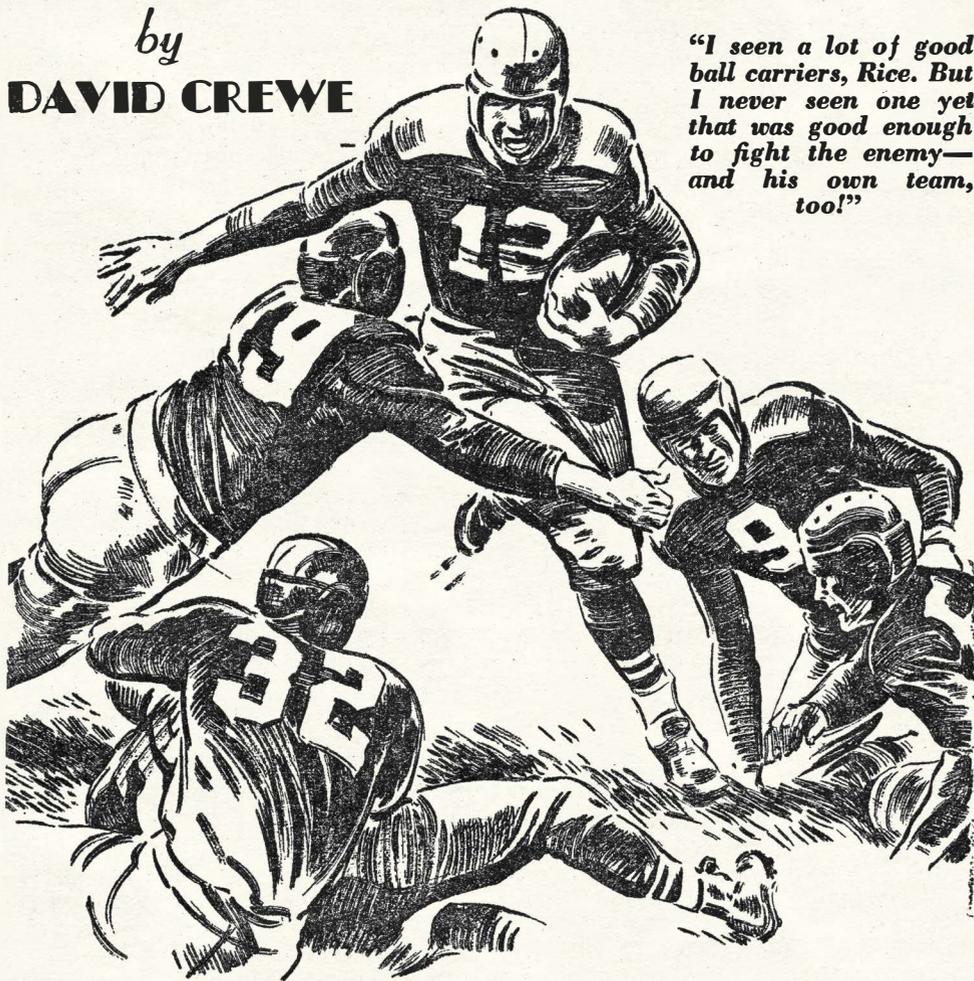
He replied clearly, "No sir. We'll be going over before I could get through training. I'll stick with my outfit, sir!"

The General gave him a salute that really sparkled. And Jim Mulcahy stood and returned it like a veteran. He had dirt behind his ears now and he was proud of every man in the Nth Infantry.

BREAKAWAY GUY

by
DAVID CREWE

"I seen a lot of good ball carriers, Rice. But I never seen one yet that was good enough to fight the enemy—and his own team, too!"



They lashed at him with steel claws that ripped and hurt and tore.

THE BISONS were standing around in a tight little circle. When the sandy-haired man came up to them, they gave a little without breaking, but Pop Grayson, the Bison coach, was smiling broadly.

"So you're Corby Rice!" he said heartily. "I've seen your pictures in the papers. I would have said you were heavier, but I guess the shoulder pads accounted for that. Glad to see you, kid. We'll need you plenty."

It was a hot day, and the long train ride had left its mark on Corby Rice's tanned face. There were the shadows of

sleepless nights under his eyes, but there was nothing wrong with his smile.

Pop introduced him to the gang. They were an awesome array. There was Link Furey, All-American tackle from Northwestern. There was the stolid Lars Larson, hailed as the greatest automatic ball feeder in the business. There was Angelo Ricci, from Notre Dame, and Paddy O'Hare, Harvard's flashy end. And there was that famous trio of back-field men from Lincoln—Sandy James, Bill Travers and Bull Andreyeff, three-

quarters of the greatest backfield of all time.

They looked strange and a little uncomfortable in their unfamiliar Bison monkey suits. They looked a little resentful, too, that the war and the fates had taken them out of their college glory and brought them to little Franklyn University, for one more fling at football before they received their commissions.

But most of all, Corby could see ruefully, they resented him. The three Lincoln Larrupers must have talked—plenty, judging from the lowering faces that met him as they shook hands briefly.

Pop Grayson said, "And this is Sandy James: I guess you guys have met before."

The stocky little quarterback was adjusting his helmet, ignoring Corby's outstretched hand. When he spoke, he bit the words out bitterly, as though begrudging them.

"We met," he said. "I hope you'll make a good Navy man, Rice. You owe the Navy that much. You cost 'em Perry Gardner, you know."

The smile on Corby's lips tightened. He walked away with Pop into the dressing room, and in his heart, he was seeing a picture—a bitter, searing picture that he had hoped would have gone from him forever. Now, with the Larrupers in on the team, he knew that it would never die.

IT HAPPENED during that last brutal quarter against Lincoln the preceding fall. Corby's little Owls were not given a chance against mighty Lincoln. But it's always dangerous to underestimate a little light team, when they have a blazing spirit and one great running back. The Larrupers had ridden roughshod over them that first half. It was ten to nothing, going into the final quarter, and only three desperate goal-line stands had prevented the score from skyrocketing. And then, going into that last fifteen minutes, Corby had hobbled up from the bench and listened to his coach's final instructions. Little Frankie Hyers was white with nervousness, but there was a quiet, blazing pride in his eyes.

"You can do it, Corby," he'd said quietly, "even with the bum knee, that line against you, and them Larrupers. We've saved up for four years for this kid. Don't let those boys down."

The Owls were staggering on their feet. They had taken the best the Larrupers had for forty-five minutes, and there wasn't anything left but blood and courage. But they had that same quiet readiness that Corby had—the knowledge that this was the moment that Frankie Hyers had lashed into their beings for four long years of planning and hoping.

Corby went into the huddle. They were looking at him silently, wondering if he could do it for them. And, seeing their battered faces, the nervousness whipped away from him and nothing but a cold, clear resolve was left.

He said, "This is it, kids. Hold your hats and don't tip off this play. I'll see you under them uprights."

The Owls were backed up against their own goal-line. It had to be a running play or a kick. Nobody but a crazy man passes from coffin corner, with fifteen minutes left to pull a score out of the fire. Corby went back to his tailback spot, praying that the Larrupers would not guess the play.

He kicked the dirt out of his cleats, looking far down the field, where Sandy James, the Lincoln safety man was edging over toward the sideline. He flecked his fingers, praying that the line would open for him. And when the ball was passed, he ran straight past it, burst through center, and made for the Lincoln secondary.

That was another thing about Frankie's climax play. The tailback never catches passes, at least, not starting from the deep kicker's spot. But this was a play to break all rules. You had to break all the rules to take anything away from the Larrupers.

A hundred times, in the gloom of a hundred blackboard sessions, Corby had lived through the split seconds that were to follow. As he went through the line, he saw Perry Gardner, the Larrupers' halfback, cutting in to cover him. And that was the vital spot of all. The Lincoln speed boy, for all his slender build,

was the key to the Larrupers' defensive power. He had to be taken out of the play—completely out, to give Ike Sanders time to get his pass away.

Corby caught him from the side. It was a rolling shoulder block, but into it went all the hopes and fears of an entire season. He had a sudden glimpse of Gardner's shocked surprise when they hit, and then he was staggering clear.

Ike's pass was right on the beam, four strides for the sideline at mid-field. He counted five slowly, looked over his left shoulder, and it was floating down there, leading him a stride ahead. He took it just as Polly Kendrick hit Sandy James, bulling him out of the play. And then he was running alone down across the white lines, with a sob of joy in his heart.

He touched the ball down. The thunder was roaring down from the stands, but there was a queer shriek of fear in it, too. He tossed the ball to the referee and walked up the field, still dazed.

A little group of Lincoln players huddled above something that lay on the field. Something that writhed and made little choked moans. The four Larrupers had played their last game together as a unit. Perry Gardner's right leg was not a pretty thing to look at. He would never play football again.

Something happened to the Larrupers with that play. Corby ran through them for two more touchdowns in that blazing fifteen minutes that remained. But after the game, a little stocky guy in Lincoln green ran after him as they went down the runway. The little guy was crying through the grime and sweat, and there was murderous hatred in his eyes.

"I—I saw it all, Rice!" he said, tight-lipped. "You did what nobody else was able to do. Not with your skill, or the lousy build-up the kids have been giving you. We played good ball, but we never played dirty. You—you broke up the Larrupers. But before I get through with yuh—"

Roddy Evens, of the *Tribune*, stepped in fast, and his lank frame was a welcome shield.

"That's quite enough," Roddy said coolly, "even if there's a bonus in it for me. These kids played the pants off you

big shots. And Corby's my personal nomination to take on where Red Grange left off. If you wanna buck the Press, just carry on from here!"

And that was the way they left it. Not that Corby was at all appeased, nor Sandy, but because you cannot shout against the grain of a hundred thousand grid hounds, on a day a national championship changed hands.

That was the day that Corby Rice gained his name. And that was the day that three of the once four famous Lincoln Larrupers decided that one guy, and one guy alone, was their personal foe in a monkey suit.

THE BISONS had a fair club, streaky and shot with personal genius, but otherwise strictly from hunger. Link Furey was the goods. Not even a small town team could take that away from him. And the Larrupers, with or without Perry Gardner, were the finest set of backs a coach ever managed to dream up.

But there was something lacking. Corby found that out, the very first time he came down to practice. The Larrupers were the same old scourges of the grid-iron. But three great men can never buck four good ones. And the Bison schedule was crammed with climax games.

It was a hard thing to figure. It was a mixture of resentment and sheer envy, and there wasn't anything a guy could do about it. The Larrupers were worthy of their name. They were fast, shifty and overwhelmingly loyal. The first time Corby came out to drill, he was stiff and awkward and tight as a drum.

Pop Grayson said mildly, "Okay, guys. You been wanting to get up steam. Here's the hombre who can make it for you. Let's go!"

It was good talk, but it didn't work. They were battling the scrubs, a lowly gang that was made up of misfits and also-rans. Sandy was scrupulously fair. He said, with the same tight-lipped face, "Take the ball, Rice. We seen the way yuh gain ground. Maybe yuh can do the same for us."

The inflection of Sandy's voice, the naked enmity in his cold eyes, left noth-

ing but the picture of a guy who was destined to All-American greatness, and was left writhing on a cow pasture, outlawed from football forever.

Corby carried the ball four times. Four bleak times out of seven. The first three the scrub-line hurled him back for a sizeable loss. The last time he fumbled and the scrubs took the ball.

Pop took him out of there. It was just in time. The Bisons were openly rebellious, waiting for a single remark to start the fireworks. Lean Bill Travers said, "The hell with this! If we gonna lose, let's take it on the chin, but not under the belt—with a guy that knows all the tricks!"

Corby was tired and hurt and ashamed. Even the little Owl forward wall, for all their ineptitude, was more loyal than this hodgepodge of greatness. He said, tightly, "Okay, wonder boys. One guy can't fight against ten. Besides, I got a commission to get. And that's a little more important than anything you can cook up. When or if you want me, I'll be around. If you don't—happy landings!"

He walked into the dressing room. The Bisons were still working out. Pop Grayson, for all his bland face, was a tyrant of the first water when personal contact stuff was on the docket.

Old Matty Dawson was there. Nobody knew how old Matty was. But he knew a lot of football, and didn't hesitate to talk about it.

He said, almost too casually, "I seen a few good ball carriers, son. But I never seen one yet that was good enough to fight the enemy and his own team, too."

Corby replied, hoping that the tremor in his voice didn't show, "Nuts to that. Give me a week, I'll chop 'em down to my size."

THEY played Central Terminal. The Termites were fast, young, and full of awe and vague heroics. But they didn't have much in the way of football players. The Larrupers were in the saddle again. Sitting alone on the bench, ignored, almost snubbed, Corby could see the way little Sandy drove his polyglot team downfield.

They took thirteen points in the first

quarter. Bill Travers took the opening kickoff and ran a cool seventy yards, falling offside on the twenty-yard line. Sandy took it over himself, in three line plunges that had his own personal stamp of genius on them.

He kicked the point after touchdown. The guy was all steel and raw nerve. He was the Larrupers—but alone. Travers and Andreyeff were run of the mill, a little better perhaps because of the luck of having played with him.

Pop sent Corby in to play in the third quarter. The game was all in the bag. The luckless Termites were crushed beyond repair. On the first play, crouching in the huddle, Sandy said, "What the hell! Let the strong boy break 'em up! We done our part."

It was the solid old seventy-three. A straight off-tackle plunge to the right, with the running guards deploying deep into the secondary.

The day was made for running. The turf was springy and the sun was warm but not too hot. Corby settled easily into the familiar crouch, making sure, even across his tightness, not to point the play. The ball came in there, floating on a silver platter. Lars Larson, for all his personal feelings, could pass a ball off the beaten track. The Bison line opened, not much but enough. Corby slid through, feeling the familiar grasp of enemy hands scraping loose against his moleskins.

And then he was free, free with his tortured memories, and on open field.

The Termite safety man was cutting in fast, trying to break up the play. It was going to be close—too close for comfort. Corby, by instincts that had become etched into his being and deeper than reasoning, swung straight in. If the interference came in there, so much the better. If they didn't, he was on his own.

For a dreadful second, he thought that he was hopelessly boxed. And then running on a tightrope squarely across the white line, trying to reverse his field, he saw Sandy coming downfield fast.

It was enough. He fainted, shifted toward the sideline. The moment he saw Sandy leave his feet, he shifted on wings of light, and ate up the white lines.

He crossed the last white stripe, with-

out a single hand being laid on him.

The crowds from the stands cheered and applauded. It felt good, but it still seemed funny, playing for a team that virtually ignored you. He trotted up the field and Sandy promptly kicked the point after touchdown. The Bisons, for all their personal feuds, were a potentially great team. They went into the huddle and Link Furey said, "This is going to be a massacre." The Termites, already blasted beyond repair by the superior weight of the Bisons, had lost their nerve. Corby took the kickoff at the goal line and ran straight up the middle to the forty-five before he was brought down. The Larrupers knew how to carry their grudges, but they also knew plenty how to play football. The blocking on that run was something for the books. Not a hand was laid on Corby as he burst through the middle of the line.

Something like awe was on his face when they went back to the huddle. It was impossible not to say something about that marvelous brand of blocking. But the beginning of a smile died as Sandy snapped, "Okay, power boy. Hit that Termite guard a little harder. He's tired now. You ought to be able to knock him out, if you try hard enough."

And that was strictly below the belt. Because the Jones man, who had been playing plenty of guard for the beaten team, was burly and tough and fighting hard all the way.

A little surprised, shocked almost beyond comprehension, Corby looked at the lowering ring of faces. The Larrupers were stony-faced, but what was infinitely worse, the rest of the Bisons were stringing along with them. It was only natural, perhaps. The Larrupers were big-name stuff. And Sandy, for all his personal failings, was a really great inspirational leader.

There was only one thing to do. Corby put the ball gently into the big paws of Lars Larson. He said, "There's a war goin' on, pals. I came here to play—and for no other reason. If you don't want me on your team, that's your business. I'll be seein' you."

He walked off the field. There was a stunned silence from his stands. Pop

Grayson was waiting at the sideline. The Bison coach's face was red. He said, "I make the decisions around here, Rice. Get out there and finish this game."

Pop was a good football coach. He was also a lieutenant commander in the Navy, in full charge of personnel and discipline. But not even the possible loss of his commission could stop Corby now. He said tightly, "I can fight any team you schedule, mister. But I can't fight them an' my own team, too. I'm through."

He sat on the bench, amid a deadly silence, while Sandy and his men rolled up three more touchdowns to end the game.

THEY went into the dressing room. It was like a morgue. The Bisons, for all their latent power, were cumbersome and unwieldy. The Termites were by far the weakest outfit they would meet all year. After them came the Coast Guard, the surprisingly strong Arden Potwallopers, Yale, Columbia and the Saints. It was a brutal lineup.

The Larrupers were openly scornful. Sandy said, "We were stinkin' out there. We got a lot of muscle, pals. But we haven't got much of a football team."

Pop Grayson said quietly, "I've been here twenty years. Always I've had the dream of a team like this one. We got everything but a breakaway guy."

Sandy said, "You got Rice."

Corby cut in, "You mean you *had* Rice. I'm through, gents. For good."

"So we lose him," Bull Andreyeff retorted. "A dirty football player is never a good one, in my books. I can—"

Corby couldn't help it. He charged at the burly fullback. Surprised, Andreyeff ducked under the lighter man's looping right. Sandy tried to come between them, and Corby flailed him across the room, against the locker. Andreyeff said, "You're askin' for it, tough guy," and his right jab was expert and lightning swift.

Corby had a flash view of that rapier fist. And then a giant hand had picked him up and bludgeoned him across the room. Surprisingly, he did not lose consciousness. There was a dull pain at the base of his jaw. He was lying on his

back, half up against the locker. Pop Grayson, white-faced, was running across the room. The rest of the Bisons were standing still. There was neither compassion nor anger in their faces.

He got up. His legs were a little shaky, but the red rage that filled him was stronger than the pain. Andreyeff said, "If you've had enough—"

And then he was into the bigger man, his fists against flesh. The Larruper fullback was a tough fighter, but you can't match boxing science against a rage that has been smouldering for a year. Andreyeff grunted, more from surprise than pain, when Corby's first wild left caught him on the side of the face and sent him careening drunkenly across the room. After that it was strictly blood and knuckles.

Big Andreyeff was backed against the steel locker, lancing left jabs, trying to keep the lighter man off balance. Corby felt the sudden hot agony when his eye opened. He was past the stabbing blows, and hammering both fists against an iron mid-section.

It didn't last long. Andreyeff, for all his size and condition, was lumbering and slow. And the smaller man's burning attack had him off-stride and on the defensive. There was one sick moment when Corby thought that his legs wouldn't hold him up long enough to get the finishing blow across. And then he felt his knuckles split cleanly, against the other man's jaw. Andreyeff's eyes went blank and he put up one wavering hand, fingers open. Corby stepped aside, just in time to avoid the fullback's body as he crumpled to the floor and lay still.

Pop Grayson's big arm spun him aside. "Maybe I'm slippin' or something. But—I don't blame you too much, Rice. Only—I had a good team here. Something that would only take a little experience to make it a great one. And when I see it crumbling before my eyes, it's kinda hard to take."

Corby sighed through his weariness, looking at that ring of lowering faces. They were impersonal, unfriendly. He said, "It's the breaks of the game. I'll report to the scrubs Monday. You can stop me from playin' on your team, pals. But you can't stop me from playing foot-

ball. I'll be seein' you—soon, maybe."

IT SEEMED strange, playing with the lowly scrubs. Because of the manpower shortage, the javees were even worse than usual. Every good possibility had a varsity monkey suit. They had a good little quarterback named Freddy Lawson, who could make any college team in the land if he could only pass an English examination. They had a lumbering giant named Pat Cawley who could play a lot of tackle but liked his firewater more. The rest of them were earnest and enthusiastic, but that was as far as it went. They welcomed Corby with unconcealed glee. Freddy Lawson said, "Jeepers, we got a guy who can carry the mail, for a change. Okay, kids. You're in the big time. Let's knock these fatheads over."

It was a good idea, but, looking at that awesome Bison array, Corby could see how difficult it was going to be. The Larrupers were the best in the business. Just looking at them running through signal drill, seeing the effortless perfection with which they ran through their plays, brought a lump to Corby's throat. Always, through the good, hard years, he had been the standout back on a mediocre team. Here, for the first time, he had the stuff that could carry him to dazzling heights. And they would have none of him. It was bitter stuff, but he was wise enough to know that a team is only as good as its spirit. With him in there, hated and mistrusted, they would fall apart. And that back-breaking schedule needed teamwork above all to pull them through.

Pop Grayson was hiding his disappointment well. He said, "We'll run through fifteen minutes of contact work. Varsity's ball, on their own forty. I wanna see a touchdown in four plays."

Freddy Lawson said, "Hold your hats, kids. The earthquake is comin', but fast!"

When the ball was snapped, Corby watched Sandy's feet. They shifted to the right, and automatically he ran in that direction. It was a shovel pass from center, with Andreyeff taking the ball from center and spinning, faking the play. But Sandy was in the clear, five

yards out of the play and doing nothing. And that was not the way the Larrupers did things. For a second he thought that he had missed the play, so perfectly had the Larrupers masked it. And then, at the last split second, he saw the cunningly screened lateral, three yards in front of him, just where Sandy was running in the clear. It fitted into his hand like a well worn glove. He juggled it on his fingertips, trying to evade Sandy's vicious lunge. Suddenly, out of nowhere, Freddy Lawson's diving block had cleared the road and he was in the clear. He touched the ball under the goal posts and walked back up the field. The javees were jumping up and down. Freddy Lawson was puffing and there was a cut under his eye, but there was nothing wrong with his grin. He said, "I only got about three blocks like that in me, pal. It was a pleasure to give one of 'em to you."

Pop Grayson said, "We got the Yales and the Coast Guard. An' we let the second team run through us like butter. My friends, we are gonna meet trouble from now on!"

THEY took the field against the Coast Guard, on a day that was made for football. The sailors had Augie French, the great Iowa speed boy in their backfield, and he made trouble right from the opening whistle. He took the kickoff behind his own goal, came straight down the sideline—and, with a tricky reverse that completely fooled Bill Travers, snake-hipped into the clear. On the bench Freddy Lawson grunted, "Sucker play. But it's gonna work, I bet."

Sandy was charging diagonally cross-field to cut him off. For all his size, the Bison quarterback was plenty of man. He bulled into French—on the twenty-yard stripe, and the shock of collision was audible even on the bench. The bigger man was going too fast to be knocked down, and Sandy had wisely caught him from the side. For a dreadful moment it looked as though he would run right through the Bison safety man. And then the referee's whistle sounded and he was pointing to a footmark inches outside of the white line. Sandy was get-

ting up, shaking his head groggily. But he was all right. The Sailors poured on the power. A line thrust through tackle, which Link Furey stopped after a three-yard gain. A sweet spot pass over center, good for a first down on the nine. And then Augie French, without interference, ran around right end to score standing up. It was all speed and slithering hips. The guy had a lot.

The Bisons straggled downfield. Sandy was limping badly. That block had taken its toll. But the Larrupers, for all their ineptitude, were still dangerous. Bill Travers took the next kickoff to the thirty before they ran him out of bounds. Sandy sent Andreyeff through the line on straight power plunges. The big guy was terrific when there was power work to do. He was breaking the tough Coast Guard forward wall, getting through for three to five yards at a clip. In exactly twelve plays he lugged the ball down to the five. Sandy, still limping badly, took it across on a delayed spinner that was a miracle of masked deception. He kicked the conversion and it was seven to six.

Slumping on the bench, excited beyond himself and completely frustrated, Corby watched the battle. The Coast Guards, minus Augie French—the speed boy had left the game, battered almost insensible, after Andreyeff had put a crashing block on him—were faltering in the last stages. The Larrupers were flashing the stuff that had made them great. Sandy's masterful hand was shaping the plays like a chess player. A power play to pull in the secondaries. And then that flat pass from Sandy to Travers. It worked four out of six times, like clockwork. They rolled up four more scores before Pop took them out. Link Carey, in Corby's spot was adequate, but inexperienced and too tightened up. They came off the field and it was twenty-eight to six. Pop met them in the dressing room. Sandy's right knee was like a melon. The trainer took one look at it, beckoned Pop over, and said, "It's tough, kid. But you don't play no more football this year. Not if you wanna save the gam for the Navy."

The Larrupers were stunned. Travers said, "What the hell! Without that guy,

you can kiss that championship goodbye.”

Pop said, “You gotta come back, Corby. We got a team here, if we can put it together. I’m an old man, an’ I’ve been waiting all my life for a team like this to show up. Now I’ve got it, I want it to click. You going to play ball with me?”

It was hard to answer, looking at that ring of unfriendly faces. Whatever Sandy had done or been, he was a born inspirational leader.

Angelo Ricci said flatly, “We got a better outfit without that guy, Coach, if you want my opinion.”

Surprisingly, Sandy said, “Nuts. You need him. If Bull hadn’t sounded off, he’d have fitted into this outfit good. With me outa there, you gotta use Corby—even if you hate his guts!”

They got by Yale. Nervous, a little shaken, Corby played worse than he had ever played in his life. On the opening kickoff, trying to watch two Blue ends converging on him, he fumbled ingloriously and Yale recovered in the Bison ten. They hammered a score over in four plays. But Andreyeff and Travers, for all their enmity, were good football players. They didn’t speak, but they knew how to carry out assignments, and they were working for Pop. The little coach had them all cheering for him. It was a funny thing, because he felt the same way himself. The boys, almost without exception, were strictly big-name stuff. Football was a part of them, but it was a lost heritage, and they were playing for Pop, not for any college. But they were good enough, and loyal enough, to do a good job of it. They rolled up thirty points against the Blue, and that perfect Bison line was impregnable after that first brief onslaught.

They came into the dressing room, tired but proud. They had met the best in the East, and it had been a breeze. Corby’s leg, damaged in that fatal Lincoln game, was bothering him a little, but he was too proud to mention it. Andreyeff had a mouse under one eye and a tooth was missing, but the big guy was full of power and enthusiasm. His fight with Corby had rolled off the big guy’s hide like a casual scrimmage. The Larrupers hated well, but they were good guys. Corby sighed, watching them.

They were three-quarters of a great backfield. And the guy who had cut them down was the only one who could take Perry Gardner’s place. But they would have none of them.

THEY ran into Gardner on the eve of the Central game, the final one of the season. It had been a good year, all things considered. The Larrupers were too good to louse up an assignment, too fair to loaf on a job. But they were never as good as when Sandy was running them. And star-studded Central was too big to outfight without perfect teamwork.

Gardner came in the dressing room, right after Pop’s final blackboard talk, a slight, studious looking gent with a slight limp. Andreyeff saw him and his shout brought the Larrupers running out of the shower.

Perry Gardner said, “I see you lugs have been doin’ all right without me.” But his eyes were wistful. Travers said heartily, “That’s what you think! We coulda had the best damn team that ever rolled, only—”

Perry Gardner’s eyes wandered around the room, came to rest on Corby. He grinned boyishly and stuck out his hand.

“That’s one guy I’d like to have on my side,” he said. “You gents are pretty hot stuff, but I never saw a better climax runner than this guy.”

There was an awkward silence. Sandy said defensively, “There’ll never be another breakaway guy like you, Perry. How’s the leg?”

Perry flexed it, a little gingerly.

“Not good enough for the Navy,” he said. “You really hit when you meet a guy, Sandy.”

Sandy’s mouth hung open incredulously.

“You—you said—”

Perry lit a cigarette. His hands were not quite steady, but the slow lazy grin was still on his lips.

“I didn’t wanna mention it,” he said. “But I been reading the papers and I can read between the lines a little. This Corby Rice is plenty of runner. I want to set the records straight, for his sake, and for yours. Remember that play I got busted up, Sandy?”

The little quarterback nodded numbly. "This Rice guy came streaking down there all alone," Perry mused. "I was a little slow coming in for him, because I thought the play was going to be a straight running formation. We were ahead and I was a little careless and too relaxed, anyway. So the Corby Rice slips me just about the best running block I ever ran into and my feet were over my head and I was falling on my noggin. And—just as I hit the ground, before I could protect myself, a Larruper came hell-for-leather past and his cleats caught me on the shin, and it busted. I could hear it go."

Sandy said, "You mean—"

"I was nearly out," Perry said, "but I saw the number on the guy's jersey before the pain came. I hate to say it, Sandy, but it was seventy-one."

Sandy's face was gray, but his eyes were clear and direct. He walked over to Corby.

"I've been a tramp, guy. But I thought I was right, and I'm not ashamed of it. I won't ask you to shake hands. But I wanna tell the rest how wrong I was."

The quick moisture was stinging Corby's eyes. He said, "All of us make mistakes. I—I'm used to fighting alone. But—it's good to know I got ten men on my side from now on."

Pop Grayson said gruffly, "Take it out on them Centrals. They need it!"

THE CENTRAL ENGINEERS were like something out of a nightmare. They averaged over two hundred pounds per man in the forward wall. They had Cupie Ray at quarter, the old Harvard brain trust. They had Lou Roscoe, from Northwestern, and the immortal Polly Morse, from Santa Clara. They were plenty of poison, and they lost no time pouring it on.

It was cruel. It was as if the Fates, having carried them through the bad times, were through with them and were making up for all the good breaks. They trotted out on the field and Sandy saw them to the sideline. The Larruper's eyes were a little misty. He said, "Win this one for me, kids. An'—take an extra lick for Corby. The guy's due."

Tight as a drum, Corby fumbled the

opening kickoff and Polly Morse took it out of his very hands, eluded Andreyeff's frantic block, and catwalked across the line standing up. They kicked the extra point and it was seven to nothing. The clock at the end of the field hadn't even begun to register any time.

They went back to their positions. Corby was gray of face. Big Angelo Ricci said, "What the hell! We can spot them lugs three more an' catch 'em before the last whistle."

It was brave talk, but that Central power was something. They slogged down the field in a bitter, bone-crushing battle that was almost impossible to endure. The two lines were smart and strong, and it was almost suicide to try to break a hole through. Ricci went in on a mouse-trapping off-tackle play and they carried him off the field, completely out. Raging, Andreyeff carried the ball eight successive times on his own insistence, and gained exactly twenty-three yards before they had to give up the ball on downs.

When they went out there again, the Centrals had a big new team in against them. The Engineers were three deep in every department, and the replacements were as good as the starters. There should have been a law against it. They came pounding down the field with that pulverizing off-tackle sweep, running three men ahead of the ball carrier. A good end could fend off a couple of them, but invariably the third one got free to put a block on the secondary. It was always good for yardage. Only the superb line play of the Bison forward wall kept it from being a massacre.

They came down to the five. Beaten, almost out on his feet, Corby saw Polly go back to the receiving slot. The Engineers were going to coast from here on in. The ball was snapped to the left and he shifted, watching Polly's feet. They were pointing in the opposite direction, and instinctively he ran back there, completely out of the play. For a second, he thought that he had been suckered into leaving his spot uncovered for a touch-down pass. And then he saw Polly break for that sideline, in a naked reverse that was sheer masked beauty.

There wasn't time to run. He left his

feet, rolling with the impact so that the momentum of his lunge brought him to his feet again. There was a sudden sharp shock of impact, a startled grunt, and the ball was floating in the air, a half stride ahead of his taloned fingers.

He took it, careening off two Engineer ends. The Central secondaries were on top of him, completely screening him from the field, and then suddenly, Travers was through them, and his savage diving leap took them out of the picture and the long thin road down the sideline was clear.

He went over the goal line and touched the ball reverently to the ground. Ricci said "Make this one, pal. Make it if yuh never do another thing!"

Still bemused he booted the ball high between the uprights.

They stayed that way for twenty-eight terrible minutes. Minutes when the sky poured down and the sheer power of that Central fury lashed at them with steel claws that ripped and tore and hurt. They took a Central kick on their own forty and Andreyeff running like a madman bulled straight into that stonewall for thirty yards. They had the ball on the enemy's thirty and there was time for one more play.

Corby called them into the huddle. They were bruised and gone but they were a team at last and he was glad,

somehow, that he had been a part of them, even for this one game. He said, "Kick it over, Travers."

Big Travers spat on the turf. He said, "There's only one guy who rates this spot, pals. You do it, Corby. An' I don't care whether it goes or not—you're my idea of a football player."

He went back there, for this time it would be the last. He was completely bushed, but his team was in even worse shape. They had played that last half without a substitution. The ball was snapped and he kicked, with a strangled prayer on his lips. For a dreadful moment he thought that it was going to be short. And then, on miracle wings, it slithered between the uprights, and the roar of the crowds came pouring down, just as the gun barked, ending the game.

They went into the field house. They were dying, but they were very happy. Pop Grayson was waiting for them. The little coach had a glass of beer in his hand and his eyes were misty. He said, "I've seen 'em come and go, kids, but this will always be my team."

Sandy said, "We took the headlines away from you, Corby, out of our selfishness and pigheadedness. I'm glad we could give them back to you. You're regular Navy, pal."

It wasn't much. But it was more than enough.



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HIGH STICK BAD MAN



I wouldn't have sent him in if he hadn't begged me. . . .

by

**DUANE
YARNELL**

IN HOCKEY garb he looked bigger, older, grayer than when he'd walked into my office that morning. He came gliding across the ice from the dressing room ramp. He was like a ghost from the dead past and when the fans recognized him they sat stunned, unbelieving.

He came up to the Seal bench and leaned over the rail. I looked at him for a long time before I said anything. There was no sign of a crackup within him. There was nothing in his eyes but confidence.

"Rowdy," I said, "I'm giving you the chance you asked for. For your own sake, I hope you don't muff it."

Rowdy Allen, at thirty-nine, had come back to my Seals after a ten-year layoff. He was too old to play hockey but he'd talked his way into a second chance. Now, facing me, he exhibited the same sincerity that he'd shown me earlier that day in my office.

"Thanks, Doc," he said quietly. "You won't regret it."

A few moments later, the two teams took the ice. Rowdy Allen was my

"When you get that puck, tough guy, start comin' my way—for I'm gonna knock you clear back to the bushes like I did ten years ago!"

starting center. He bent over his stick, waited for the ref to drop the puck between him and Terror center Tim Lewis.

The rubber disc dropped. The Terror center stabbed frantically. Rowdy was like a slow motion picture. He wasn't in any hurry. But his movements were deft and sure, the movements that come with experience.

His stick reached gently toward the puck. He got it on the back side, drew it toward his body. The Terror center slashed at Rowdy's stick and ice shavings sprayed from his slashing skates. But Rowdy Allen stickhanded beautifully. He whirled away from his opponent, swung into an open zone of clear ice.

The home fans applauded as Rowdy Allen turned on a burst of speed that carried him to the boards. I kept my fingers crossed, prayed a little. In a moment I knew that one of the fans would start it. I wondered if Rowdy would be able to take it.

From high up in the balcony, a Terror fan screamed, "Give him a high stick! He's yallah!"

Rowdy had reached the boards on the far side. A Terror winger came gliding in from an angle. He smashed into Rowdy and his stick was high, the butt end stabbing dangerously close to Rowdy's eyes. But the Terror screened the foul from the referee. I couldn't see Rowdy Allen's face, but the back of his neck was white.

Something died inside me then. After ten years, nothing had changed. He's still the same old guy who let them drive him out of the game with high sticks. I was a fool to listen to him.

Then it happened. Rowdy Allen ducked the high stick and slammed the puck into the boards. He whirled and took it on the carom. His blades churned the ice as he sped for the blue line. He was like a thundering truck on sled runners. The Terror defense came up to meet him. But Rowdy swerved past them, fired the puck for the end. It bounced wide of the cage, came shooting back toward Rowdy as he charged.

The maneuver was slick. Rowdy was past the defense when he retrieved the puck again. He stabbed at the puck and it clung to the crook of his stick as if it

had been glued there. He cut straight for the cage. The Terror goalie tensed, spread his body like an angry turkey, trying to block the entire opening.

Rowdy held his fire. He was ten feet away, then five. He fainted for the left corner. The goalie dropped his club to trap the shot. Then Rowdy feinted to the opposite side and the goalie dived. It was lightning fast, but the third time it was not a feint—it was the McCoy. Rowdy drove the puck into the corner that had just been vacated. The net cords bulged and the red light blinked.

We were leading the vaunted Terrors one to nothing and the game had only begun.

The Seal fans screamed Rowdy's name. He had come back to them and he had delivered in the clutch. Like fans everywhere, they proved their willingness to forget. But even as they yelled for him I wondered if anything had changed. It was early yet, much too early to tell. Rowdy was skating lazily toward center for another face-off but I wasn't watching him. I was watching the Terrors. They were whispering to each other and their eyes were grim. I couldn't help seeing that they were carrying their sticks a little higher than usual. I was a little bit afraid to think about what might happen. I guess I couldn't forget what had happened in this same rink ten years ago.

ROWDY was in his prime then. A product of the lumber country, he'd believed the old axiom that hockey was an exercise in the survival of the fittest. He was the biggest center in the league and the cleanest. He was so big and so efficient that the only way to stop him was to gang him.

Every defense team in the league had a yen to stop Rowdy Allen. They checked him harder, hit him faster and handled him rougher than any other man. Rowdy took it and laughed in their faces and bounced back for more—until I bought him.

My Seals met the Terrors for Rowdy's first game in a Seal uniform. The Terrors had a fresh young defenseman, a kid named Rip Lukats. Just before the face-off that night, Rip Lukats yelled, "When

you get the puck, Rowdy, bring it toward me. I'm gonna knock you clear back to the bushes!"

Everybody heard it. And when Rowdy got the puck, the rest of the players on both sides just sort of drew away and let him take it toward this fresh Rip Lukats by himself.

Rowdy was barreling when he crossed the blue line. He drove straight for Rip Lukats. Rip was coming at Rowdy from an angle. They hit solid and there was a tangle of arms and legs, a grinding of wood and metal. They went down in a flurry of ice dust and it was Rowdy Allen who didn't get up. Rowdy had a cut over the bridge of his nose and he was out cold.

I yanked him and when he came out of it, there was a queer look in his eyes. "Rip Lukats high sticked me," Rowdy said. "It was so slick I guess the ref missed it."

I sent him back. I felt sorry for Rip Lukats. But I needn't have. Something had happened to Rowdy. He would skate like blazes until he'd meet a man holding a high stick. Then, for an instant, he'd falter and the hesitation would prove fatal.

You know the rest. They whispered around the league that the great Rowdy was afraid of a high stick. They whispered that Rowdy Allen was yellow. The fans turned against him and in the next few games Rowdy lost the reputation it had taken him ten years to attain.

Rowdy came to me in mid-season. His eyes were bleak. "Doc," he said. "I'm washed up. Rip Lukats gave me a high stick and it did something to my eyes. Things are jumpy. I keep getting worse instead of better. I'm going to retire."

I thought of the dough I'd spent, of the plans I'd made. I was pretty bitter. "So you're running out!" I accused. "You're everything they've said about you. You're yellow!"

He shrugged and there were tears in his eyes. "I'm sorry you said what you did, Doc. It hurts." Then he walked out of there and my Seals finished in the cellar.

I saw him just once after that. I was scouting through the timber country for players. I found Rowdy running a mill.

Rowdy seemed glad to see me. He introduced me to a skinny fifteen year old, his son, Jimmy.

"I'm training Jimmy to take my place," Rowdy said proudly. Then his expression got worried and he drew me aside. "The kid thinks I was pretty good, Doc. I'd rather you'd not say anything about how I left."

I didn't make any dirty cracks and later, I was glad that I didn't. Young Jimmy put on a puck-snagging exhibition on the millpond. He was a natural, slim and fast as a whippet. Rowdy was training him for me, sort of a free will offering to make up for what he'd done to me.

But I didn't get Jimmy. The Navy beat me to him. I'd forgotten all about Rowdy until he'd walked into my office this morning and he'd begged me for one more chance. I knew I was a sucker. I knew he'd failed me once, that he'd been driven from the game by too much high sticking. But something in his tone this morning had made me decide to gamble again. I needed help. I'd lost two of my best players in an accident.

Right now, we were leading one to nothing and the fans thought everything was going to be all right. But when I saw the Terrors get set with their sticks a little too high, I knew what was coming.

Suddenly, a new man skated into the game for the Terrors. It was almost as if ten years had been wiped away. The new man was Rip Lukats, no longer a freshman but a thirty-year-old veteran. Rip was grinning as he took his place.

He yelled, "Bring the puck toward me, Rowdy. I'm gonna knock you back to the bushes like I did last time."

ROWDY'S face was white. I was smoking a cigar and when I took a puff the smoke wouldn't come. I'd chewed it into two pieces. The puck dropped. The rink was as still as a tomb. You heard the puck hit the ice, heard the scraping of skates and the clatter of sticks. But Rowdy got the puck.

Again the players sort of hung back. The Seals wanted to know if Rowdy had licked his complex. The Terrors were

willing to bet that he hadn't. It was going to be a showdown.

Rowdy Allen had a clear path. He was gathering speed as he crossed the blue line. He swerved to his left, toward Rip Lukats. Not a fan breathed so you could hear it. You could hear only the heavy breathing of the players, the slap of their bodies as they made light contact.

Then Rowdy and Rip Lukats were together. Rowdy couldn't break through. He whirled, bounced the puck off the boards. Rip and Rowdy drove for the loose puck together. Their bodies came together. The ref was screened from the play. Rowdy leaned forward for the puck and it was over as swiftly as a streak of lightning. As Rowdy reached, Rip Lukats brought his stick up under Rowdy's chin. Rowdy smashed down onto the ice. He hit the barrier and was almost immediately up on his feet. Rip Lukats didn't go for the puck. Instead, he stood there waiting, a grin of triumph on his face.

Rowdy started to peel off his gloves and I thought, *Slug him, Rowdy, and I'll pay you a bonus.* But suddenly, Rowdy changed his mind. He made an ineffectual stab at the puck. His stick got tangled with Rip's skates and Rip tripped to the ice. The ref saw that. He gave Rowdy a couple of minutes in the penalty box.

I was sick. So was the crowd. Rowdy had been too yellow to fight back.

The Terrors had six men to our five. They sent their men screaming down the ice in five-man rushes. Rowdy was in the penalty box for two minutes. It cost us a point a minute. The Terrors pushed two into the nets. We were trailing one to two when Rocky came out of jail.

Beside me, Butch Reardon said, "I told you that bum would ruin us, Doc. When they turn yellow, they don't come back!"

Butch Reardon was my regular center, my first lineman. He'd been sore when I'd started Rowdy. Now, in the face of things, I decided I couldn't blame him. Butch had given me a lot of trouble in times past, but I couldn't accuse him of lying down on the job. He liked to carouse and he hated training rules.

But on the ice, he'd always delivered. I'd jerked him to give Rowdy a chance. Now, I was going to have to make it up to him.

"Get in there," I said. "Get in there and win for me!"

Butch Reardon was right that night. It was uphill the rest of the way. I was short handed. My Seals took a battering. But with Butch leading them, they began to hack away at that lead. It was three and three when the overtime began. It was four to three in our favor when the overtime ended. We'd won and we were tied for the title. Tomorrow night we would play for the cup.

Rowdy Allen? He spent the rest of that game on the bench. He spent it with his head buried in his hands. And when the overtime period started, when he realized that I was through with him, he didn't wait for the finish. He skated off to the dressing room alone and nobody missed him. When we skated off at the finish, Rowdy had dressed and was gone. It made me a little sick to think of it. There is something about a man losing faith in himself that gets you.

I TOLD my gang to get to bed early and forget the beer until we'd won the title. Then, to make sure that they'd followed orders, I checked their rooms when I got back to the hotel.

They were all in bed, with the exception of Butch Reardon. Butch was sprawled on his bed, reading a comic magazine. He was pulling on a cigar when I walked in.

"You oughta be in bed," I said.

Butch made a wry face. "I was waiting for you, Doc. I want to talk to you. I guess you know we're good for a title if we win tomorrow night."

"If we win!" I said. "We've got to win!"

"You can't win without me," he said.

"You're not sick, are you?" I asked quickly.

He took his time. "Yeah. I'm sick of playing for peanut money. I've given you everything I've got and tonight you paid me back by embarrassin' me in front of the fans. You sent a yellow punk into the lineup in my place. And when I finally got a chance, I had to

play my guts out to win the game.”

I had to admit that Butch was right, although I didn't say it out loud. You can't give Butch that much of an edge. I looked at him and said, "What are you driving at, Butch?"

Butch said, "We're short handed. You saw tonight that you couldn't win without me. Tomorrow night, if I play, we've got a chance at a title. It'll mean thousands to you, Doc. To get to the point, I'm sick of promises. I want some real dough. Is it worth a bonus of two grand for me to play in the title game?"

I wasn't mad. I was sick. I remembered the times I'd gone without a salary myself in order to pay guys like Butch Reardon. I remembered the times I'd faced the stockholders, that I'd begged them to give me a little more time. I hadn't underpaid these guys—I'd overpaid them! And now my star center was putting me over a barrel. He was virtually blackmailing me into handing him a bonus.

I said it very slowly and in words of few syllables. I didn't want Butch Reardon to misunderstand me. "Butch, I've gone all these years without a title. I've taken a lot from you. But I'm not taking any more. If you want to forget the bonus, be in suit tomorrow night. Otherwise, forget it. There are some things a man won't do—even if it costs him a title."

He was grinning as I walked out of there. "I'll be in suit," he said. "But I won't play until you ask for me. When the going gets tough, you'll be willing to kick in with the bonus. I'll be where you can find me."

I felt lousy when I walked out of there. I don't know why I remembered, but I found myself recalling that Rowdy Allen had checked into the room next to mine. I wondered if he'd checked out, although I don't know why it mattered.

I knocked on his door. After a moment, he said, "Who is it?"

I pushed the door open. He was lying on his bed, fully clothed. He was staring at the ceiling. There was a small lamp on his bedstand and a glass of water under it. When Rowdy saw me, he reached for the glass of water. He grasped quickly, clumsily. The water

spilled onto the floor and a marble rolled across the rug.

I reached down to pick it up. Then I looked at Rowdy. I guess he was more embarrassed than I was. The thing I'd mistaken for a marble was Rowdy's glass eye.

I sat down on the edge of his bed. I said, "Rowdy, maybe you'd better do the talking."

Rowdy said, "I went blind in my left eye the first night I wore a Seal uniform. The night Rip Lukats high stucked me."

"But why didn't you tell me?" I demanded. "Why didn't you let me know? Why did you let them keep calling you yellow?"

Rowdy shrugged. "You know how it is, Doc. Sometimes, when an athlete hurts an arm or a leg—or an eye, the word gets around. You can't blame your opponents for taking advantage of you. I was afraid if I told 'em my left eye was gone, they'd play me on my left side all the time, on my blind side. I kept thinking I'd be able to fool them forever, that they'd never know. But things got too tough for me. They started high sticking me and I guess that the thought of losing that other eye worked on me. I had a kid to bring up. I wanted him to have an easier time than I'd had. Maybe they were right when they called me yellow for pulling out. I don't know."

I put myself in Rowdy's shoes. I said, "Rowdy, you're not yellow. You never were."

"You thought I was yellow tonight," he said. "You jerked me after I'd refused to tangle with Rip Lukats."

"Why didn't you slug him?" I asked.

Rowdy said, "He came in on the left side. I felt the high stick, but I didn't see him give it to me. The Terrors had another man close to the mixup. I thought maybe he did it but you can't clip a guy for something you didn't see him do."

"No," I said, "I guess you can't."

"I'll make up for it tomorrow night," Rowdy said. "If you'll give me a chance, Doc."

"A chance to go blind?" I said disbelievingly.

Rowdy looked at me as if I were crazy.

"Doc," he said softly, "a man has to take chances if he wants to live with his conscience. What happened to me probably wouldn't happen again in a hundred years. I've learned to make one eye do the work of two. Maybe I've been a little too careful in the past. But that was because of my kid, Jimmy. He's a man, now and on his own. If he can fight Japs every day, I guess his old man ought to be good enough to play a few more periods of hockey."

"If you don't deliver," I said, "they'll never stop talking about you, Rowdy."

"Are you afraid?" Rowdy taunted.

"Hell, no!" I said gruffly. "I'll never be afraid of anything again."

Rowdy turned around and dropped the glass eye into a glass of water. "Good night, Doc. I reckon I'd better get some sleep. I've got a feeling I'm going to need it."

THE TERRORS couldn't believe their eyes when Rowdy Allen took the ice in place of Butch Reardon. They didn't know, of course, that Butch was holding out for two thousand.

The ref skated out to the center ice. It was Rowdy against Tim Lewis. The rink got quiet. From down deep in enemy territory came a bullfrog challenge: "When you get it, Rowdy, skate for me."

Rowdy said, "More than likely I will."

Then the puck hit the ice. Sticks stabbed at it. Rowdy Allen got there first. Rowdy fired to the sideline. Frenchy LeBleu snagged the puck and started down the boards with it. He took it almost to the blue line. Out in center, a stick was slapping the ice, Rowdy Allen's stick, calling for the puck again. Frenchy met a human barrier and backhanded over to Rowdy.

Rowdy took it on the fly. He was across the blue line in an instant. He was driving straight for Rip Lukats. But this time I noticed that Rowdy was keeping Rip on the outside. This time he was taking no chances of getting caught on the blind side.

They rushed together. Rip made a stab for the puck, missed. Then his stick came up. He made no effort to hide it from the ref. He fanned at Rowdy's face.

Rowdy Allen jerked his head aside but the stick grazed his temple. It peeled skin and silver hair into a little pile that soon turned crimson. The bell clanged.

But Rowdy Allen didn't stop. He had his glove off in a flash. He shoved his right fist into Rip's nose. There was two hundred twenty pounds of muscle behind that blow and it sent Rip backward, landing on his pants. He skittered across the ice and bounced off the boards. Rowdy followed him. He reached down, picked Rip up and the Terror defenseman was like a sack of grain across Rowdy's shoulders. Rowdy reached the penalty box in half a dozen strides. He leaned forward and Rip went sailing into the penalty box.

The ref skated up. He said, "Rowdy, it breaks my heart, guy, but I've got to give you the full five minutes. Rip comes out in two minutes if he's able."

Rowdy said, "It's okay, chum. It was worth it."

You should have heard those fans. They loved Rowdy Allen at that moment. They didn't know what had happened except that a veteran had found himself.

Me? Well, I had a lump in my throat, I guess. A lump that got bigger as our team fought the Terrors to a standstill during the next two minutes. But when Rip Lukats came back onto the ice, the complexion of things changed. The Terrors had six men and we had but five. For three minutes more that margin would hold against us.

And in three minutes, our title hopes went glimmering. The Terrors swarmed all over us, six men to our five. They dented the net cords for two swift scores. When Rowdy came out of the cooler, we were trailing nothing to two.

I called Rowdy in for more rest. I sent in my third center. His eyes were miserable when he sat down beside me. "It's my fault, Doc," he said. "Maybe I could have taken care of him without all the fuss."

"If you had," I said, "you wouldn't be going back in there again."

Again his eyes took on that confident look. "What're we waiting on?" he said.

I gave him a couple of minutes to cool off. Out on the ice, the game was a

dogfight. Both teams rushed down but neither defense cracked. We were going to have to battle for those scores tonight. I turned and gave Rowdy the nod.

They screamed his name as he skated back there. It was a face-off on the blue line in enemy territory. The puck darted around and then caromed off the boards and into center ice. Rowdy and a Terror wing went for the puck together. I saw the high stick and I kept my fingers crossed. But Rowdy averted the stick. He snaked the puck and as the Terror winger crashed into him, Rowdy gave him his hip. He smashed the winger into the boards, whirled and started a rush of his own. Rowdy got almost to the blue line before Tim Lewis of the Terrors stopped him. Rowdy checked hard, but he gave back more than he took. And even as Rowdy fell to the ice, he flipped the puck to Joe Turpin.

Joe's goal attempt went wide. The Terror goalie cleared to his own defense and once again the melée started. It was that way all during the rest of the first period. Every time Rowdy Allen got the puck, the Terrors centered their fire on him.

They gave him the works—high sticks, hard checks, everything. But Rowdy Allen laughed at them, threw the punishment back into their faces. It was a great exhibition of courage. But even as we skated off, I knew where it was leading us.

Rowdy Allen was taking too much for a veteran. He was game, he was fighting back, but that punishment was taking a toll of his strength. Somewhere along the line he was going to crack.

I SAW the signs of it halfway through the second period. They weren't fouling Rowdy any more. They didn't dare, not after what he'd done to Rip Lukats. But they were roughing him within the bounds of legality and he was gradually slowing down.

I was getting ready to jerk him when he took the puck near our own goal. Rowdy circled the cage. His shoulders seemed heavy and, as he wove a path up the ice, he seemed to be trying to shake some of the pain from those shoulders. He was in center ice before they

made a serious attempt to stop him. Mink Moley of the Terrors came driving in. Rowdy didn't wait for Mink to get there. Instead, he fired the puck to his right. It looked like a pass to Frenchy. But it wasn't. It was a clever carom shot and when Rowdy reached the blue line, the puck was bouncing toward him.

Rowdy crossed the line. The two Terror defensemen were trying to close the aisle. They rushed together fast. Rowdy saw that he couldn't make it in time. So he fired wide of the cage and the puck bounced off the boards and back toward the blue line.

Rowdy Allen gathered himself for one great try. As the defensemen closed in front of him, Rowdy leaped into the air. He hit Rip Lukats with his hip, Ed Brown with his shoulder. It was like driving a wedge into a tree stump, watching the way he split them. He came down behind them and he somehow managed to keep skating.

The goalie saw the puck bouncing back toward Rowdy. The goalie gambled. He dived for the puck, tried to trap it with his body. But Rowdy snaked the puck out from under the goalie's belly. He sped past the man with the puck still glued to the crook of his stick. He skated straight into the mouth of the cage and his wrists swung easily, almost insolently. The red light glowed and the puck stopped in the right hand corner of the net. We had drawn first blood. Now it was Terrors, 2; Seals, 1.

They gave Rowdy a great hand as he skated off the ice. They knew he was finished but he had gone down gloriously. I put an arm around Rowdy's shoulder and he sat down beside me. "Nice going," I muttered. "It was a great way to finish."

"Finish?" His tone was a question mark. "It's never over until the end."

Butch Reardon was sitting behind me. I turned and gave him a look that only Butch could understand. "It's too bad," I said, "that some of the others don't feel the same way about it."

Butch looked away. Then he buried his head in his hands. He'd made his decision. He could sit this one out if that was the way he wanted it. I guess I had my pride, too.

I didn't send Rowdy in until halfway through the final period. I wouldn't have sent him then if he hadn't begged me. You can't say no to a guy like that.

From the way Rowdy skated out there I knew that he'd managed to store up a little energy. And from the look of concentration on his face I knew, too, that he was going to burn it as a comet burns out. One stupendous sweep across the horizon, then his energy would be spent.

Rowdy got the puck away from Tim Lewis. He banged Tim aside with his shoulders. He was facing his own goal and he didn't deviate from that path. He drove straight down the ice, his skates zinging, his stick keeping the puck out there beside him.

Tex Edwards tried to stop him. Tex got bumped aside for his effort. Then Rowdy was smashing across the blue line, smashing straight for Rip Lukats. But this time, Rip Lukats had extended no invitation. Rowdy was driving at him unsolicitedly. Rip Lukats started for Rowdy, then hesitated. Ed Brown came over to try to help.

And in that instant of hesitation, Rowdy set up the shot. He feinted a shot through Rip, then backhanded easily across the ice. It was a lateral pass and Frenchy LeBleu was waiting for it. Frenchy took it on the fly and banged away at the goal. The goalie had only time to stop it.

He dived for the puck as it lay out there in front of the cage. As he fell, he managed to take Frenchy down with him. But the French-Canadian was smart. He flipped the puck to Rowdy and Rowdy Allen smashed it into the nets before the startled goalie knew what had hit. The light glowed and the rafters rang with the cheering. We were tied, with ten minutes to play.

Ten minutes. I sat there hoping when I had no reason to hope. We were playing the roughest team in the league. The Terrors had a full lineup, plenty of fresh subs. We'd made a great stretch rush and at the last, we'd lost two key men. To plug that gap, I had only Rowdy Allen. And right now, Rowdy Allen was all but spent.

The Terrors got the puck on the face-off. Down they swarmed, all five of them—all but the goalie. They were cocky, confident. They knew their rush could win for them. A puck cracked at our goal. But Rowdy Allen dived and cleared it with his stick. The puck was taken by a Terror wing. Once again they smashed at the cage. This time, the puck got past our defense. It took a diving stop by our net tender to avert a score.

The action was terrific. Time and again the Terrors poured the puck toward the nets. Time and again it was Rowdy Allen and our goalie who managed to stave off a counter. It was eight minutes, six, four. . . .

There was an off-side and a face-off on our blue line. The fans were hushed. Rowdy looked at his men. He snarled at them. "Don't stop now! We can take these guys yet!"

A hand was shaking my shoulder. It was Butch Reardon. Butch was shouting above the din. "I'm going in! I can shift over to wing. I can help that guy!"

"No bonus," I said flatly.

"Who said anything about bonus?" he snapped. "Dammit, I *want* to go in there."

BUTCH went in at right wing. And Rowdy Allen stayed in. I saw Butch whisper something to Rowdy. Rowdy stopped a minute and

FOR A
Merry Christmas



GIVE WAR BONDS

grinned. Then they were facing off and the mad scramble was under way again.

The Terrors got the puck. They started down the ice. Rowdy drove in, tried to poke check the puck away from the Terror center. But before Rowdy could get there, Butch Reardon had swept in from the flank. Butch trapped the puck, stole it neatly. Without skating a stride he fired to Rowdy.

Rowdy Allen sent a diagonal shot toward Frenchy and the little winger carried the mail to the blue line. A step across the line, he poked the rubber to Rowdy. Now, swiftly, three Terrors converged upon Rowdy. They were taking no chances with him. At last, they had learned to fear him.

Rowdy hit the three men head on. He hit them hard and knocked them in three directions. But he didn't have the puck when he did it.

He had already passed it to Butch Reardon.

And Butch, with only the goalie to worry him, held his fire until he was in the mouth of the cage. Then he feinted the man out of position and blasted on between his skates.

They tore the house down. They threw cushions onto the ice. They got up and started a snake dance. They yelled for Rowdy and they yelled for Butch. It took five minutes to get order restored. Five precious minutes that didn't hurt Rowdy Allen a bit.

The Terrors were trailing and they had to gamble. They swarmed down in a five-man rush. But Rowdy broke it up. Rowdy fired a pass out to Butch and then the relay was winging to Frenchy. Butch, Rowdy and Frenchy were behind the entire Terror team. They went weaving toward the goalie crisscrossing and maneuvering so that the goalie couldn't keep track of them. They converged upon him together. In desperation, the goalie charged Butch. But Butch passed to Frenchy and Frenchy passed to Rowdy and Rowdy was standing in the mouth of the cage with all the time in the world. . . .

For all practical purposes, that was the finish. We scored once more when the Terrors tried to gamble on another fruitless rush. We won five to two and

it could have been a dozen if we'd had more time to play.

IT TOOK them half an hour to get through carrying Rowdy around on their shoulders. He finally managed to fight his way to the dressing room, and when the door had been closed and we were alone for our celebration, Rowdy Allen sat down. He was fagged and spent, but brother, he was happy.

I went over to him and put my arm around him. I said, "Rowdy, you've paid me back. You've squared your debt to me."

He had a funny look in his one good eye. He said softly, "No—I've squared a debt with Jimmy. This one was for him."

I didn't get it. Not until Rowdy handed me a letter from his son that had been passed through the censors. Only then did I understand. I read the crisp, boyish scrawl:

Dear Rowdy:

I guess you'll soon hear how they recommended me for a medal. Maybe the papers will get it wrong. Maybe they'll make it sound different than it really was. I want you to hear it right.

I caught this Jap cruiser getting set to pour shells into one of our hospital ships. I didn't have much gas left to get back to the carrier. Then the cruiser saw me and began to fire flak. I was scared, Rowdy, until I remembered that I was your kid. They shot me up pretty bad, but I got down through and somehow, I dropped a five hundred pounder through the deck and into a powder magazine.

Somehow, Rowdy, I don't think I could have done it if I hadn't felt that you were riding beside me. So now, when you hear about it, you'll know. . . .

I gave Rowdy the letter. I said, "So that was the angle. You wanted one more chance. You wanted to prove to yourself that you were everything your son thought you were!"

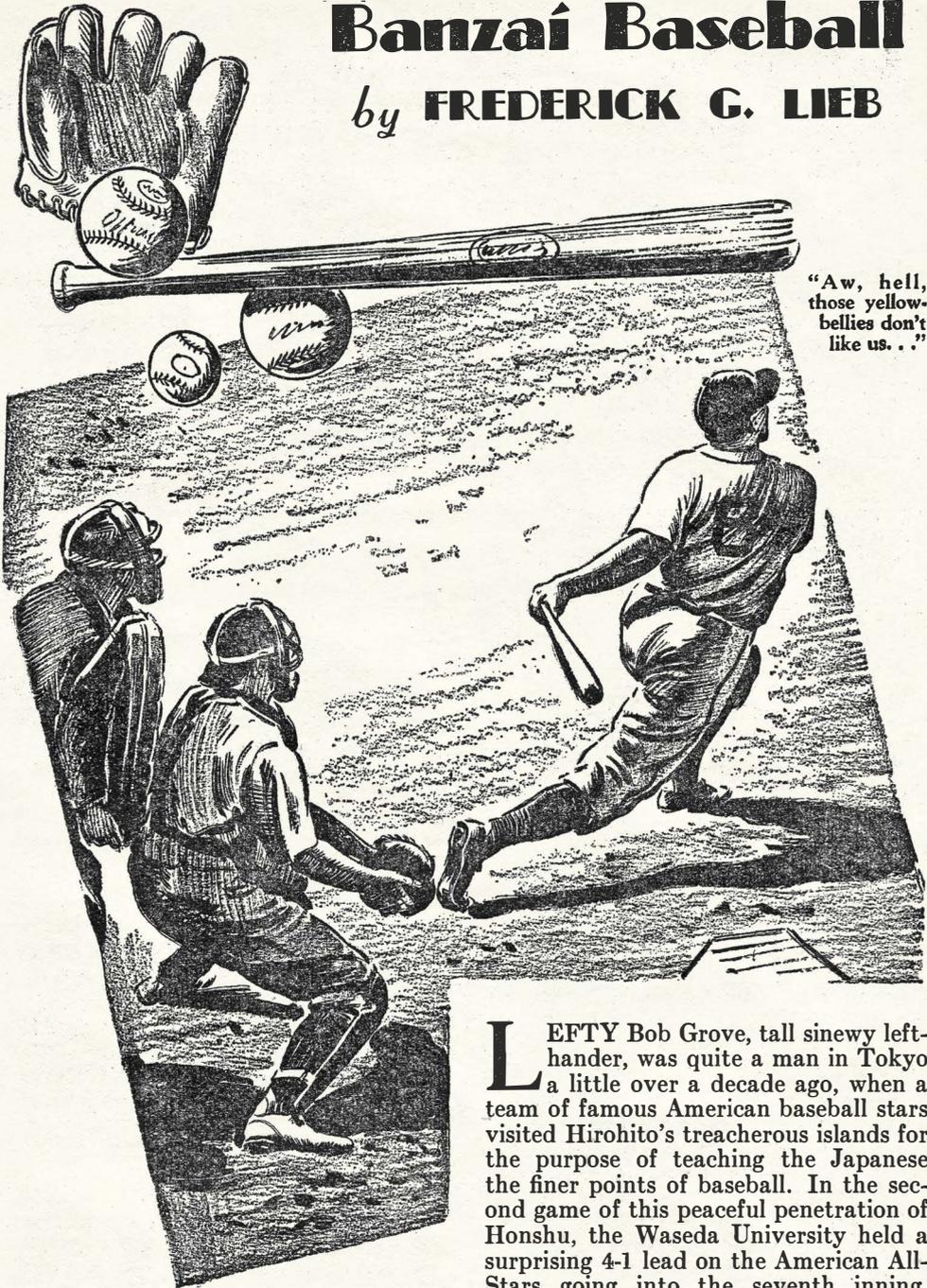
Rowdy nodded and his eyes were misty.

"I'm gonna write Jimmy a letter," I said. "I'm gonna send him the clippings of this game. Then, Rowdy, I think maybe he'd like to know that I'm making you my manager."

Rowdy grinned. "Yeah, I think he'd enjoy it," he said.

Banzai Baseball

by FREDERICK G. LIEB



“Aw, hell, those yellow-bellies don’t like us. . .”

A famous sports writer tells how the Japanese took to the Great American Sport—in their own peculiar way!

LEFTY Bob Grove, tall sinewy left-hander, was quite a man in Tokyo a little over a decade ago, when a team of famous American baseball stars visited Hirohito’s treacherous islands for the purpose of teaching the Japanese the finer points of baseball. In the second game of this peaceful penetration of Honshu, the Waseda University held a surprising 4-1 lead on the American All-Stars going into the seventh inning. Then Lou Gehrig, Frankie Frisch, Al Simmons, Lefty O’Doul, Mickey Cochran, *et al*, put their woods to the ball and rolled over seven runs in one fruitful inning. Grove was sent in to hold the

lead, replacing Larry French, and Lefty held it with streaks of chained lightning. It was the year Grove won thirty-one and lost only four in the American League, and he didn't let down because he was pitching against pint-sized Japs. Nineteen times he reared back and flung that Japanese apple to the plate; he got eighteen strikes. Only once Beans Reardon, the American ump, called a ball, and no Japanese even got a piece of the ball for a foul.

So far Japan has been pretty much on the offensive in this war, but ten years ago it thrilled at the defensive in baseball. Those six strike-outs, on nineteen pitches in two innings, were considered the high spot of the 1931 visit of the American barnstormers, far greater than any subsequent homers by Gehrig, O'Doul or George Kelly. Whenever the Americans started one of their other pitchers, Bruce Cunningham, the little Brave right-hander, or Larry French, now of the Dodgers, the Japanese fans took up the cry: "G-love! G-love! G-love!" It was their nearest approach to pronouncing "Grove."

Naturally Bob was besieged with requests for autographs, and the Japanese autograph hunter is just a little more aggressive than any other species. Before leaving San Francisco, Grove had his signature reproduced on a rubber stamp, but most of the fans objected to the stamp and tried to thrust their leaky fountain pens into Grove's hands. When they became too insistent, Lefty took no pains to hide his displeasure. He snapped a few choice Cumberland mouthfuls right into their grimacing faces, and when he referred to them he did not speak of them as Sons of Heaven. It got so that Grove would lock himself into his room, and even ducked some of the team's social obligations. "Why don't they leave the ball players alone?" he bellowed.

Some of the other players told him that he wasn't doing right by his country and baseball. Lou Gehrig, the old Columbia athlete, had found a fraternity brother in the official Jap interpreter, one Matsumoto, a University of Washington and Harvard man. Lou argued with Lefty. "We're here on a mission of

good will. These people are our hosts, and we've got to act accordingly."

"We've got to act like good Americans," said Grove's teammate, Al Simmons, whose name on his American passport was spelled Szymanski.

Even Grove's particular buddy on the expedition, Rabbit Maranville, whose pal on the voyage from San Francisco to Yokohama had been a frolicsome Japanese rear admiral, said, "They're only trying to be nice to us, Lefty."

"Aw, hell, those yellow-bellies don't like us," snapped Grove. "They'd stick a knife in you just as quick as look at you."

MANY Americans have an idea that baseball is something new in Japan. Actually, it goes back seventy years. It used to be said that "baseball follows the flag;" in Japan, it followed the Cross. Not so long after Commodore Perry opened the Hermit Kingdom to Western civilization, American missionaries established themselves on the islands. They built mission schools, and in the playgrounds of these schools they introduced the youth of Nippon to the great American game. Other Japanese, who took advantage of generous Uncle Sam's invitation to study in our schools and colleges, also took baseball back to the islands. Being small of stature, agile and born jugglers, they took more naturally to baseball than to our more popular collegiate sport, football.

American college teams, especially those from the Pacific Coast, visited Japan early in the century; they were followed by teams from Chicago, Harvard, Michigan and other great universities. The teams from Keio, Waseda, Rihkyo and Hosei played return engagements in the States. By the time Charley Comiskey and John McGraw took a team around the world in the winter before the first World War, baseball was firmly entrenched in Japan. The Americans visited Tokyo, Yokohama, Kobe and Nagasaki and showed the Japanese such ace ball players as Tris Speaker, Sam Crawford, Buck Weaver, Larry Doyle, Mike Donlin, Mickey Doolan and Hans Lobert. After Decem-

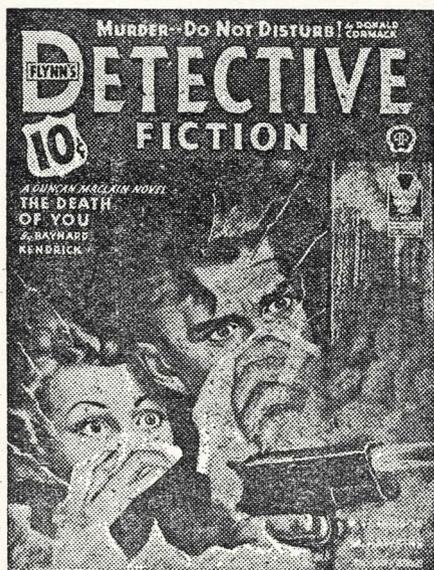
ber 7, Lobert, now manager of the Phillies, remarked, "And to think I helped teach those people baseball. I only wish I could help unlearn 'em."

Herb Hunter, a young ball player, took a team made up largely of stars of the champion Giants and Yankees of 1922 to Japan in that year—Casey Stengel, George Kelly, Irish Meusel, Waite Hoyt, Joe Bush, Herb Pennock and Freddy Hofmann. Later he piloted educational missions in which Ty Cobb, Bob Shawkey and Ted Lyons taught the fine arts of hitting and pitching, and George Moriarty and Ernie Quigley held classes in umpiring. The day before Cobb sailed for the States, his uniform disappeared from his hotel room. Ty doesn't know to this day whether a Jap manufacturer paid some bell-hop to filch it, or whether the Department of Police suspected he had maps of the Meiji Shrine Stadium in his pants pocket. Anyway, it was an old Japanese custom.

Several years later, a sporting goods manufacturer, who had gone out of his way to be agreeable and helpful to a later mission, asked whether he could look at the gloves used by Gehrig, Cochrane, Maranville, Grove and the other players. He wanted to examine the workmanship so as to improve his own product, and thereby help raise the caliber of Japanese baseball. Gullibly, the play-

ers turned the gloves over to him. A week later big ads appeared in the Tokyo newspapers, advertising the Lou Gehrig first baseman's mitt, the Mickey Cochrane catching mitt, the Al Simmons outfield glove, the Willie Kamm third base glove, and so on.

In 1931, the year Japan invaded Manchuria, it is safe to say that a greater percentage of men and boys played baseball in Japan than in the United States. They had no football other than a little soccer; golf and tennis were out of reach of the average Japanese pocket-book and wrestling between fat human sausages, the former national sport, was losing its hold. Baseball was the sport of the masses. It was the number one college sport, with the Big Six University League the big league of Nippon. The ball yards in Tokyo and Kobe outseated anything we have in the United States, with the exception of the Yankee Stadium. Young men working for commercial houses started games at day break, getting in seven innings and more before reporting to business; workmen rushed through their meager lunches of rice and fish to devote the rest of the noon period to playing ball. In a twenty-mile ride on a shore road running out of Yokohama, the writer saw thousands of ball games played on the beach, one overlapping another.



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Japan gave the 1931 American All-Stars a royal welcome. A crowd estimated at over a million lined the Ginsha, Tokyo's Broadway, to welcome the big-leaguers, and 450,000 Japanese attended seventeen games, with four week-end games in Tokyo playing to a quarter-million fans. But, looking back on it with the perspective of a decade, the great welcome to the American ball players was just a smoke-screen. The Manchurian adventure was nearly over, the military clique was plotting the attack on Shanghai, and on the surface the Government was trying to show how much it loved Americans. Herb Hunter and the writer were invited to the Foreign Ministry to be welcomed officially, and a remark by the Under Foreign Secretary was the tip-off. "I have just been working on the translation of a message from your very splendid Secretary of State," he explained. "Ah, but your Mr. Stimson is a difficult man to convince of our good intentions!"

Connie Mack and Babe Ruth took the last team of big-leaguers to Japan three years later. Again Lou Gehrig went along, and it was another great team—the Babe, Lou, Jimmy Foxx, Charley Gehringer, Lefty Gomez, Earl Averill, Bing Miller and other stars. Again they did all but slay the sacred fatted deer for the Americans—at least on the surface. And as he left Japan, that patron saint of American baseball, the beloved Connie Mack, gave out a statement on his seventy-second birthday: "I believe the trip of the American League stars did more to promote a better relationship between America and Japan than anything that has occurred in the past ten years." And dear old Connie believed every word of it from the depths of his guileless heart!

The famous baseball linguist, Moe Berg, of Princeton and Sorbonne, divided the catching on that team with Frankie Hayes of the Athletics. Moe even learned to speak Japanese so that he could talk shop, baseball and good will with the sons of Nippon in their native tongue. Last winter, as a member of the War Department's propaganda staff in Washington, Moe sent a short-wave broadcast to Japan in his

best Japanese, asking the good sportsmen of Nippon (if any) to reject their war-lords and play ball under the enlightened rules of democracy.

There were several phases of American baseball which the Japanese couldn't get, and it proves the inconsistency of their two-faced national character. They couldn't understand our players' arguing with the umpires or riding their opponents—jockeying, we call it. "An umpire is the official of play; he represents authority and should be honored and respected, not abused," said one higher-up in their Big Six University League when Frisch, Cochrane and Maranville not only bellyached at Beans Reardon, but at the Japanese college umpires. As for riding opponents from the bench or coaching lines, it simply wasn't done. To do so, they felt, would be losing face.

Warm-hearted, sincere, honest Lou Gehrig, always wishing to be helpful, addressed a group of almond-eyed players at Waseda. He told them that the Japanese had reached a point where they could play good mechanical baseball, especially in fielding and pitching. "But you don't fight hard enough," admonished Lou, one of the best hustlers in baseball. "Go in there and fight; put more spirit into your play, and don't be afraid of us. We don't mean half of what we say out there, but if we do any talking, you come right back at us."

Maybe they took Gehrig's counsel too literally, but he put his finger on something when he said the Americans didn't mean half of what they said in their good-natured ragging. Neither did the Japanese mean their punctilious politeness, their profuse thanks, their smiles, their grimaces, their bows.

As for Gehrig's remark about the Japanese failure to put our spirit into their game: they simply couldn't, because they never learned the spirit of American baseball. In their seventy-year contact with our national game, the real spirit of baseball, the soul of the game, never penetrated their yellow hides. It meant fair dealing, square-shooting, an inherent decency and an ingrained respect for the other fellow. And the Japanese just didn't understand that.

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bottles of wine just before going on, they said, forgetting that it is a fighter's own hard luck if he's not ready when he goes into the ring. Another excuse was that Jim was not expected to go through a brannigan when he was hired for a boxing exhibition, failing to mention, however, that Jim had fought in alleys and on barges before he turned pro. The fact is, under the rules as they are today, Tom Sharkey might well have been crowned champion of the world. Later on he was to show that he was indeed Corbett's master, but not until Bob Fitzsimmons had lifted the bauble from Jim's handsome brow, so that beating Jim would not gain Tom the crown.

As a result of that fight, everybody wanted to know more about Sharkey. Here was a man who asked nothing but to get in there and fight.

Could he beat good men or was this bout a freak?

He was matched with Joe Choynski, the man who had nearly beaten Corbett twice and had knocked out Jack Johnson. The bout was to be eight rounds, and Choynski guaranteed a knockout or accept loss of the decision. They made screwy matches in those days.

The bell rang for round one. Sharkey walked straight in. Choynski uncorked one of his twisting, slashing lefts, the punch that had beaten Jack Johnson. Sharkey took it without blinking. Sharkey got in close and let go a shower of rights and lefts, each hard enough for the knockout, if it hit a vital spot. Choynski covered up; then let go another left.

Sharkey landed two to the midsection at the bell.

Round after round followed the same pattern. In round seven Choynski caught Tom behind the ear with one of his lefts, and sent Tom diving through the ropes. Tom landed on his head on the wooden floor. He got up, climbed back through the ropes and, at the end of the round, was hammering Joe all over the arena.

In round eight, Choynski knew now that he had to land the hardest punch of his life to win by a knockout. Sharkey walked in, standing straight, but Choyn-

ski took chances, left himself uncovered to get more leverage into his left. Sharkey landed left and right to the chin. Choynski was staggered; he stepped back. Once more Choynski tried to get set but Sharkey gave him no time. A right to the jaw and Choynski nearly went down.

The fans were gasping. They expected Sharkey to backpedal. Under the terms of the fight, all he had to do was to stay this round and the duke was his. But Sharkey came straight on in. A draw would have been a fair decision, but Sharkey might well have been called the winner, for the end of the round found him still attacking, still coming in strongly.

THEN began the long list of breaks which kept Tom from ever becoming champion. He was matched with Bob Fitzsimmons. Everybody wanted to know whether this savage Sharkey could last more than a round or two with the hardest punching light heavyweight of all time.

Sharkey walked in, standing straight up. Fitzsimmons started a left hook for the heart. To everybody's astonishment, Sharkey made a defensive move. He picked the punch off before swarming all over Fitz and landing four lefts and two rights to the head. Fitzsimmons stepped back and started another punch. Sharkey picked it off and came in again. At the bell Fitz was on the ropes, taking it.

Round after round went by in much the same pattern. Sports writers and fans sat on the edges of their chairs, waiting for the break—the climax that was sure to come. Bets were made that Fitz would end it with one punch. Other bets said that Fitz himself would go down.

However, there never was any climax. At the end of eight rounds, Sharkey had won beyond any question. He was the first man to beat Ruby Robert Fitzsimmons in the United States, but the bout gave the promoters nothing on which to build Tom up. There simply had been no drama.

Corbett and Fitz were matched for

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HOOP JITTERS

by
**LANCE
KERMIT**



"It took a sub to show us
how to play a game . . ."

JOHNNY LANE, the kid from Brooklyn, was walking on air. What happened to him was hard to believe and Johnny pinched himself to make sure it was true.

He was in college and he was going to play on the varsity basketball. It all seemed like a dream and Johnny waited for someone to break the bubble. He had

never figured on going to college, let alone playing collegiate basketball.

Back in Brooklyn Johnny'd played on his high school team. On winter nights he'd made the trek over to Manhattan to the Garden where big-time amateur basketball was played. Johnny paid his fee and climbed the stairs to the top tier to look down at his heroes. He didn't root for any special team. He just sat there drinking in the game he loved.

Everybody at the Garden knew him. "Some day, Johnny," they said, "you'll be playing down there instead of watching."

But Johnny knew he'd never make the Garden. He couldn't afford to go to college and nobody had offered him a schol-

You're the best man here. I'm building the attack around you, Lane. You're the spearhead."

The season was three weeks away and the team practised hard in the little time it had free from studies and drill. Rutledge had a tough schedule but they were going to give it everything they had and Johnny was in there pitching.

One day when he came down to practise, Sam Brand's face looked like a full moon. He wore a grin from ear to ear.

"You look like you had good news from home," Johnny said.

Brand stared at him. "You ever hear of Flipper Walsh? Of Dizzy Bergman?"

"Sure," Johnny said. "Who hasn't? They were mighty good basketball

"You're the best basket maker I ever saw, kid. But you'll never play for me. You win games playing for your team in this league, pal—never by playin' for yourself!"

arship. He played a steady forward on his high school team but he was just five feet, eight and his team had never had a championship record. It looked as if all his life he'd climb the stairs and watch other men play.

That was what Johnny thought, but the Nazi paperhanger and Tojo changed all that. Johnny found himself in the Navy, and after a while he discovered that he was scheduled to go to college, to Rutledge out in the Middle West.

Johnny promptly reported for basketball. Sam Brand, the coach, was glum. He had coached good teams in his day, but this year there was nothing much available. He watched his candidates stumble around the floor and then he saw Johnny. The kid was moving around out there as though his pants were on fire. He took a pass, dribbled around a befuddled guard and flipped a one-hand shot down through the cords.

Johnny made the team right then. He took the coach's eye and he was a regular forward.

"We don't have much of a team," Sam said to Johnny. "These guys are willing but that is about all I can give them.

players. But why the excitement?"

Brand went on, "And if you know them, you know Len Krider, Spider Sand, and Hank Blaine."

Johnny knew all the names. He's never seen any of them play because none of them had ever hit the Garden in New York, but they were fabulous names in basketball.

Sam Brand said, "I thought it was a mirage. I'm sitting in my office this afternoon thinking of all the whippings we were going to take this season. I hear a noise and look up and I see five guys in front of me. They look familiar and I identify them—Bergman, Walsh, Krider, Sand and Blaine—five of the best players in the country. I think to myself that I am seeing things and probably will be cutting out paper dolls next. And then they speak and I discover they are real."

Johnny was just beginning to get it. "They're—"

Brand broke in. "Navy guys, Johnny. An order just went through. A couple hundred cadets were transferred here to Rutledge. Those guys were in the group. They're going to play for

Rutledge. Now we'll have a team that will rank with the best!"

For Johnny it became dark and gloomy. The dream was over, the balloon smashed. He wasn't going to be the Rutledge basketball team spearhead. He wasn't going to lead the attack at all.

Brand suddenly realized how the news was affecting Johnny and tried to cover up his own elation. "Listen, kid," he said, "you'll get in there occasionally. You're my number one sub."

Johnny tried to find a ray of hope in that. But from top man to bottom man in a couple minutes was pretty tough to take. He couldn't beat any of those guys out of their positions, and now he was going to be just a guy sitting on the bench. He thought of the clippings he'd sent back home to his folks; he remembered the headline in the college paper that read, "Rutledge hoop hopes rest on Johnny Lane."

FROM then on, in the brief practises before the season opener, Johnny played on the scrubs and his eyes bugged as he watched the varsity. They were rusty but they had it. They were dream players all, and the only trouble was in fitting them into a unit. They had come from different colleges, from widely separated sections of the country and now Brand had to gear them to his style of play to make them a harmonious team. But they were all big and fast and they could shoot.

Hank Blaine, the six-foot-four right forward with the rumbling voice and the deadly eye, treated Johnny like a kid brother. He said, "You got the makings, kid. You'll be a ball player some day."

But Johnny knew it wasn't true. This was his chance and once he was sent out on active duty his college days were over.

He sat there when the season opened against State. The coach said, "State is loaded. We got a potentially better team, but our boys got a very late start. They're way off to what they will be in another month. It may be tough."

Brand was proven right at the start. The referee tossed the ball up and Dizzy Bergman won the tip. It went to Spider Sand and the boys started working the ball down the floor. They knew the

plays and they didn't make mistakes, but their timing was off just a fraction. And State had already played two games. They broke up the passing play, stole the ball and a red-jerseyed State forward sank the ball for first blood.

Rutledge attacked again and Bergman, who spun like a top as he went down the floor, started on a one-man offensive. But he was rusty and again State took the ball and made it good to take a four-to-nothing lead.

It was that way all through that first half. State had the edge in condition and practise that made all the difference. The teams went off the floor and it was twenty-one to eight. It was bad, but the Rutledge regulars were not too perturbed.

Dizzy Bergman drawled in the locker room, "We were bad, Sam. But I think we're ready now. I think we'll show you something come the second half. We'll take these lads apart."

"You'll get going," Brand said. "But don't take too many chances. You got three personals now, Bergman. Another one will put you out. We can't afford that to happen. We got a great first team, but nothing beyond the first five, no reserves."

They went up to the floor again and Bergman had called the turn. The State team was taken aback by the sudden onslaught thrown at them. Spider Sand began to demonstrate where he'd acquired his nickname. As a guard he seemed to have eight arms and legs. Dizzy Bergman at center and Blaine and Krider at the forwards had found their eyes. They began to rattle shots at the hoop and slowly they were cutting down that lead. It was an uphill fight all the way. They came within three points of tying and then State broke loose to score a basket. Rutledge crept up again, and went ahead by one point. Then Dizzy Bergman fouled his man.

Brand swore softly, then said, "It was bound to happen. Fortunately, there's only a minute and a half to go. Maybe they'll miss that foul. You're in there, Johnny. You take right forward. Blaine will shift to center. Hold 'em, Johnny."

He stripped off his sweat clothes and raced out on the floor. The State player had two shots and he made them both

good. State had a one-point lead and time was running out fast.

Rutledge took the ball out and started racing down the floor. Johnny broke loose and went into high, racing across the boards. Near the enemy basket he cut toward the corner and shouted for the ball. It came at him on a line but high, and he saw a State guard going up after the ball. Johnny gathered his legs under him and went up into the air in a desperate effort. He saw the guard driving at him and then the man crashed into him, their heads hitting. Johnny saw the lights fade, he was falling backwards and then his head struck the floor. He knew no more until finally he opened his eyes. He thought he was still playing basketball and started to jump up.

The trainer said, "Take it easy, boy, You're all right. The game was over five minutes ago."

"Who won?" asked Johnny.

"Rutledge," the trainer chuckled, "and you won it for 'em, Johnny."

Johnny shook his head in bewilderment. "I made a basket?"

"No. You were fouled, Johnny. You had a couple shots. But you couldn't take them because you were out like a light. Somebody else took them for you and made them both good."

Johnny sat up. He could focus again and the team was all there grinning at him. Hank Blaine roared out delightedly, "Nice going, Johnny. You knocked yourself out for dear old Rutledge. That's using your head, kid."

"I'm glad we won," Johnny said.

He took his shower, dressed, and went on home. He was in the public eye once more—not as a basketball player, but as the guy who had gotten conked and somebody else had taken his foul shots for him. It was one of those things that would become a campus legend.

Everybody enjoyed it but Johnny. And he was glad when the story was finally forgotten. He was still the number one sub and he made all of the trips but he didn't get in any games.

THE first team had come into its own. They had learned Brand's style of ball, and they were clicking as a unit now and rolling up the

scores. They went up into the sixties in two successive games and they were beginning to get notice all around the country.

They began to get nibbles from Madison Square Garden and there was talk that they might get a game there. It sobered the team. They were big and confident but there was something about playing in the Garden that awed them.

Hank Blaine put it into words. "I always wanted to hit the Garden," he said. "I never thought I'd get there."

The others felt the same. Each man had been a single star on a team, and now that they were together, they might get the chance.

They played twelve games without a defeat. Johnny got in two of the games, playing in the last few minutes when the win was safely tucked away. He made a few points, picked up experience, but he was not happy.

Hank Blaine said one day, "You don't make mistakes out there, Johnny. You play a nice game of ball. This isn't a five-man team, it's six. We got a good sub in you. We all know that if one of us has to go out, there's a good man coming in. We count on you, Johnny."

They were nice words to hear from the big star. But every time he went in he heard a chuckle from the gallery. "Don't knock yourself out, Johnny," they yelled at him. "Take it easy, kid."

They had a game coming up with Lewiston. The team was very good. They'd dropped just one game early in the season but now they were hot and the game between the two colleges promised to be a titanic clash.

And then the day before Sam Brand called the team together after their final practise for the contest. He looked more serious than usual. "I didn't know whether to tell you fellows this or not," he said. "It might make you press if I did tell you but I'll take a chance. The point is that the winner of this game is going to get an invitation to the Garden. I've been tipped off by a New York reporter who's a friend of mine. They're watching us tomorrow and the winner gets the bid."

"It's in the bag," the irrepressible Dizzy Bergman yelled. "We're going to the

Big Town, boys! We're going to show the city slickers how to throw the ball around. And after the game we'll kick the dog around!"

Exuberantly he clamped a headlock on big Hank Blaine and they began wrestling across the floor. Brand yelled for them to cut the clowning but they were both laughing and didn't hear him. They lunged into a bench in their path, tripped and sat down heavily. Hank Blaine's face went white suddenly.

Dizzy Bergman got up; Hank Blaine just sat there. He looked across the floor until his eyes met Johnny Lane.

"How you feel, Johnny?" Hank said in an odd, strained voice. "In the pink?"

"Sure," Johnny said. "Why?"

"You better be," Hank said. "You better be red hot, Johnny. Don't look now but I got a busted ankle."

The trainer, summoned hastily, looked up from Hank.

"It isn't broken," he announced. "Only a sprain."

Sam Brand threw up his hands. "That's all," he moaned. "A sprain he tells me. He can't play, can he? It might as well be a broken back."

Abruptly Brand calmed down. "All right," he said. "Forget it, Bergman. It was a fool thing to do but it's done. There's no point in crying about it. Johnny Lane takes Blaine's place. It'll be tougher but we'll take them anyway. We can still do it and go the Garden."

"You bet we will!" Hank roared. "You remember what I told you, Johnny. You were a good ball player to start with and it hasn't hurt you any sitting on that bench. You're the kind of guy that learns by watching. We'll murder 'em, Johnny. You're our secret weapon."

Johnny went back to his room that night and it was different now. The news had spread like wildfire all around the campus.

As Johnny went to his classes the next day, everyone spoke to him. "You can do it, Johnny," they said, and he knew that the last fiasco, where he had been knocked unconscious, was forgotten now. They were counting on him; they needed him.

This, he thought, was what he had wanted.

AT EIGHT o'clock that night Johnny walked out on the floor with the team. He got a thump on the back from Hank Blaine who had insisted on getting into uniform, although he wasn't going to play. His ankle was taped and he had a basketball shoe loosely laced over it. He would not get in but he was on the bench.

With Blaine on the sidelines the big Lewiston team was confident and anxious to get started. Johnny shook hands with his opponent and then waited tensely. Dizzy Bergman solemnly stood at center. The ball spun high and Bergman was up like a cat, reaching for the ball, spitting it forward.

The coldness left Johnny then. He went high and got the ball and twisting in the air, he saw Krider cutting down the far sideline. Johnny fired the pass right into Krider's hands.

Hitting the floor again, Johnny raced downcourt, cutting away from the basket. He reached the corner and his guard ran even with him. Johnny made a sudden right angle turn, and knifed straight back toward the basket. When he was underneath it he jackknifed high. Dizzy Bergman slammed the ball at him from center court. He picked it off the fingers of the reaching Lewiston center, twisted his body like an eel and dropped the ball through.

The crowd came to life with a roar as Johnny landed on the floor again. On the bench Hank Blaine pounded his knee. "I'll never get back in there again," he shouted gleefully to Coach Brand. "The kid's too good. He'll cut my throat."

"He's got it," Brand said. "But I wish he didn't know the Garden game hinged on this contest. There's a lot of pressure on him in his first start."

"We roll," Dizzy Bergman said. He scored on the next play. Spider Sand came down and dropped one in, and Flipper Walsh sent two in a row spinning through the netting.

It was ten to nothing in the first five minutes, the beginning of a rout and then Lewiston came back, fighting a defensive game, holding them, and then working down the court themselves.

They made it twelve to six, and then

it was fourteen-twelve eventually, and Lewiston was playing the game expected of them. It had figured to be a tight contest with either team able to win but only by a point or two. It was going just the way the experts had predicted, a nip-and-tuck affair that would probably be decided in the final few minutes.

But out on the floor Johnny Lane did not think of that. He only knew that it was too close for comfort. And a thought kept running through his mind. This game hinged on his play. With Blaine out there it might be different. Lewiston tied it up and panic began to creep through Johnny.

He took a pass at midcourt and flung a long shot at the hoop. It missed and as soon as he had tried it, Johnny knew it was an error. He should have passed, Bergman had been open. He'd been too anxious to make that shot. He'd been thinking of the score and not the play.

He got the ball again a moment later, and glancing across the court he saw Krider open. He had to make it good, he thought desperately, and whipped a pass across the court, then groaned the instant it left his hands.

The pass was wide. A Lewiston man intercepted it, flipped one down the court and a forward converted.

On the bench Hank Blaine was silent. Sam Brand said, "I'm afraid he's beginning to crack. I can hardly blame the kid. He's done fine but now he's forgotten there are four men playing with him. He thinks he has to do it all himself."

The Rutledge crowd had become glum as they saw the pattern of the game. Lewiston moved smoothly ahead and it was still a battle but they had a definite edge and knew it. The half ended and Lewiston held a seven-point lead.

In the locker room Sam Brand said, "You did well, Johnny. All you need to do is calm down out there. Seven points is not much. We can make that up."

Johnny nodded glumly. This was his chance and he was blowing it.

They went up on the floor again and Johnny fought himself and settled down. He was doing better but it was a defensive game, and Rutledge had to go all out to win. All they were doing now was holding Lewiston even. Lewiston didn't

mind that. They were content to go along with their lead and hang on to it as the minutes ticked away.

On the bench, big Hank Blaine squirmed unhappily. When there were six minutes left he suddenly stripped off his uniform. Sam Brand said, "What's the big idea?"

"I'm going in," Hank growled. "After this game is over they can cut my leg off, but I'm going in."

The coach made no protest and Hank Blaine went out on the floor. Johnny saw him coming and started slowly off the court. He got a hand from the crowd but he didn't hear it. "Sorry, Hank," he said.

"It's all right, kid," Hank said. "I guess you need a little more moxie, that's all."

On the bench, sitting there disconsolate, Johnny watched the team. Hank Blaine's return had done something to them. Dizzy Bergman pawed at the floor like an impatient thoroughbred straining at the barrier.

It was outside Rutledge and they started down the court. Hank Blaine got down to pivot position and it was the only thing he could do. He couldn't run away from a Lewiston man with that bad ankle. But he could stand in one spot and pass the ball.

They ganged up on him but he was indomitable out there. He picked his moment, and a bullet left his hands and Dizzy Bergman made it good.

The guards, Sand and Walsh, swarmed all over the Lewiston attack. Again Hank Blaine had the ball at the pivot line. Another pass bounded between a Lewiston man's legs. Kriger dropped it through. On the next play they fouled Hank and he made two shots good.

Lewiston broke through then to score, and there were just two minutes left. Dizzy Bergman, on a one-man rampage, made a goal. Hank Blaine, at the pivot line, faked a pass and made the shot himself. Krider dropped on in and Rutledge had a one-point lead.

State was storming downcourt when the gun went off.

Hank Blaine, perspiration standing on his forehead, limped off the court. "The Garden," he said, and then slumped

down on the bench exhausted and spent.

THEY were in. The invitation came by wire the next day. They were going to play Queens, the top team in New York, a team that Johnny Lane had watched for years.

Johnny thought that Hank Blaine had saved the game, after he had done his best to lose it for them. He was going to the Garden but he did not deserve to be going. It was a six-man basketball team, he thought, and it contained five stars and one tramp.

The team had four more games before the encounter with Queens in the Garden. Johnny played in all four games. But there were no big opponents in those games. Rutledge could have won them playing with their eyes closed. Johnny scored eighteen points in one game but he wasn't proud. The chips weren't down. It didn't mean anything unless they were.

The team started for New York finally and Hank Blaine's ankle was completely recovered. He was ready to go at his best again but on the train journey to the east, the team did not act as teams usually do on a train trip.

Dizzy Bergman did no clowning. "All my life," he said to Johnny, "I wanted to play in the Garden. And now that I get the chance after I'd given up hope, it's got me jumpy."

The team learned that Johnny came from Brooklyn, that he had seen more games in the Garden than he could remember and they clustered around him, asking him questions.

Johnny told them all he knew. He told them that the smoke occasionally bothered visiting clubs that weren't used to it. He said they didn't have to worry about a hostile crowd. New York basketball fans were impartial, often rooting for out-of-town ball clubs.

They reached New York and had their first workout. Hank Blaine stood on the floor, looking up at the tiers of empty seats. He pointed up at the top row. "Will anybody be sitting up there?"

"There won't be an empty seat up there, unless I miss my guess," Johnny said. "That's where I used to sit."

The team was impressed, walking

around and rubbernecking. But to Johnny, somehow, it seemed as though he had come home. He'd seen this court so often; he'd watched the greatest players in the country show their stuff here. One of the local reporters got wind of Johnny's story and wrote a human interest feature in the paper. Johnny's folks and his friends got a big bang out of it. They said they were all coming over to see him play.

"Not me," Johnny said. "I'll be in plain view on the bench. I'll be the guy next to the towels."

An hour before the game Sam Brand gave the team a pep talk. "You guys had better pick the straw out of your hair. You're acting like you never saw a city before. This is just another basketball court, and just another game. The spectators are just fans the same as you find anywhere else."

"Yeah," Dizzy Bergman said. "I've been tellin' myself that for a week now. But there's something about this town. I feel like I'm playin' before royalty."

Brand chewed on a dead cigar and looked unhappy.

Dressing, the players listened to the thunder overhead. They went upstairs finally and Hank Blaine whistled softly when he saw the crowd. "You used to sit way up in those top seats, Johnny?" he said. "I hope you hung on tight. If one of those guys falls out of there, we'll have to delay the game and scrape him off the floor."

Johnny took his seat on the bench and watched the team go out. Queens, despite the war, had a typical Queens squad. There must have been twenty men warming up at their end of the court. And Johnny knew that every man out there would be a capable player. They were not as big as the Rutledge men; they were smaller but they were faster. And the coach had three teams to send out there. They wouldn't slow down for a minute. They would be out to pass Rutledge dizzy.

The teams lined up and they were ready to go. The ball went high and the game was under way. Bergman won the tap and Rutledge started down the court. A guard sifted through and stole the ball and Queens was moving. They

threw the ball around like a bean bag. They drifted through the Rutledge team and made monkeys of Spider Sand and Flipper Walsh.

They scored and Rutledge came back down. They looked a little hesitant out there. Johnny was shouting and then abruptly he stopped because Hank Blaine missed an easy setup shot. It wasn't even close and Queens took the ball off the backboard, raced down again and made it four to nothing.

When Queens had scored another one, Hank Blaine called time out. They went into a huddle, came out of it again, and they were improving. But they were holding back, not playing their brand of ball. They were supposed to be a high-powered, big-scoring outfit and they were being cautious, not taking any chances, never gambling. They were trying to play the Queens kind of ball game. They were too good a team to be routed but they were not far from it. And the crowd began to stir. They wanted to see the best in the Garden and this Rutledge team was not living up to its press notices.

From the top sections of the arena a few catcalls drifted down.

Johnny said in anguish, "They're asleep. What is wrong with them?"

Sam Brand was chewing his cigar as though he had a personal grudge against it. "They are stage struck," he said. "The big tramps have forgotten everything they ever knew. It is going to be terrible. When this game is over we will get out of here fast and we will never get another invitation. I hate to think of the New York papers tomorrow."

Johnny hated to look. It was twenty to nine out there. It was twenty-seven to twelve and then mercifully the gun went off. The Rutledge five came off the floor to an unhappy silence. It was not that Queens was brilliant—Rutledge was plain lousy.

IN THE locker room the team looked haggard and unhappy. Dizzy Bergman said, "All my life I wanted to play in the Garden. Now I wish I'd never seen the place."

Hank Blaine said, "I'm sorry, Coach. We just stink out there."

"You acted like a bunch of giggling Girl Scouts getting a screen test," roared Sam Brand.

Johnny Lane said, "You guys got everything but guts. You told me once, Hank, that was all I needed. You could use some yourself."

Hank Blaine did not retort and Sam Brand, figuring out another insult, stared suddenly at Johnny and removed the cigar from his mouth. An idea ticked in the coach's mind. Johnny was a New York guy and he was not scared.

Maybe in the game it would be different, but a desperate chance was still worth taking.

"Okay," Sam said. "The game is over now, but we got to finish it out and we might as well have some fun. Johnny, you take Krider's spot. This is your town and I hear your folks are in the stands. Boys, you feed Johnny this next half. Let him score a couple points to make his old man happy."

They went up and Johnny went out there in Krider's place. The team looked

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stricken. They were hating themselves now but the big town had gotten them. It was a shame, Johnny thought. He wasn't even thrilled to be out here. He'd never want to see the Garden again.

They lined up against a self-assured Queens team and again Bergman won the tap. Johnny started driving toward the basket, and took a pass from Blaine halfway down. He went up in the air and sent the shot home for two points. It was wide open basketball now, anything went.

Queens came driving back and Johnny raced across court, threw himself in the air and speared the ball out of a forward's hands. He landed, sprawling, ducked around a guard and threw a long one toward the ceiling. It kissed down through and the crowd roared suddenly.

Johnny plunged down the court, conscious of his teammates staring at him. "Come on," he yelled. "You posing or playing basketball?"

Queens scored twice. Johnny sank two more and they were still a long way behind. But he was getting better passes now. Hank Blaine was firing bullets at him, they weren't throwing the ball away anymore. And on the bench Sam Brand had his fingers crossed.

Hank Blaine called a time out. He stared at his teammates. "All right," he said. "It took a sub to teach us a lesson, to show us how to play this game. We've been mugs but if Johnny can play ball in the Garden, the rest of us can, too."

Dizzy Bergman had his old-time grin. "There's been a guy up there in section seventeen," he said, "having fun calling me a bum. I think I'll shut his face."

Hank said, "Attaboy. Now look. Johnny's been carrying this thing. From now on Dizzy and I are with you, kid. All three of us will shoot. We play it wide open for awhile. We don't have time to work in close."

They went at it once again. Dizzy Bergman got the ball and threw a long one that never touched the rim as it went through. Dizzy looked up at section seventeen and said, "Who's a bum?"

Hank Blaine scored twice in a row. Spider Sand got through and made one. Johnny scored again. Queens was scor-

ing, too, but Rutledge made six points for every two that Queens made. And the crowd had come to life now and it was all the ball game that it had been expected to be.

They went into the last five minutes and Hank Blaine scored twice to put them within a point of a tie.

The strategy shifted then. They stopped throwing the long ones, and began passing the ball, working it in close. Queens broke it up, went down and scored to go three points ahead.

"Still time," Hank Blaine boomed. He worked down to the pivot line and threw Johnny a pass. He was hemmed in, he went up to shoot, and instead, flipped backwards to Bergman and Dizzy didn't miss the shot.

One point to go! Queens came down slowly, and under the Rutledge basket, it was jump ball between a Queens man and Spider Sand.

The Queens man tried to bat the ball through the hoop but Hank Blaine's long arm went high, and the ball bounced off his fingers against the backboard. Dizzy Bergman retrieved it and threw to Johnny. He had a quick look at the clock and time was running out.

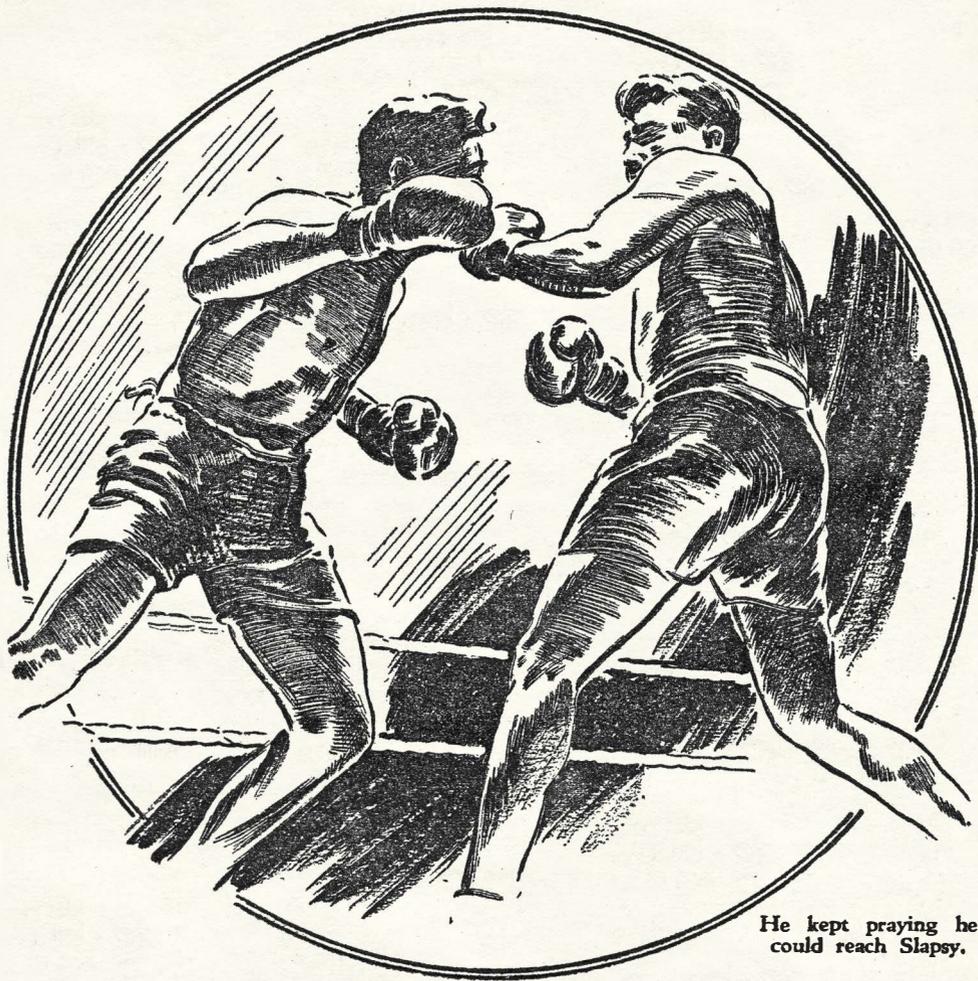
All five of them went down the court and then Hank Blaine was at the pivot line again and nobody was free. Hank set himself to make a shot, and Johnny darted out from the basket, running away from it, leaving his guard a step behind him. Hank whirled and Johnny had the ball. He went up and threw it and Hank Blaine was in there, ready to bat the rebound back. But it wasn't necessary. The ball was through and Rutledge had a lead.

Queens came down fast. A long shot missed and Hank Blaine was dribbling downcourt when the gun went off before the limp, exhausted crowd.

Rutledge headed for the exit and Johnny suddenly thought how close it had been. He hadn't been scared before, but he was now, thinking about it. Dizzy Bergman drawled, "A nice place, New York. I'm glad we came. Maybe after the war, Johnny, we'll come again."

Johnny said, "Yeah. That would be swell."

THE IRON DUKE'S LAST FIGHT



He kept praying he could reach Slapsy.

by
RAY
P.
SHOTWELL

"You take this Landry, kid. You take him without no legs and no wind and no punch. Or—there'll be a new champ by morning!"

LITTLE PETE MARTIN said, "Let's go, slugger. Three more rounds and we'll call it a day," and Duke Carmody got up off the stool and went to the center of the ring. The feel of his headguard was hot against his burning face and his legs were a little rubbery. He hoped that it didn't show. This day, of all days, he had to look like the Iron Duke of old.

Wiry Lem Drew was waiting for him. A good light heavy from Pittsburgh, imported to the training camp because of his speed. A wild swinger and strictly a prelim boy, but he could hit when he landed.

Duke weaved in, watching for that stabbing left. It raked the top of his headguard and he ducked under it, pounding both hands to the mid-section. The kid tried to backpedal, but the ropes were against his back and he didn't know enough to tie up those arms. By the time they broke, his eyes were a little glassy.

That was good, Duke was thinking grimly, because every fight writer in the business was down there watching him do his stuff. And the way his legs felt right now, he'd never last three more rounds. It had to be now, or there'd be a lot of smart money changing hands in the next three days.

He said, "Let's make a fight of it, kid," and weaved in again. He could hear Pete Martin chortle, "Lookit the Duke. That guy never gets enough!" That was distinctly a joke. He'd had enough, more than enough, a good year ago. But the world hadn't found it out yet. And then Lem's wild haymaker caught him on the padded jaw. He felt the dangerous tremor in his knees, and knew it had to be now or never.

There were a lot of tricks, if a guy knew his business, and the Duke used all of them now. Taking the blows on his elbows, getting inside, where his weight and balance could count. Grinning confidently, to hide the sudden fear in his eyes, he put his head down against the other man's chest, hammering with a kind of grim desperateness, watching the other man's knees. Almost too late, they buckled, and he stepped clear, sighted, and threw his right for the unprotected jaw. There was the solid *clop* against bone through the heavy training gloves and he stepped lightly aside.

Lem took a wavering step forward, seemed to come apart at the middle, and started to sag.

Duke wanted to hang on to those ropes, but greater than his weakness was the knowledge of the part he must play. He caught the heavier man and eased him to the canvas, breaking his fall. He said, "Okay, Pete. The kid's had enough. I guess we can call it a day."

He hoped that the awed clamor of the sports writers drowned out the sound of his gasping breath.

He went into the dressing room, shut the door, and sat down heavily in the big club chair. It was good to be alone. Alone with his bitter secret—that he was done, washed up, on the eve of the match he wanted to win more than life itself.

There was a knock on the door and Pete Martin poked his head inside. The little manager was grinning broadly, saying over his shoulder, "Okay, boys. The Duke'll see you as soon as he gets a shower. There's ice and mixings and what goes with it up at the house."

He came in and shut the door but the smile had whipped out of his face. Duke had never seen him look that way before.

"What's cookin', boss? You look like you had a bill collector on your mind."

Pete sat down and lit his inevitable stogie. His hands were not quite steady.

Duke continued, "What the hell, guy. I'm the one that's got to fight this Landry, not you." The same fixed smile was on his lips, a grin of no mirth but fatigue and strain.

At the sound of many feet going up the stairs, Pete lumbered over and put the latch on the door. He said slowly, "I knew you when, Duke. You can kid the world, but you oughta know better than try to pull it on me. When did you lose your stuff?"

It was good to feel the load slip off his shoulders, the load he had been trying to carry alone for so long. He laughed shortly, and the mask went away from his eyes.

"The night I fought Curry, in the Garden," he said. "I laid it on the line, Pete. For you and for me, all you had taught me and all I had left. And when that last round finished, there wasn't any more. I thought it would come back, but only a little of it did. The rubber fire went away, but the speed didn't come. An' I can't get outside of a left jab no more. I can hit but I haven't got the legs to catch 'em."

"You'll have to catch Landry, plenty," Pete said. "He's the goods, kid. I hate that lousy Snell like hell but he's got himself a real boy there."

The Duke yawned. He was, he discovered, strangely tired. And after all the years, the good ones and the bitter,

it was hard to care too much about one more fight.

He said, "Let's not kid ourselves, boss. Snell's got the next world champion. In three days he'll say it with leather, on my puss. And after that Duke Carmody will disappear forever and we'll run our health farm."

Pete Martin was looking at the wall. His lips were working strangely and he was trying to say something, but the words wouldn't come out. He said, at last, "Let's go see the boys. They'll be waiting for that last story before the Garden."

DUKE CARMODY had been a great fighter for ten years, in a decade that had some of the best light heavies in the business. But as he drove down the peaceful, well remembered road to Elmhurst, he was thinking what a joke it had been. Because his name wasn't Duke Carmody, but plain Jim Wallace—one of the Wallaces who had been doctors for generations—and nobody in little Elmhurst ever knew him as anything different.

He came to the little white cottage with the doctor's shingle on the door and his father strolled down the walk to meet him. Doctor Alvin Wallace was as patrician as ever, straight as a ramrod for all his years and one of the best country practitioners you'd find anywhere. You got a lot of affection and gratefulness being a country doctor but you didn't get much money. The house needed a coat of paint badly, Duke thought as the two men shook hands.

They went into the cool study. Doctor Wallace was trying to conceal his delight. He said, "It's been a long time, boy. They must keep you busy down in that consarned Boston hospital. Why don't you give it up and be an old sawbones like me? This surgeon stuff pays big money, but you get something in your home the world can't give you."

Duke nodded soberly. He was wondering what his father would say if he told him that he had never had a patient in his life, in spite of his medical degree, but that he'd seen more blood and suffering than most doctors ever did. The old man wouldn't say anything. He was

too fine for that, but his heart would just about break.

"How's Freddy?" Duke said casually, trying to change the subject.

Old Doctor Wallace's face lit up.

"There's the boy who's going to be the real doctor in our family," he said proudly. "That brother of yours will make the world sit up and take notice one of these days. He's—he just wrote me he's getting a ten thousand dollar fellowship to study tropical diseases! More than I make in two years!"

"That's—that's swell," Duke said, a little lamely.

That doctor in Cleveland had kept his word. The old man didn't know, but that ten thousand dollars was Duke's whole cut of the purse after the Slat's Curry fight, after deducting a thousand for a new paraffin nose. But it would set the kid up where he had failed to go and pay his own debt to the old man for the way he had failed him.

He had chosen to be a fighter, against his own good judgment, for the money it would bring, and what it could do for his family. And after his mother had died, it was too late to change, and the purses were getting bigger, with the million dollar gate just ahead.

But the war had busted up the big gates, and the boys were getting tougher. After the Curry fight he had known there'd never be a million dollar gate for him. A week, hence, after Slapsy Landry had murdered him, he'd be one more guy on the edge of Queer Street with nothing but a fistful of slightly scrambled memories, a medical degree that had rusted into uselessness, and enough dough to run that health farm with Pete. It wasn't going to be a bad life but it was a lot different than he had dreamed. And it was something eight generations of Wallaces would turn over in their graves if they knew.

He drove back to the big city and Pete Martin was waiting in the hotel room. The little man looked as though he hadn't slept for days. There was a half filled bottle of rye on the dresser and Duke very carefully poured it out the window.

"You haven't touched that stuff for ten years," Duke said quietly. "What

the hell's the matter with you now, pal?"

Pete Martin shook his head bleakly.

"Yeah, I did touch it," he said tonelessly. "Eight weeks ago. The day I signed the papers for this fight. Snell got me and the boys out on a brawl. The champagne was good an' about ten o'clock I forgot the way you looked with Curry, and you were the best damn fighter in the world again. I—I told Snell so an' he laughed at me. An'—I had to back it up somehow."

Duke looked at him, with fear and a strangled murder in his eyes, but Pete still stared straight ahead, letting the bitter memories of it possess him.

"I—I never had a champion," he said. "An' the winner of this fight with Landry was a lead pipe cinch to be declared head of his division. So, when Snell shot off his ugly puss, I—" he shook his head grimly—"I bet our purse, yours an' mine, even money, on us to win."

Duke shrugged. The shock of it was stronger than the rage. But the little guy was so utterly loyal, it was hard to hate very long.

After a moment, he said carefully, "And the health farm. We got twenty thousand bucks to pay before—"

Pete Martin said, "That's what I mean. You take this Landry, kid. You take him without no legs and no wind and no punch. Or we ain't got no title. Or no health farm either."

THEY walked into the Garden together. It was a hell of a way to go into a fight. Always, before, Pete had tended him like a baby, kept the world and its troubles from him, allowing nothing to happen that would hurt his boy's chances.

This time he had had to stay up half the night watching the old guy. He was so broken that Duke didn't dare leave him alone. His eyes were burning from lack of sleep and his legs felt a hundred years old.

He went into the dressing room and waited, while the noise of the prelims and the shouts of the ring worms stirred up the memories and after a while he closed his eyes.

Pete was shaking him. He recognized the battered signet ring and the broken,

gnarled hand, even before he lifted his eyes.

"It's time, pal," Pete said.

Duke sat up, yawning. He was, he discovered, relaxed, for the first time that bitter week. It was as though the world had done everything possible to him, and what was left now was just the reality, never as bad as the imaginings. He was suddenly fiercely glad that now soon it would be over.

He put on the faded blue robe, with the faded smell of wintergreen oil on it, and walked out with Pete under the thunder.

The Garden mob had always liked him. He'd always laid it down on the line for them, win or lose. He wondered how they'd feel after this one was over.

Slapsy Landry was in the ring before him. Fat little Snell was fussing over his bandages. The little manager grinned evilly when they climbed through the ropes.

"Come an' get it, suckers," he said. "After my boy knocks your brains out, don't come suckin' around for hand-outs."

There was a big yell from the balcony, drowning out Pete's unprintable bellow, which was just as well.

Landry was the goods, all right. Long and clean muscled, with cruelty and plenty of tricks behind his little eyes. And most of all he had youth.

They went out to the center of the ring and touched gloves, while the flashbulbs burst. The kid put his arm affectionately over Duke's shoulders, mugging for the news reels. He said, very softly, with the empty vacuous smile on his face, "Yuh lousy bum, I'm gonna finish that nose where Curry started."

Duke knocked the arm away.

"I like you better as a rat," he said. "If you put your hands on me again, punk, I'll kill you before the bell."

He said it loud enough for the news reels to catch, and the loud speakers sent it ringing through the two dollar seats.

They went back to their corners. Duke felt better than he had for weeks. But there still was no spring in his legs. He said to Pete, "In case I can't talk after this is over, chum—you were the best

manager a guy could have. The hell with everything—I'm gonna go out there an' slug while I can last!"

And then the gong clanged, and there was nothing else in his brain but what he had to do.

SLAPSY came in fast, feinting with that left, rushing Duke off-balance before he could get to the center of the ring. The kid, for all his weight, was panther fast. Duke got his hand up, just in time. The counter punch, a right jab he didn't even see, knocked his own glove against his face and pushed him backward, off-balance. And that left, and another, stabbed at his jaw, forcing him back to the ropes.

That was the way it started. Shaken but not hurt, he tied the kid up. But in the clinch Slapsy backhanded him, rubbing the gloves along the bridge of his nose, and he could feel the cartilage give. Snell had taught the kid all the dirt he knew, which was plenty.

They broke, and Slapsy said, "Just a sample, pal."

Midway in the round it happened. Duke was boxing carefully, wary of that murderous left. He'd be able to win the first half of the fight on points, he knew, if he was careful. But he forgot about those aging legs.

They failed him, just as he was fading away from a blistering right that started from nowhere, and seemed to come off the floor straight for his jaw. He waited a split second, secure in the pattern of his remembered speed. And—like a nightmare, he saw that he wasn't going to be fast enough.

There was a terrible instant that seemed like an age when he could see the leather coming and couldn't do a thing about it. And then a giant hand jumbled the lights and the world into a blinding red light of shock. He was falling. . . .

The canvas pushed against his shoulder blades and he opened his eyes. There was a lot of thunder in his ears. There was something wavering in front of his face, and after a second the thing came into focus and he saw it was the referee's hand.

"—five—six—" the voice was saying.

For a dreadful moment he didn't think that the legs would obey him. He got to one knee, looking at his corner, and Pete was pushing his hands to the floor, telling him to take more time. But he didn't dare to trust the gamms on the last second. He got up, and Slapsy was in there, lusting for the kill.

The long days of roadwork saved him now, the weeks he had spent running backward, until the secret of it was as natural as a forward sprint. For a minute Slapsy had him in the corner, but Duke bounced off the ropes, letting a left graze off the side of his head, and then he was free. He hooked to the body, missing by a foot. But the kid's stabbing left slid over his head, and he went into a clinch thankfully, wrestling Slapsy's arms down until the mists cleared away.

The bell clanged and he went back to his corner. There was a scattered boing from the balcony. It had been a slow round, he realized, except for that knock-down. The fans were used to a real fight when Duke Carmody was on the card. But he'd have to play this one out his own way. It was his only chance.

He sat down, and Pete's hands were tender as a woman's, working on the little cut Slapsy's glove had made above his nose. He looked down at the crowd and swallowed hard, almost forgetting the fight. Pop Granger was sitting in the front row—Pop Granger, from Elm-hurst. And there was startled recognition in the older man's eyes!

His secret was out now. He'd never be able to keep it from his dad any more. He had the sudden quick regret that, of all the fights he had made, this had to be the one that his home town would hear about. His lips thinned coldly, and he decided then, that as long as Duke Carmody had to go out, he'd go out fighting, and the hell with afterward.

He came out fast. He could see the startled wariness in Slapsy's eyes, and he shot a left for that spot. It landed solidly, and the kid shook his head, covering up. He hooked the left again, hard, to the body, and Slapsy came straight in, clinching. He pushed away, giving all he had in a whistling right, but the other man's gloves took it.

Slapsy danced away. There was a little trickle of blood on his lips, but his legs were strong. He'd been stung but not hurt. And Duke knew that it would be suicide to try to chase him. Already he could feel the weariness holding him back.

It was maddening. The stuff of victory was in his hands, but he couldn't get close enough to do anything with it. And every minute would cut his chances to suicide odds.

He looked over in Slapsy's corner and Snell was grinning his relief. The man's shiny face was still carrying the scars of his late fear, and Duke yelled, "It won't be long now, sucker!" He saw the fear come back, and a startled wonder. Snell would have a few minutes of hell before this was over, anyway.

He weaved in, in the old familiar crouch, and the yelping rally cry of his pals up in the rafters was good in his ears. He caught Slapsy in his own corner and gave him the old one-two. The kid was holding on, listening to his manager. And then suddenly, he pushed away, shooting a terrific right to the heart.

It checked Duke in mid-stride. He had the sudden agonized feeling of being cut in two. He couldn't breathe, and his whole left side seemed paralyzed. In spite of himself, he felt his head sagging forward, and he couldn't get his glove up to protect that jaw. There was a raking jolt of agony across the side of his head, and another, lower down.

After that he didn't remember any more.

THERE was a hammering noise in his ears, a darkness that came and went, the taste of blood in his mouth, and pain that would not stop. Groaning, he opened his eyes.

He was sitting on his stool, he discovered. He shook his head, and the mists whipped away. Pete was working on his face. There was a startled awe in his eyes.

And then he looked over Pete's shoulder, at the sign.

It said: "Round Nine."

Pete said, "Don't try to breathe through that nose, kid. It's flattened

against your face like a squash. I dunno where you found that speed. But after you got off the floor in the second, you haven't stopped once. You keep that up two more rounds and we'll take him!"

Still half comprehending, he looked over at the other stool. Slapsy was leaning heavily back against the ropes, his chest going up and down very fast. There was some hemstitching over his right eye, and the claret was still leaking out around the edges.

It was a funny one. He himself felt like a slightly resurrected corpse, Duke decided. But his head was clear again. He started to tell Pete, then checked himself. What was the use in telling the guy that he'd been out on his feet, fighting from the blind instincts of his past, since the second round? It wouldn't make sense. And anyway he was still alive. The other guy must be hurting as much as he was.

He said to Pete, with a queer thread of gladness in him, "Don't give up on that health farm yet, pal. I got ambitions!"

The bell came and he went out there. It seemed strange, weaving into that cruel leather and seeing it stay in one spot. Slapsy had danced away for the last time this day. He, too, was feeling the lead in his knees. He feinted with the right and the kid ducked and countered. He walked past the counter and pounded three short quick ones to the body. He could hear Slapsy gasp and give way. There was a looping right that came for that tortured nose and he walked straight into it, knowing that he couldn't escape. The shock of it snapped his head back, but he discovered that he was still going forward. He put his head down on the other man's chest, rubbing the blood against the sweat, and dug in with both hands.

Slapsy was sobbing curses. The kid was game enough. His youth gave him strength to hang on, and his arms were still strong in the clinches. He laced that backhanded blow again, while the referee's head was turned, and Duke spat redly at him and threw a right that never landed and fell to one knee.

The bell rang and he walked to his corner.

Pete said, "I can't stand much more of this, chum."

The little manager's face was stricken.

Duke said, between the blood, "Neither can that other guy. You sit there and cross your fingers."

THROUGH the sting of the sponge and the dope, the bell came, and he walked out to meet it, glad that the time was come. Slapsy came in fast, lashed above his hurts. The kid was still plenty dangerous. He ripped a solid left that missed by a hair and his right counter punch caught Duke on the busted nose, smashing it back into his face. He went down on one knee, and stayed there, taking the count of nine. He needed those precious seconds to hoard what he had left to give.

He got up and Slapsy was on top of him, bulling past the referee's arm. It was a flagrant foul, but the kid was too groggy to know it. And Duke was glad it was this way because he didn't have enough go juice in his legs to catch that shadowy figure again.

He ducked under the haymaker, with something like a prayer. It caught him on the top of the head, but that was all right. He had to take two more rights to the face before he got in close. And then there was nothing but the roaring darkness, the feel of his fists bludgeoning sweetly home, and the numbing urgency of this thing that he must do now, before the last thin strands of his consciousness were severed.

There was a lot of noise, and all of it was not in his ears. He suddenly realized that his arms were pinioned down and not even his desperate efforts could lift them.

He looked up. The referee had his arms pinned.

"Save that stuff, slugger," the referee said, "until you got some guy to use it on."

Slapsy was on the canvas, unmoving. A thin trickle of red ran from a cut under his eye. The hateful Snell was waving his hands at the heavens, and Pete Martin—a new radiant Pete who was his old fighting self again—back-handed Snell into the corner, where he sat numbly among the arnica bottles.

Duke grinned, a little feebly, at the roaring faces, feeling his arm being lifted.

And then, a little ashamed of his weakness, he fell on his face and the lights went out for good.

HE DROVE down the old familiar walk, where the shabby white house was waiting. Pop Granger was in there with his father, and young Freddy, and about half of Elmhurst. They were making a lot of noise, and Duke listened to the cheers and got his back slapped, which hurt more than he would ever tell them. He drank beer with the boys until the last of them went away again into the night, and then he was alone with his dad and his brother.

Doctor Wallace's face was white and lined, and he was not smiling. He hardly said a word all through that riotous party.

Duke touched his nose, which no paraffine operation would ever make quite the same again, and knew that his left ear would be marked for life. He could never be anything else but a ring-marked pug now, and somehow he was not ashamed of it any more.

He looked at the old man as Freddy said, "They told me, Jim. About the money and where it came from. I didn't know whether to tell Dad or not, but when Granger spilled the beans, I thought I'd better—"

The man who had been Jim Wallace shrugged.

"It's over," he said. "For good or bad. I know how you must feel, Dad."

Doctor Alvin Wallace adjusted his gold pince-nez. He seemed to have a little trouble in finding the words, but when they came they were simple and direct, as a man should use to his son.

"Doctor be damned," said Alvin Wallace. "We've had too many doctors in this family, anyhow, and we never had a real fighting man before. I'm proud of you, boy."

Freddy said, "Listen, Jim—"

Doctor Wallace cut in, "Jim, hell! Iron Duke Carmody, come in and chew the fat with your family. It isn't every day I get a chance to sit in the same room with a champ!"

GRUDGE RACE

by W. H.
TEMPLE



Fighting, weary, he fought down the last grim straightaway of the race that would decide his future—the race he had trained someone else to win!

THEY were doing it up fancy tonight, Ed Maloney thought. Each man came out there and they turned the spotlight on him while the thousands cheered. It was like a parade of race horses, the men in shorts and jerseys. Ed, standing in his place, listened to the cheers. There were great men here tonight, and that new sensation from the coast, Duke Menafee.

The light went on the Duke. Menafee was long and lean and restless. The crowd gave him a thunderous ovation. The boys were running for the Red

Ed heard the kid right in back of him. "Come on," he whispered.

Cross tonight. It was all for charity and the house was packed.

The light came on again, strong and white on Ed Maloney, standing there like a barrel—chunky and broad-shouldered, with a grin stretching from ear to ear.

The crowd didn't give him an ovation. They yelled, "Hey, Ed, how's it?" For Ed Maloney was their pal, good old

Ed Maloney—the guy who never won a race but was always in there trying. Old Faithful they called him and they had been watching Ed for a long time.

The ceremonies were over, the lights were on again, and Ed wandered around, that grin still on his face. And the athletes moving around the arena spoke to him. They all knew and liked Ed Maloney.

Ed meandered on and flapped a hand at the gallery. He saw Duke Menafee and changed his course to intercept him. Duke Menafee was new around these parts.

Ed held out his hand. "I'm Maloney. Glad to have you running with us. Heard a lot about you, mostly good."

Menafee shook hands, his eyes bleak. "Maloney," he said, "I don't know the name."

Ed grinned. "I'm just a guy who runs," he said. "Just a guy who is around."

Menafee said, "A man's either good or he's a bum. If he's a bum he ought to stay away from high-class competition."

Menafee strode away and Ed Maloney looked after him, the smile fading from his face. He was not angry, but the words had pierced him. In all the years he had been running, there was no more popular man among the milers, but Ed Maloney had never won a race. There were a lot of seconds and thirds in his record and once, in finishing second, he had turned in a mark of four minutes, eight seconds. That was good time, fast running in any competition. But the fact remained he was an also-ran.

Walking toward the starting line, a lot of the sunshine had gone out of Ed Maloney's heart. He was thirty now. He clerked in a sporting goods store during the day and did his training in the city parks early in the morning or after working hours. He had a wife and a small son who, he hoped, would be a miler some day. He had been offered memberships in athletic clubs but he had turned the offers down.

"Wait until I win a race," Ed told them. "Then I'll take you up on it."

Duke Menafee, he guessed, when he

came up to the starting line on the board track, had called the turn. He was thirty and time was running out on him now. He'd always been able to believe that some day, somehow, he'd win a race. And now he knew it just wasn't in the cards.

The milers were all there—Pete Vogel, the favorite, Long Tom Turner, the colored boy, Sam Jackson—great milers all and good friends of Ed Maloney. The Duke and a kid completed the field. The kid was Dave Lawrence, a newcomer. Ed could see how nervous he was.

"I'm Maloney," Ed said to him. "Take it easy, kid. Just move those legs around; that's all there is to it."

Lawrence gave him a grateful grin and some of the tension ebbed out of him. The starter lined them up and Ed was on the outside. *This time*, he thought, *maybe this is my night*.

THEY had their marks, then the gun cracked in the silence and they were away. The kid, Lawrence, was off like a frightened rabbit, scurrying into the lead and hugging the pole. Behind him the others strung into line, and Ed Maloney was running fourth in the six-man competition.

There were eleven laps to the mile and Ed ran easily. He took a short stride, pounding the boards. After they had gone around once he began to step up his pace. The crowd liked that. Whenever Ed Maloney ran a race the time was good. The boys couldn't let him get too far ahead; they never loafed when Ed Maloney ran.

Up ahead of him the kid was still setting the pace. He was going too fast; he'd never last. Ed pounded on around the turns, timing himself, and in twelve years of competition he knew his pace like the back of his hand. It wasn't going to be a walk tonight.

He had moved up into third slot with Lawrence and Turner ahead of him, Duke Menafee at his heels. Up front Lawrence had a lead of twenty yards. Ed liked his stride. There was a smooth flowing motion in his legs, he had rhythm as he ran and no waste motion. Another kid who was going places, and through the years Ed Maloney had known the

best of them. He'd run against them all, the great Cunningham, Bill Bonthron and all the others were names indelibly marked in Ed Maloney's memory.

He plodded on, and two more laps were history, five circuits still to go. Dave Lawrence stumbled once, then caught himself, and went on but the smoothness had gone out of his stride, and it was the beginning of the end. Behind him, Ed heard drumming footsteps and Pete Vogel came up, giving Ed a grin as he swung into third place.

It was shaping up now between Turner and Vogel and the unknown, Menafee, still holding back.

They hit the eighth lap and Duke Menafee swung out. Ed Maloney lengthened his stride and they ran side by side until Menafee, with a burst of speed, went ahead. The crowd yelled suddenly and up front Dave Lawrence had fallen flat on his face. He dragged himself to the outside and Turner flashed by.

They had just two laps to go now. Ed Maloney's legs pumped against the boards. He felt it now; it was just like always, the last couple of laps tearing the heart out of a runner. He lunged ahead, on past the fallen Lawrence, and was running fourth as they swept around the back turn and into the straightaway.

Turner had the lead with Vogel two steps behind him, and Duke Menafee in the third spot. They went into the final lap in that order and then Duke Menafee started his final kick. Ed pumped on behind; he came closer to Pete Vogel's back. Duke Menafee fought it out with Turner on the back curve, took the lead and sprinted out in front.

It was all over then, Menafee widening his lead and Ed Maloney giving everything he had, pulling up a little on Pete Vogel. Menafee raced across the finish line, Turner six strides behind him. Then Pete Vogel, and fourth, Ed Maloney, once again an also-ran.

The time, announced a few moments later, was four minutes and nine seconds. Not championship time, nor a record, but fast time on this track. Duke Menafee was surrounded by the reporters; he was the new mile sensation now.

Duke said, "Pretty slow time. But

after all, a man can't run unless there's competition."

The reporters had little to say. Pete Vogel and Tom Turner got slightly pink about the ears, for they were old-timers and both good men. It was too bad, Ed thought. Milers were nice gents in a nice sport and Duke Menafee was a rotten apple in the barrel, but he could run.

Ed started toward the dressing room and arriving there, spotted Dave Lawrence. The kid looked pretty downhearted; he'd wangled himself into this competition. Ed went over and sat beside him.

He chuckled and said, "I remember the first race I was in against the big boys of the mile. I was so damn excited I didn't know what was going on. I couldn't control myself. When the gun went off, I started out like it was a hundred-yard dash. I knew it was crazy but I couldn't help it. I lasted just four laps and then collapsed. They had to carry me off the track."

He saw the kid felt better and Ed knew when to stop talking. He went on over to his locker and then showered and dressed. He went outside and met his wife, Carol, who was waiting there for him.

"You did fine, Ed," she said.

"Fourth," he replied flatly. "I guess that's it, baby. A guy's got to quit some time."

"But, Eddie, it's your life."

"Honey," he told her, "I just don't feel so good tonight."

They went back to their little apartment and Ed sat up late. Before he went to bed he wrote two letters. He was entered in two more mile races, and he canceled his appearance in each, saying that he was retiring. And that, he thought, was the end of it at last, his dreams gone up in smoke. He'd been a dope to keep on hoping, kidding himself for years. He just didn't have it in him.

A few years back he'd talked to one of the greatest coaches in the country, and asked him for advice. The coach had grinned down at him. "You need someone to light a fire under you, Ed," the man had said. "That's your only trouble."

Ed knew what he meant now. In a

joking way he'd said that Ed simply wasn't fast enough. Good enough to be an also-ran, but never anything more than that.

THE next day, however, he had two telegrams. He was begged not to drop out of the next two mile runs. They had counted on him, and asked him to reconsider. A reporter came around to find out if the rumor he'd retired was true.

Ed thought it over. He didn't want to run again, but track had been good to him down through the years. The men who ran the sport had been his friends. He owed them something now and he wired back he'd be on hand. It seemed the fair thing to do, and the next day he was back in training. But it was different now; he was simply fulfilling an obligation.

Two weeks later he was in the big armory where the meet was being held. And it was the same faces again, the same men. Dave Lawrence did not look quite so nervous.

Duke Menafee, new king of the mile came sauntering by, and stopped in front of Ed Maloney. "Thought you'd retired," he said. "It was a good idea."

Ed said, "You got a good pair of legs, Menafee. Your face I don't like so much."

"It makes no difference to you, bum," Menafee said. "You'll never see anything but my back."

He ambled on and Dave Lawrence came up. "You take him, Ed," he said. "You take the tramp apart tonight."

"Not me." Ed shook his head sadly. "I'm a guy who should be running in the sack and potato race." An idea caught at him. "But maybe you can take him, kid."

There was something there that appealed to him. He'd never reach the heights himself, but maybe he could help this kid to get there.

"The mile," he said, "is something more than just running. A lot of angles enter into it. The Duke is the man to beat. He's crafty, he doesn't make mistakes out there. Tonight you hang right



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on his heels. Don't let him get away from you. And when you hit the start of the next to last lap, give it the gun."

The kid was very grateful. Ed wandered on outside, and near the starting line he met the coach he'd talked to years ago. Ed said, grinning, "I'm still waiting for someone to build that fire. You got a match?"

The coach stared down at him. "You ever punch anybody in the nose, Ed?"

Ed shook his head. "I get along with one and all," he said, and then eyeing the Duke, added, "or almost all."

"Too bad," the man said.

It didn't make much sense to Ed Maloney. He walked along and the crowd waved at him again. "It's your night, Eddie," someone yelled, and he grinned but not inside.

He lined up at the start and he didn't even hope to win. He wouldn't quit, he'd give everything he had out there, but everything he had was not enough. Maybe the kid would make it up for him.

He took his place, his eyes strained forward and then the *crack* sounded in his ears and he was off, taking the lead. If he couldn't win, maybe he could give the crowd a record tonight. They'd paid their dough and they were entitled to the best.

He pounded out in front and these boys, with the exception of Dave Lawrence, were veterans. He couldn't sucker any of them into chasing after him. But just the same they wouldn't let him get too far ahead, and he could hear the pounding footfalls in the rear. It was going to be fast tonight; it might come down close to a record on this track. He could sense the excitement of the crowd.

For two laps he went fast, and then slowed down a bit. There was no point in killing himself; he wanted to keep this up awhile. But that first quarter was going to be right around sixty, he knew.

He swung around the turn and twisting his head, saw how they were lined up behind him. Long Tom Turner was in second place, and Duke Menafee was third. Right behind the Duke, Dave Lawrence jogged along.

He got a lift from that. The kid was learning fast and, if he had a real kick,

he might have a chance this time.

At the halfway mark Ed Maloney hit it up again. Twisting his head he saw Duke Menafee increase his stride and step out. He had a long lead; it could be that the Duke was worried. Maybe he'd sucker the Duke at that. He hoped the kid would get smart, but Dave just pounded on. It took a while to learn. Experience counted in this business and Ed had plenty of that. He knew all the angles, but it was no good unless a champion's legs went with it.

He pounded on and when there were five laps to go he put on all the pressure he could muster. The pain of it was dragging him down, but while he lasted he'd throw the works at them. He drove along, building up that lead and behind him they picked it up. The crowd was coming out of their seats now to watch the blazing finish.

For two laps Ed poured it on. And then he tripped and almost dropped; he knew that he was through. He'd done all he could to make this a record mile and now it was up to the real runners to make it good. His run became a stagger, and he dug his nails into the palms of his hands, stumbling forward. He would finish anyway, that was one thing.

Turner came driving by him, in pretty bad shape himself. They were in the backstretch with just two laps to go and Duke Menafee came by, still running smoothly. Dave Lawrence followed on his heels, hanging on by grit and determination.

Ed swayed just in their rear. They hit the back curve and Ed saw the kid try and follow instructions. He had nothing left but he was going to give it the old college try. He cut out toward the middle of the track and then it happened.

ED MALONEY was right behind where he could see it. Duke Menafee swung wide at the same moment. He didn't run into the kid; he just stepped out in front a moment as he picked up speed. But the kid's stride broke.

Behind him, Ed Maloney felt all his good nature evaporate. The Duke took no chances at all. He had been afraid the kid had a kick left. And the Duke

believed in figuring every possibility. There was no foul at all, a clash had been avoided. It was neat and it had not even been necessary because Dave Lawrence was through.

The Duke went on down the track and took the lead all by himself. The other milers drove past Ed Maloney. He had nothing left at all, but he fixed his eyes on that finish line. And he got across it before the boards came up and hit him.

He had blacked out for just a matter of seconds. The shock of falling brought him to but the buzzing was still in his ears. He was still groggy when they pulled him to his feet. He heard the thunder of the crowd. Pete Vogel was leading Ed around—Pete and the kid, Dave Lawrence, who was in bad shape himself.

"I do not care for that Menafee," Pete Vogel said. "But you have to hand it to him. Four-seven tonight, Ed. That's traveling. The heel is very definitely a miler."

Ed lumbered on into the dressing room. He saw the Duke stretched out on the rubbing table and Ed walked up to him.

There were a few reporters hanging around, talking to him.

"Nice work," Ed said. "You had the race won anyhow, but you had to make sure. You had to break his stride. Nobody saw it but it was a foul just the same."

"You're punchy," Duke Menafee said. "You're weaving on your heels." He swung up to a sitting position and stepped down to the floor. "Out of my way, has-been," he said, and thrust out a hand to push him out of the way.

Ed Maloney saw red. He swung one hand from the floor and it wasn't even close. His legs were water; he had no strength in him. The Duke didn't have to move. He moved forward on the balls of his feet and drilled a left hand at Ed's jaw. The miler went back down on the floor and just then a flashlight bulb went off.

Ed sat there, and the sense came back to him. The reporters stood around, and one of them said, "I'm sorry that happened, Ed."

The picture was in the papers the next morning. The reporters were friends of Ed Maloney and they hushed it up. But it was not good. Ed Maloney was an old-time miler, and he had walked into the dressing room, accused Menafee of a foul and swung on him.

Ed threw the papers aside. He was at the end of the trail and all the years of good will he had built up were being broken down. He was through and he was not making a gentleman's exit from the game.

The next day Ed went into training for the last mile he would ever run. And Dave Lawrence was training with him. They worked together but it was a different Ed Maloney. The friendly grin was gone.

"You can beat him," Ed said. "I'm through, washed up and I never was good enough to do anything but swallow his dust. But I can't quit like this. I've got to see him licked and you can do it."

Dave said doubtfully, "If you say so, Ed, maybe I can. But I was whipped last time."

"I got a plan," Ed said. "You have the legs, I've got the brains and know all the tricks. This time we gang up on him."

The details of the race were in his mind. Never in his life had he concentrated so on a race. This was the last one, and for the first time in his life he was in a grudge race. He couldn't win but maybe the kid could. They worked out together each day. Dave Lawrence was unattached, he had no coach, and Ed gave him the benefit of his years of knowledge.

Two days before the meet they went out of town. The other milers were on the train, each one wrapped up in his thoughts. Duke Menafee was there, sure of himself, a lone wolf, and enjoying it. It was not a pleasant trip. For years now the kingpin milers had been friendly rivals but Duke Marafee had changed all that. He was cocksure and arrogant and it had destroyed something.

Ed watched over the kid. He supervised his diet, saw that he had plenty of sleep and then, an hour or so before the race was due to start, he unfolded his plan.

"Following the Duke was not good," he said. "You let him run his race, you ran the way he wanted. Tonight we do it differently. You haven't been at this game long enough to pace yourself. Tonight you're going to follow me. I know what you can do. I know Duke Menafee. Four-seven is his best and you can do as well. I'm going to shoot for a four-six mile. You can follow me and when I fold up, you can go on. There'll only be a lap or so to go. You'll be on your own then but I'll get you that far."

They walked out toward the track together and the fans yelled out at him. There were a few boos, the first he'd ever heard directed at him. Ed stood there and listened to them. He didn't like it.

He hated Duke Menafee but he should have kept it to himself. He'd been a good competitor down through the years and now that he was quitting, he didn't like to leave this on his record. Ed Maloney made up his mind.

The Duke was standing there, alone, surveying the crowd as though he were a king on view to the multitude.

Ed walked up to him, his face set. "Duke," he said, "I'm sorry I swung on you. But it's over now. Will you shake hands?"

His eyes narrowed as he looked at Ed Maloney's outstretched hand. "You started it, Maloney," he said. "And you can go to hell!"

THE DUKE left him standing there. And up in the stands Ed Maloney had regained all the prestige he had ever lost, though he didn't know it then. He didn't realize the crowd had taken in that scene. Like a wooden man Ed turned and went over to the starting line. He tried to calm down. He had to be cool and collected in this race. He had drawn the inside lane and he stood there, not even seeing the other runners lined up alongside of him.

They crouched and took their marks. The crowd was suddenly silent and the starter raised his gun hand high.

Crack! Ed was out of his marks like a sprinter, hugging that inside pole. For fifty yards he raced ahead and then a

measure of sanity returned to him. He slowed down and tried to calculate this thing. He had to time himself perfectly.

Turning his head he saw Dave Lawrence just behind him. The kid was there and Ed turned back and pounded on. They went around the first lap and he was running carefully, his mind on the race now. That first quarter was going to be fast, approximately sixty seconds. A little slower for the second and third, and all out on the final.

They pounded around the home turn and into the second lap. There were twelve laps altogether and the runners were spread out behind Ed Maloney. Sam Jackson broke out from the pack and came out fast to take over the lead. He was pacemaker tonight. All the boys were shooting for a record, pouring it on.

Duke Menafee was running fourth. He was content back there, biding his time, running his own race. He didn't look a bit worried.

They finished the second lap and Ed Maloney's pace was unvarying. They pounded down the stretch and the kid was right back there, driving in his footsteps. A good kid, Ed thought, and a great miler. At least, he would be some day. And maybe in the years to come when the kid was winning, there would be some satisfaction there for Ed Maloney. If he could help to make a champion, it would cushion his own disappointed dream.

They finished the fourth lap and one quarter was gone. Ed knew he'd timed it right. He slowed his stride just a trifle and the pace was getting him now. It was getting all of them. Up front Sam Jackson was just about burned out. He hadn't tempted the Duke who was still in that fourth slot.

Ed had figured on a sixty-two for the second quarter. It was fast, but he had to be fast tonight. And behind him Dave Lawrence had to have that extra something Ed lacked, the finishing kick, the stamina to stay in there.

They went along and Ed's arms and legs were dead weights, swinging from his body, dragging him down. There were needles in his brain. He pounded on and began to gain his second wind. He could make it for three of the quar-

ters, but in the last one the kid would have to do it all alone.

He drove on steadily. Sam Jackson started to stumble. He staggered off the track finally and his pacemaking had fooled no one. Ed held the lead and then, in the distance, he heard the sounds of pursuit.

He thought it was the Duke but it was Pete Vogel who came up to challenge him. He broke wide and for a few strides rode even with Ed, and then fell back into third place.

They were into the third quarter and Ed knew that he was just about through. It was only a question of time now. It was bitter to realize that he was not going to finish tonight in his last race. He would run until he dropped and if the kid couldn't win, it was just too bad.

He raced on and they came into the far straightaway with just a quarter of a mile to go. And now the strategy was finished—from here on they would just run. Ed heard the kid right in back of him; he turned and flashed a grin at him. Dave Lawrence looked white around the gills, but he had not faltered. And the Duke was running third now, two strides away.

Four laps to go. Ed stumbled once, then caught himself and kept going. He saw the fans through a mist and underneath him the boards were wavering.

He lost track of things. He kept on running and then he saw the flag and there was one more lap to go and it was over. The footsteps drummed behind him and someone was hanging at his shoulder. He didn't know who it was—Dave or the Duke.

He dug down deep for some reserve but there wasn't anything there at all. Lifting his head he saw the tape up there, shimmering across the track. It came over him in a fuzzy sort of fashion that he'd never seen before. It was always

snapped before he got there. He lunged forward and then suddenly he was falling with something twining around his chest.

HE WAS being lifted, carried off the track. They were all helping him, the milers he had known through the years. And the old coach was there and then he heard the time. Four minutes and six seconds.

It was good time, he thought. And then they were shaking his hand.

His old coach said, "I don't know how it happened, Ed. Somebody built that fire under you at last."

Ed shook some of the fog out of his head. "I never figured out that remark," he said, "but it sounded to me like something I should resent."

The man said, "Ed, you're too good-natured. You ran hard, but you never had that inner drive, the competitive spirit that becomes a flame, that pushes a man to impossible accomplishments. But it happened to you tonight."

It filtered through and Ed knew who was responsible. Duke Menafee, and he would be grateful to him ever after. Then something struck him like the shock of cold water. "Hey," he said. "Who won? Dave—"

Dave Lawrence was standing right in front of him. "Some day," the kid said, "I hope to be a champ. But I wasn't even close those last two laps. It was just you and the Duke, and you took him by a yard."

Ed sat there and tried to take it in. He'd won, he'd come in first!

He couldn't quite figure it out, but from now on, he'd have lots of time to think about it. Now that he was retiring, it would be something to remember. And looking up at the still cheering crowd, the old good-natured grin spread across his face.

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SAYMAN SALVE

DIME SPORTS MAGAZINE

(Continued from page 67)

the title and Fitz won, while Tom looked on. Later, Tom was to beat Corbett again, knocking him out in eight rounds, but by that time Corbett was no longer champion.

They brought Tom on to face Gus Ruhlin. Gus stood nearly seven feet tall, and he was fast and tough. The fans kept asking: "How long would it take Gus to beat Tom Sharkey? How many rounds would he need to get past fistiana's question mark?"

The two met beside the roaring surf of Coney Island. Gus walked out at the bell. He knew he could take anything this one-hundred eighty-five pound Sharkey could land on him. He knew Tom would walk in straight up and was ready to land one punch that would blast Tom into the ocean.

Gus let go with a roundhouse right for the midsection. Tom stepped to his left and let his right fly at the jaw. The blow landed on the button. It was a one-punch knock-out!

Tom was challenging everybody then. He dared them to prove that he was not the logical contender for the crown but one man stood in his way—the cunning, cruel Kid McCoy.

They met in Syracuse, New York, where McCoy had started his career. At the bell, McCoy put one of his corkscrew lefts flush on Tom's mouth. Tom walked right through it. No one ever before had taken that punch without backing up. McCoy looked surprised and backed up himself, landing two more lefts to cover his retreat.

McCoy tried another left. Sharkey partly picked it off, got through and inside. Instantly he began landing punches so fast that McCoy did not know which hand to tie up. Every punch stung and McCoy was an astonished man at the bell.

In round two, McCoy tried feinting Tom out of position, but it only meant that Tom would swarm in just that much sooner. McCoy changed his tactics and began leading with his right. This bothered Tom for a round or two. Kid McCoy was clever enough to save his ring life by his wits.

THE SCORE BOARD

By the end of the fifth, the outcome could be seen. McCoy was tiring, Sharkey getting stronger. McCoy was ten pounds lighter than Tom, and no man who ever lived could give away weight to Tom Sharkey when Tom was in his prime. Tom knocked him out in the tenth.

NOW there was no doubt of Tom's getting a championship bout. Jim Jeffries had beaten Fitzsimmons for the crown but Jim would have to prove that he could beat Tom Sharkey, if he were to be called a champion worthy to be compared with John L. Sullivan, a real king of his sport in his day.

Coney Island was the scene of the fight. Jim Jeffries had said that he was in the best condition of his entire ring career that dramatic night, and he needed to be.

It was a twenty-five round fight. For twenty-one rounds Sharkey took all that Jeffries could give, and battered the giant boilermaker from rope to rope. No one at the ringside could see what was holding Jeffries up. Then the turn came with dramatic suddenness.

The first real movies of a prize fight were being taken. To get enough light for the cameras, old-fashioned carbon arc lamps had been strung only a few feet above the ring. Standing straight up, Tom's head came so close to that terrific bank of heat that it singed all the hair off from the top of his head and he was to be bald for the rest of his life.

Perhaps the heat tired Tom as much as Jeffries punches for, in the twenty-second round, Tom showed that he no longer could take those Jeffries lefts and come back strong. In those last three rounds, Jeffries broke three of Tom's ribs with left-hand wallops. Even so, Tom did not go down, but that beating was the end of his career. He was never a fighter again.

And so Tom lost the crown again, but this time by being born thirty years too soon. Jeffries had done his best in every round but if Tom Sharkey had fought under modern ring rules, he might well

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DIME SPORTS MAGAZINE

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* * *

TERRY McGOVERN was the first in the ring. He was matched against Pedlar Palmer and he did not fear to sit and wait for an opponent. Rather, it seemed to him a sign of being afraid when a man was last into the ring. He sat on his stool and glared at the referee and at the newspaper men along the ring. No twitchings of nervousness moved his knees or caused him to scuff his feet in the rosin.

Pedlar Palmer, the English cutie, skipped gracefully through the ropes. You could name your own odds on either man. Terry was a bantamweight grown into the feather class but with the shoulders and wallop of a first-flight middleweight. Pedlar, beautifully built but tough as they come, was famous for making the sluggers look foolish.

Terry glared. His eyes never left the Englishman. His arms and shoulders were fidgeting now, going through the shadow movement of short-hooked punches, a trick that Jack Dempsey was to adopt and use before his fights many years later.

The referee called them to the center of the ring. Pedlar Palmer looked down at his opponents feet, as so many fighters do at that tense minute, but Terry glared at his man, showing scant courtesy to what the referee was saying, fuming to get going.

Terry left his stool at the bell, as if to start a fifty-yard sprint. Pedlar was ready to begin slowly, to feel out his man for a round or so, as was the custom in those days when most bouts were for twenty-five rounds or longer.

They met in Pedlar's corner. Terry crashed a left to the jaw and aimed a terrific right at the midsection. Pedlar sidestepped to his right. Terry stepped to his own left, keeping in front of his man and put a right to Pedlar's midsection. Pedlar tried to clinch. Terry swept his arms aside, landed a left to the ribs a right to the jaw. Pedlar Palmer went and down, knocked out before the stools

THE SCORE BOARD

were clear of the ring. The time of the bout was twenty-seven seconds. Many of the fans, accustomed to letting the first slow rounds go by before they came in, paid for their tickets and heard the news of the fight while standing outside the arena.

The sheer ferocity of that two-fisted attack caught the imagination of the nation. Everywhere the newspapers were full of Terry McGovern—Terrible Terry, the man who paid little attention to defense, and had only enough boxing skill to know how the other man was trying to defend himself.

No one was more impressed than the college boys. Up at Yale, a lot of hard-bitten athletes made up their minds to play football the way Terry McGovern fought. Pudge Heffelfinger, the guard who still was a great pro grinder at the age of fifty, was one of them. Tad Jones, and Hare, and the rest of the names, which no old-timer will ever forget, all thought the same way.

Football, at the time, was only a minor sport. Yale men wore high-necked sweaters like Terry McGovern. You can see them in any of the old pictures taken on the Yale fence. The football men scowled and stuck out their chins like Terrible Terry. They built plays around the ferocious attacks of men like Ted Coy, and the furious charging of ends like Hinkle was used to break up the massed attacks of the Bulldogs' opponents.

Like the man-killing attacks of Terrible Terry, the Yale attacks caught the imagination of the nation. Football was on its way to the highest place in all college sports, and the spirit of Terrible Terry, who had almost no education, changed the higher educational system of the country.

THE men who had backed Pedlar Palmer still did not believe that Terrible Terry could beat a really good boxer. It is true that he had taken on Patsy Haley and Turkey Smith in the same night, knocking out Haley in one minute and forty seconds of the first rounds and finishing Smith off in three more rounds. Haley was a first-

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DIME SPORTS MAGAZINE

rate boxer, too. He knew the sport so well that later in life he was to become one of the few top-flight referees, but the fans were not satisfied.

Right in the same division with Terry, and champion at that, was George Dixon, the Chocolate Kid.

Dixon had been born with one of the fastest right hands ever seen in the ring. He had won his preliminary bouts with his left arm glued to his side. When Tom O'Rourke discovered him, that left was nearly useless to him, yet George was winning. Tom spent months developing the Dixon left into as useful a weapon as the right. After that, the Chocolate Kid was nearly unbeatable. He held the title in the featherweight division for six years. During those years, he fought and won in every division, including the welters, and in every place where boxing was a major sport. There never was a rough streak in him; he was known as a gentleman among gentlemen.

When Terrible Terry was matched with Dixon, the sports writers really turned themselves loose. Here was the wild Irishman against the clever Negro, the complete brute against the polite gentleman.

Who would win?

Featured in all the news was the fact that Terrible Terry had grown up in the shadow of the Brooklyn Bridge and where he had developed his fighting style. Terry would fight a heavyweight or a bantam for money, marbles or the sheer fun of it. He would fight on the ice of the East River, in the dark caverns beneath the arches of the bridge or in any barroom big enough to swing his arms. Name your man and your spot and Terry would fight him and win.

The bell clanged for round one. Terry came off from his stool and charged straight across the ring into Dixon's corner. But George Dixon was no Pedlar Palmer. He did not stand there to be hit. Instead he dashed along the ropes and left a right hook sticking out for Terry to run his chin into.

The furious McGovern whirled and took after his man. He found his punches picked off before they started. He

THE SCORE BOARD

launched furious charges, only to find himself flailing away at empty space where the colored man had stood a second before. He set himself for another charge, and felt leather gloves stabbing into his face and pushing him off balance.

For seven long rounds this went on. Dixon was winning easily. The rooters, who believed in the tap-and-get-away system of boxing, were planning on how to spend the winnings from their bets.

Between rounds, Terry's handlers tried to give him advice, but from those clenched teeth came only the words: "I'll get him, boys! Put your bets down! I'll get him!"

The odds were on Dixon when that eighth round came up, but no such odds existed in the mind of Terry McGovern. He charged as furiously that time as in the first round. He tore and hauled at those defending arms.

Then Dixon made the one mistake. He left his midsection unguarded and McGovern right went home.

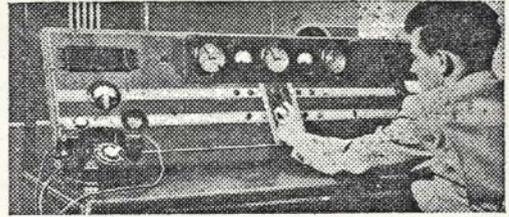
Dixon sank to one knee and actually turned pale with pain but he was game. He got up, groggy and helpless, and tried to fight. McGovern was on him with a furious flurry of rights and lefts to the chin. Dixon went down and the championship changed hands.

How much Brooklyn money was on Terry that night, no one will ever know. Brooklyn had spent weeks reading about its native son, and almost overnight, the sleep-loving citizens, who lived beyond the river because it was so restful, became the Terry McGovern type known as the Dodger fans.

Terry McGovern was considered un-

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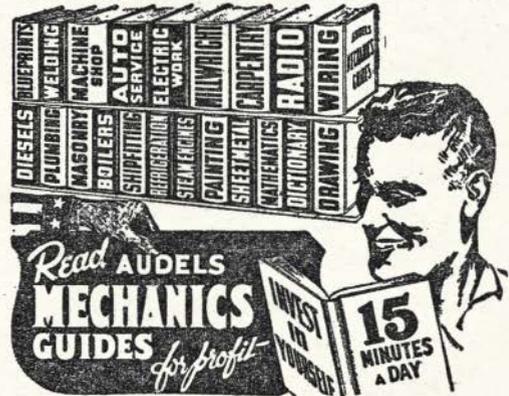


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beatable for a while. Everybody had tried to straighten him up and slow him down with uppercuts. The swaying McGovern attack made it almost impossible to land those punches. The missed uppercut lifted the elbow out of the zone where it guarded the midsection. Then the McGovern right sank into the pantry region, while the McGovern left hook went around the up-raised gloves to land on the jaw.

It all happened so fast that few could see how Terry did it.

Young Corbett from California saw that the way to beat Terry was to go over his attack rather than under it. He was a side-stepper like Pedlar Palmer, and though he never had beaten anyone of importance, he could take Terry seven nights per week, any week you named.

Corbett and McGovern met in Hartford. On the way to the ring, Corbett knocked on the door of Terry's dressing room.

"What d'ya want?" Terry called. His voice was high and whiny with the keyed-up tension of his nerves.

"It's Corbett! Come on out and take your licking, Terry!"

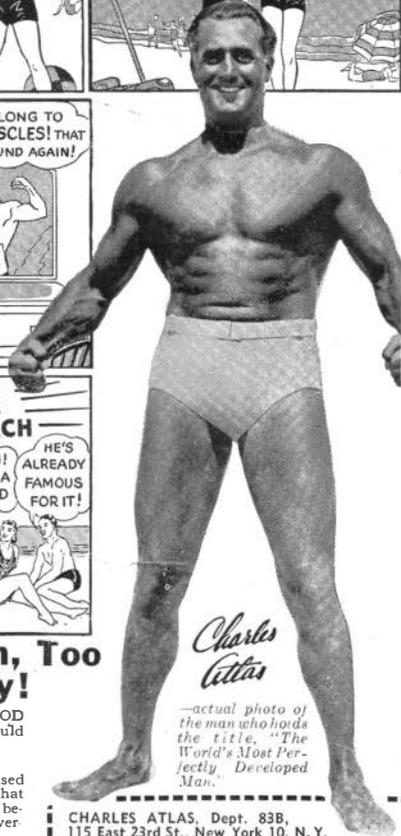
No one ever had talked to Terry McGovern that way and failed to get action. In a second Terry was through that door. He walked on young Corbett's heels all the way to the ring, and Corbett just laughed at him.

The first round told the story. Corbett side-stepped that rush, and threw an overhand left that came downward on McGovern's out-thrust chin. Its force drove straight through Terry's body. Terry felt that long punch clear to his heels.

Terry turned and charged, but that first punch told the story of the fight. Terrible Terry was knocked out.

But before his knockout, Terrible Terry McGovern had done several things. He had made a mark that will never be forgotten in the world of fistiana. He had changed football and inspired the fighting Yale spirit, but most of all, he had changed Brooklyn from a sleepy town to the home of the Dodger fans.

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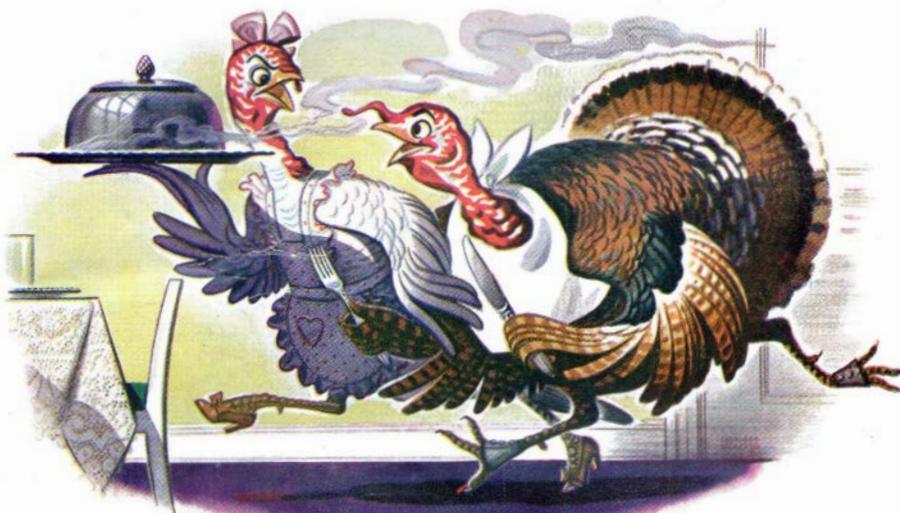
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