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2. **ONE PITCH FOR BLOOD**.....*T. W. Ford* 62  
The kid had a big mouth—and a pitch to go with it—but it took eight other guys on his own team pulling for him to lose to give him a high hard one where his heart ought to be!

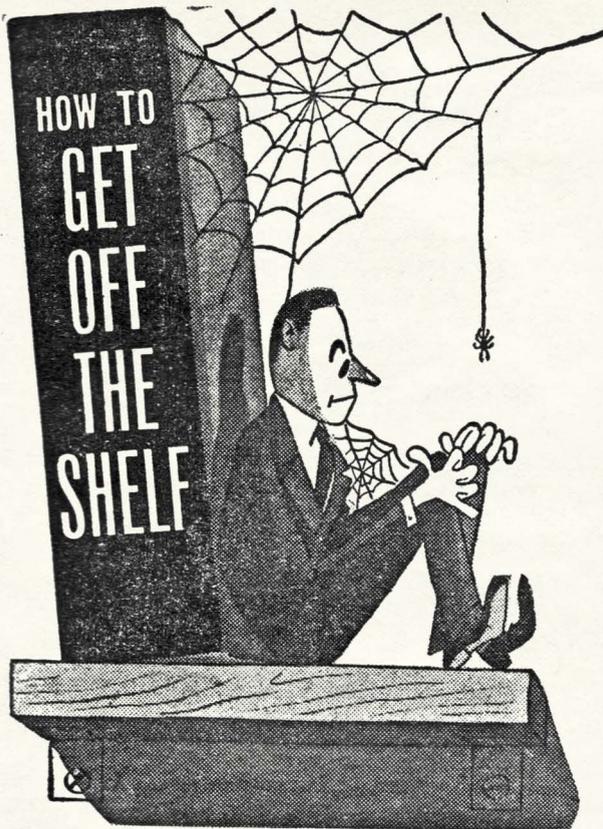
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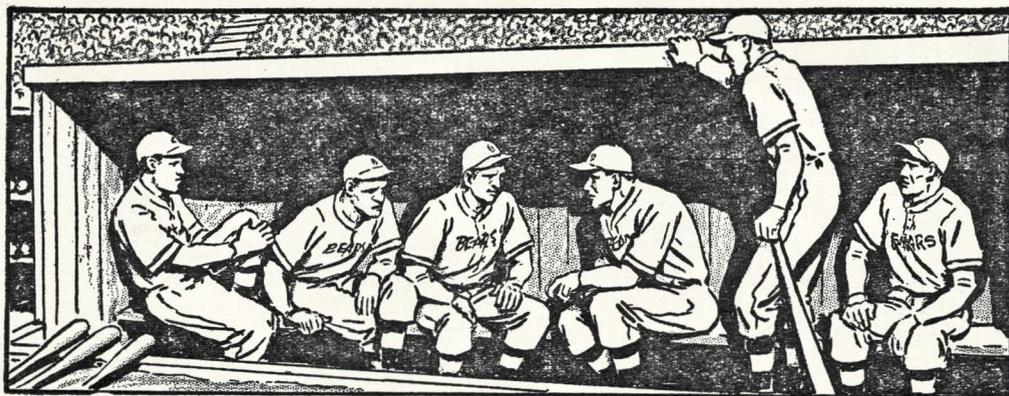
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## IN THE DUGOUT

SOMETIMES, little things happen in baseball that never show up on the score board.

Last year, the veteran little infielder, Eddie Stanky, and the twenty-year-old pitcher, Ralph Branca, were Dodger teammates and pals. Young Branca leaned on the cool wisdom, sound baseball knowledge and inspiration of Eddie Stanky. With Stanky's help, Ralph Branca became one of the finest pitchers in the game. His right arm did valiant service in bringing the pennant to Brooklyn. When the Dodgers traded Stanky to the Boston Braves, in a sudden deal which the veteran infielder called "a stab in the back," young Branca was heartbroken. When the baseball season opened, young Branca was a changed pitcher. With little Eddie Stanky no longer behind him at second, Branca found it tough to win ball games. He became moody, worried and drawn—a startlingly changed ball player. It seemed as if the Brooklyn Dodgers had lost their best pitcher.

Recently, when Durocher brought his Dodgers to Boston to play against the Braves, little Eddie Stanky, now dressed in his new baseball uniform, lost no time

to humble his former teammates, and publicly express his hate for Durocher. But Eddie Stanky also found time to invite young Ralph Branca to his home for a quiet little dinner, and he spent the entire evening talking to the worried rival ball player, trying to restore his lost confidence as a pitcher.

It was a moment of kindness that is rare in baseball rivalry.

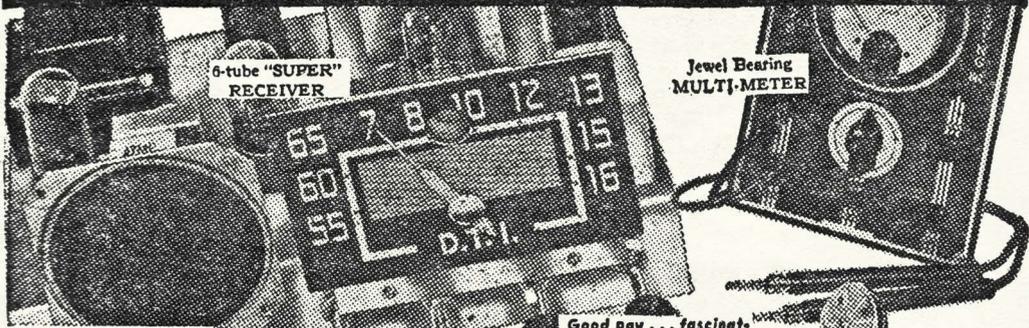
STIRRING half-time addresses by football coaches are becoming passé, but there was a time when those pep talks were masterpieces.

One of the best probably was rendered by Fielding (Hurry Up) Yost, an artist who did everything but wave a picture of Whistler's Mother. The team was entranced and in an emotional jumble when Yost reached the grand climax.

"Go out that door," he thundered, his voice reaching crescendo pitch. "Go out that door—to victory!"

Yost had worked himself into such a frenzy that he pointed at the wrong door. The obedient athletes, blinded by rage and tears, stampeded furiously out that wrong door—into the swimming pool.

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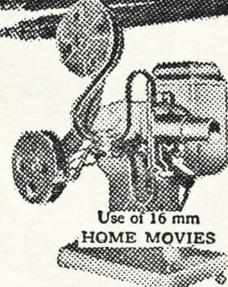
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# GOAL OR

*They tried to be men of iron—and they bled. They made like men of steel—and were bent. And then there was time for just one more play—a play that was never on any coach's diagram, a play called—fight!*

A  
NOVEL



**W**HEN you think about football you don't ordinarily associate it with forty-five-year-old men or studious-looking college sophomores who wear spectacles and tip the scales at a hundred and fifteen pounds. The State-Mar-

# BUST GUY

High up on the rim of the stands, Paul Wallace and Bill watched the game, the telephone that was connected with the Marquand bench in Bill's fist. . . .



By  
**JUDSON  
P.  
PHILIPS**

quand game a few weeks ago hit all the sports pages, and we heard a lot about Trigger Lamar, Marquand's great triple-threat back, and the inspirational play of the Marquand line, and the genius of the Marquand coaching staff. The real core of the story of that game had quite another slant. It had almost entirely to do with a forty-five-year-old man and a small stu-

dious-looking, bespectacled sophomore.

When the announcement was made last March that Jake Willis had torn up his long-term contract with Western University and was coming east to coach Marquand, they burned bonfires on the Marquand campus. Jake Willis is one of the great figures in football. When they talk about an all-time All American backfield-

they always mention such players as Thorpe, Grange, Nevers, Gipp, Nagurski, Harmon, Jake Willis, and one or two others. Perhaps Willis, in his playing days, couldn't kick as well as Thorpe, or pass quite as spectacularly as Sammy Baugh, or run quite as elusively as Grange or as hard as Nagurski, but when it came to a combination of all these talents Willis certainly rated at the top of the list.

It was natural that he had turned to coaching, and his success had been spectacular from the very beginning. His Western University teams had won more Conference titles than you could count on your fingers. He had a reputation for being a perfectionist, a rugged drill-master who, in spite of his uncompromising demands on his players, had them worshipping at his feet.

**F**OR the last three years Western hadn't done well, chiefly because they lacked material. Material is apt to run in cycles, and nobody thought of placing any part of the blame for three lackluster years on Jake. It was just one of those things. As a matter of fact, the public and the old grads had rallied to him more loyally than ever because of a personal tragedy in Jake's life. In his senior year in college Jake had married a coed on the Western campus. Her name was Laura, and every football player who'd played under Jake's coaching down the years knew Laura and loved her.

She knew almost as much about football as her famous husband. They used to say that she was Jake's most trusted scout. She would go to a game in which one of Western's opponents was involved and come back with charts and a shrewd evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the enemy that astonished old hands at the scouting business. Laura was a great guy, everybody said.

She'd been a very special woman, Jake Willis's wife. Three years ago she'd

drowned, in an heroic effort to save their son, sixteen at the time, who had been swimming with his mother.

To Jake Willis, losing Laura was like losing his right arm and most of his heart. His boys rallied round him; the alumni rallied round him. But everybody guessed that finally, when Jake asked to be released from his job at Western, it wasn't because the offer from Marquand was better. Western would have matched that. It was the fact that he could never rid himself of Laura's ghost on the Western campus. They had met there, fallen in love there, married there, worked there. Everybody understood.

Jake came east. He was a wiry, hard-bitten man of forty-five now, but he hadn't put on an ounce of weight since his playing days. He could still demonstrate his theories by actual play, if necessary. His eyes were blue, cold, penetrating. His tongue was sharp, but everyone knew that behind that cold exterior there lived a warm, understanding heart.

Spring practice had been under the direction of Paul Wallace, hired as Jake's assistant, because Jake hadn't been engaged until late and needed time to wind up his affairs in the West. Wallace was a gentle, mild-mannered guy who had played under Jake at Western ten years before. He knew Jake's system inside out, and his temperament was expected to be a perfect counterbalance for Jake's hard, driving personality.

When Jake met the squad for the first day of fall practice he told the men, "I didn't come here to fail."

He meant it in spades. Fundamentals, day after day, handling the ball, falling on it, kicking it, passing it, endless working on the charging-machine and the tackling dummy. Hour after hour of this with Jake's voice, stinging like a whiplash, never satisfied, always pressing for greater effort. The boys took it—even with some degree of pleasure. They knew that Jake

was a perfectionist; they knew that these long hours of drudgery would pay off in the long run. When one or two of the boys complained out of Jake's hearing, Trigger Lamar, Marquand's captain, reminded them of the unmerciful beatings they'd taken for the last couple of years because of inadequate preparation in fundamentals.

"We've got the material," Trigger said, over and over. "Willis can show us how to use it. Let him do it his way."

Not that it was very likely Jake would change his methods. In addition to the grinding work on the field there were blackboard talks. Jake was introducing his own system of play—a floating wing-T, the sports writers called it. It was a tricky offense that was based on the quick-opening play. Every play in Jake's system was a scoring play.

"If every man was able to carry out his assignment perfectly," Jake said, over and over, "we'd score on every play. I don't expect that. You won't be playing against sawdust dummies. But I expect it to happen often enough for you to keep winning."

**F**OOTBALL isn't all offense, though most fans may think so. There is the defense, and Jake was also a master of intricate defense formations. They often compared him with Dick Harlow. Both his offense and defense were tricky and complex. The boys found that their muscles ached from the strenuous drills on the field and that their heads ached from trying to absorb the details of the blackboard diagrams.

"You got to be a Phi Beta Kappa to play on this club," Ward Shaver, the big tackle, said to Lama.

"It won't be so complicated once we begin to put it into practice," Lamar said.

"This is worse than calculus," Shaver moaned.

After ten days they began walking through the plays. Even in slow motion Jake seemed never to be satisfied. His acid sarcasm lashed at them. When finally they began to scrimmage against the second team his discontent mounted. He picked out big Shaver as a particular target for dissatisfaction.

"You need to develop a few muscles in your head, Shaver, as well as in your arms and legs! Do I have to lead you by the hand to show you where you ought to be on that play?"

Shaver gritted his teeth and plugged away at it. The second-string linemen got a particular brutal going-over from the big tackle, but Jake wasn't satisfied.

"A smart line would mouse-trap you every time, Shaver. Get the lead out and get moving!" Jake shouted through his megaphone.

After practice Shaver was burning. "I thought this guy was a rough diamond," he said to Lamar. "But where's the diamond?"

Trigger Lamar was worried, but he kept it to himself. Because of Conference limitations, the fall practice was short. There were only three weeks to get ready for the opening game. He realized that, with a new system to be learned, there wasn't time for gags or kidding around. But this high-powered stuff was new to the Marquand squad. It needed a little leavening. He began to sense something like discontent and rebellion among the men. He went to Paul Wallace, the assistant, about it.

"The fellows need a little encouraging," Lamar said. "They don't mind being driven out there on the field, but they need a pat on the back now and then."

Paul Wallace was worried, too, but he tried not to show it. They were talking in his room, and he sat in a big easy-chair, puffing on a blackened briar pipe. He was a round, good-natured fellow, a direct contrast to Jake Willis.

"I know," he said to Lamar. "But there's a lot to get done, Trigger. The Bedlowe game is only ten days off. Jake knows that we can't relax an instant if we're going to be ready. We're breaking in a completely new system. After that game I think you'll find him changed."

But Wallace wasn't as sure as he sounded. After Trigger had gone back to his training quarters, Wallace knocked out his pipe and walked across the campus to the little white house near the athletic field where Jake Willis lived. There were lights in the window. Wallace knocked on the door. He heard Jake's voice, sharp and edgy, calling out to him to come in.

Jake was sitting at the table in the kitchen. To Wallace's astonishment there was a bottle of liquor on the table and Jake had a drink in his hand. His eyes looked red and angry.

"Maybe I should talk to you another time," Wallace said. He'd known Jake a long while and had never known him to drink. He was deeply disturbed.

"What's the matter with now?" Jake demanded.

"Nothing, I suppose," Wallace said. "It's just that the boys are a little on edge, Jake. You've been driving them pretty hard. They—"

"They've come to you to complain?" Jake asked.

"No," Wallace said. "Not exactly. As captain, Trigger Lamar was worried and he mentioned to me that—"

"Let's get one thing straight, Paul," Jake said. He tossed off what was left of the drink. "I'm the head coach here. I'll run things exactly as I see fit. If these boys can't take it that's just too doggone bad!"

"I know, Jake." The palms of Wallace's hands were damp. He'd sensed that something was wrong with Jake. He loved this man. He'd played under him, worked for him, believed in him. But something was terribly wrong.

"Remember this," Jake said. "I'm running this show and I'll run it my way!"

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## 2

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### Touchdown Touchoff

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PRACTICE began at three in the afternoon. The day after Paul Wallace's visit to Jake the head coach failed to appear for practice. According to the schedule this was the day that Jake had planned to give them four new plays to be used in the Bedlowe game—plays which Bedlowe scouts, familiar with Jake's system, would not know. They would be held in reserve in case the going got rough.

Wallace saw the question in the boys' eyes as they dressed for practice. Where was Jake? He decided to plug that hole quickly.

"Mr. Willis was called away on personal business of an urgent nature," he told the boys. "He may not get here for practice at all. But he has given me the four special plays he told you you'd get today. I've set them up on the blackboard."

Wallace did have the plays, but he'd only glanced through the charts, planning to get them exactly from Jake Willis's blackboard talk. The squad gathered before the blackboard and Wallace, pointer in hand, went over the plays with them. Like most good coaches, Jake's plays were all variations on a familiar formation. You ran a play several times until the defensive team was all set to defend against it, and then you pulled the variation.

One of these was a variation on the wing-back threading back through the backfield, taking the ball from the quarterback in the T, who had faked to the bucking back. This play is sometimes called the naked reverse. The variation, however, saw the wing-back flip the ball to the

quarterback, who had faded after handing him the ball. From this developed a long, downfield pass.

When each man knew his assignments thoroughly the team took the field. They worked the play over and over again in signal practice, and then they were called on to run it against the scrubs, who were unprepared. Lamar, quarterback in the T, ran the fake reverse, then the regular reverse, and finally the new play. Condit, the wingback, came threading through the backfield. The ball was snapped to Lamar, who faked to Wedge, the fullback, and then handed to Condit. Condit continued on a step or two and then turned to flip the ball to Lamar who had faded back. He never got the ball away. The scrub right tackle smeared him.

Wallace and the other coaches rushed in and stopped play. They pulled the varsity back and went over the assignments on the play again. Something had gone wrong to allow the scrub right tackle a clear shot at Condit. They went back to scrimmage. They ran several plays, and then Condit tried K-8, as the new play was numbered. The same thing happened. This time the scrub right tackle was in on Condit, and Condit fumbled. The scrub end recovered.

Wallace, watching the play closely, was certain that each man had carried out his assignment. They tried it again. This time Condit managed to get the ball away, but it was an inaccurate pass, because he was hurried by the scrub tackle, and all Lamar could do was fall on the ball for a ten yard loss.

"That scrub tackle is coming through your spot, Shaver," the assistant coach said.

**T**HE big tackle, nerves already on edge, snapped back at him. "That's one you can't blame on me, Mr. Wallace. My assignment is to go through and take out the defensive right half. I got him all three times."

Wallace took off his glasses and wiped them. There was something wrong with the way the play was set up. It was something that called for Jake's quick, incisive mind. Where was Jake? Wallace had called his house. He had tried the college operator a dozen times to see if there was any message.

They dropped the K-8 for the time being and worked on the other new plays. But morale was low. Wallace sensed it. It was as if the boys knew that something was wrong. The "urgent business" story about Jake hadn't gone over too well with them.

The usual laughter and kidding didn't go on in the locker room when the practice was over. Their confidence in their preparation for the Bedlowe game was shaken. The Jake Willis magic wasn't working. And where was Jake?

As soon as he could leave, Wallace set out for Jake's house, which was only a short distance from the field. He knocked several times on the front door and got no answer. He tried it and found it wasn't locked. He let himself in.

"Jake!" he called. There was no answer.

He walked through into the kitchen where he'd seen Jake the night before. The whiskey bottle, empty now, was on the table. An empty glass stood beside it. But no Jake. Nor was he upstairs in any of the bedrooms.

Wallace walked out onto the front path again. He stood there, stuffing tobacco into his pipe, and wondering what to do. If Jake didn't show tomorrow he'd have to go to the college authorities, and this might put Jake's position in jeopardy.

Wallace didn't pay any attention to the boy who came slowly up the path toward him. He was a skinny kid, with owlish-looking horn-rimmed spectacles shielding his eyes.

"Mr. Wallace?" he asked.

"Yes, what is it?"

"You're looking for Jake Willis?"

Wallace was suddenly interested. "Yes. Do you know where he is?"

"No," the boy said. "But don't worry. He'll be on the job tomorrow."

"How do you know?" Wallace asked.

"I just know," the boy said. He had a curiously shy way of speaking.

"Who are you?" Wallace asked.

"Bill Carey, sir. I'm a sophomore here at Marquand."

"What do you know about Mr. Willis and where he is?"

"I just know he'll turn up, sir. That's all."

"How did you know he was missing?"

Young Carey smiled a wistful smile. "I—I just happened to know," he said. He turned and walked away. Wallace watched him go. There was something about Bill Carey, something that was familiar, though Wallace could have sworn he'd never seen him before.

**H**ALF a dozen members of the football team were gathered in Trigger Lamar's room in Burrows Hall. There was Ward Shaver, and Jimmy Condit, and Bog Wedge, the fullback, and Jay Pond, the center, and Harry Locke, the All-Conference end.

"I tell you, the man acts queer," Shaver said.

"His approach is new to us," Trigger Lamar said, without too much conviction. "It's been a kind of picnic for us other years. Willis is big time."

"You can be big time and still be human," Shaver said. "I've heard fellows talk about Lou Little at Columbia. He's a perfectionist, too. But those guys would lie down and let a steam roller go over them if Little asked them. They love him. I wouldn't pour water on this guy if he was on fire."

"You certainly wouldn't call him 'Lovable Jake Willis'," Harry Locke said.

"I don't understand it," Pond said. "I used to read articles about him. They al-

ways said how good he was with his players. The sports writers used to say he had a way with his players that'd make a weak squad win games they had no business winning. We haven't seen any of that kind of stuff. Frankly, nobody likes him."

"Maybe the trouble's with us," Bob Wedge said. He was a big good-natured guy. He walked over and looked at himself in the mirror, grinning. "Just wanted to make sure I didn't have two heads or something. You guys look normal, too."

"Look," Trigger Lamar said. "Whether we like it or not, we're stuck with it. We can't holler before we've even played a game. If we turn out to win we don't really have any complaint. He's here to build a winner."

"It's funny about that K-8 play," Pond said. "It just doesn't work, and yet I know everyone was carrying out his assignment."

"I certainly wouldn't be very tempted to call it in a tight spot," Lamar said.

There was a knock at the door, and Lamar called out, "Come in!"

The door opened, hesitantly, and a gangling young man with big horn-rimmed glasses that gave him an owlish look stepped into the room. He was clearly embarrassed.

"I'm sorry, Lamar," he said. "I thought you'd be alone."

"What's the matter, kid?" Lamar asked.

The boy moistened his lips. "It—it's about K-8," he said.

"*What?*" They were all staring at him now.

"The—the play you were trying out this afternoon."

"Say, who are you?" Lamar asked.

"Carey, sir. Class of Fifty-One."

"What do you know about K-8?"

"Well, sir, I was watching the practice this afternoon and I—"

"How could you be watching the practice? It was secret—no spectators allowed."

Bill Carey shuffled his feet, unhappily. "Binoculars, sir—from the roof of Burrows Hall."

"Go ahead," Lamar said. The room was suddenly silent.

"As you can see, sir," Bill Carey said, "I'm not the physical type for football. But I—I love the game. I've made quite a study of it, particularly the Willis system, and I—"

"You know what's wrong with K-8," Shaver said, drily.

"Yes, sir," Bill said.

"That's great," Shaver said. "A whole staff of coaches didn't know, but a sophomore looking through binoculars from the roof of Burrows Hall can tell us."

"YES, sir," Bill said, quietly. "You see, I know the Willis system inside out."

Shaver winked at the others. "Well, what is wrong with K-8?"

"You, sir," Bill said.

The others burst into laughter. Shaver's face got red. "Look, I'm in no mood to take a ribbing from some fresh kid," he said.

"Oh, I don't mean you personally, sir," Bill said. "I meant the left tackle. The assignment was given out wrong."

"It came from the horse's mouth, to coin a phrase," Shaver said. "The great but absent Mr. Willis drew those diagrams himself."

"He—he was probably in a hurry." Bill said. "Or Mr. Wallace read it incorrectly. You were going downfield to take out the defensive right half, weren't you, sir?"

"That's my assignment on the play, written down in black and white," Shaver said.

"There was a mistake somewhere," Bill Carey said, calmly. "The left tackle is supposed to stay put, blocking that hole. Condit is supposed to pass the ball back from behind the barrier set up by the left tackle."

"What about the defensive right half?" Lamar asked.

"If he's left alone he may think it's a simple reverse," Bill said, "and be sucked in. That leaves the left flat wide open for a pass."

Shaver winked at the others again. "You could probably draw a diagram of the play, couldn't you, Carey?"

"Yes sir, if you have a pencil and paper."

Somebody gave him a pad and pencil from Lamar's desk. They watched him and their eyes widened as they saw him reproduce Jake Willis's diagram perfectly, except for the new assignment for the left tackle.

"The kid's right," Lamar said. "If the left tackle holds on, the play works."

"Mr. Willis would have spotted it in a minute if he'd been there," Bill said.

"How come the other coaches didn't notice?" Shaver asked.

"People have a way of following Mr. Willis's orders pretty literally," Bill said, smiling faintly. "But in this case, Mr. Willis made a mistake in his diagram. I'm afraid Paul Wallace has never been very imaginative. He wasn't an imaginative player."

"You used to see him play, I suppose," Shaver said. "He was a star when you were a one-year-old."

"I never saw him play, of course," Bill said, seriously, "but I know he wasn't an imaginative player. I know almost all there is to know about the men who have played under Mr. Willis."

"You're quite a Willis fan, aren't you?" Shaver said.

"Yes, sir. Quite a fan," Bill said.

IF ANYONE but loyal, plodding Paul Wallace had been assistant coach at Marquand, Jake Willis would have been all through the next day, because the head coach remained absent. Wallace did not report his absence to the college au-

thorities, and he pretended to the team and the other coaches that he knew where Jake was and why he was absent. He even prepared against the worst.

"Jake figures the Bedlowe game is just a warm-up," he told the other coaches. "He may drop off at the capitol and scout State personally. After all, our game with them next week is the important one."

The coaches accepted the explanation, but they weren't happy. Jake should be here. The boys needed him. You could feel it in the final practice. Bedlowe, which should have been a pushover, began to loom as a threat. You could feel the uncertainty in the locker room.

It was a tribute to Trigger Lamar that there wasn't open rebellion on the squad. Whatever the individual players felt about the situation they kept it to themselves. The truth was that no one believed Paul Wallace's explanation of Jake's absence.

The day for the Bedlowe game was bright and crisp for September. There was a bigger than normal crowd for an opening game with a weak opponent. Thousands of old grads were anxious to see what a Willis-coached team would look like on the field. A good many top-flight sports writers were on hand, eager to see Jake and talk to him. The announcement that he was away, scouting State, was met with raised eyebrows. Jake should be with them. Everyone knew that.

In the press box, reporters talked about Jake's strange absence. Orland Price, dean of the football writers, watched the teams come out on the field for their preliminary warm-up. Price, with thousands of football games behind him, had a sixth sense about football.

"Marquand doesn't look up," he observed.

You didn't have to be an expert to see little Bedlowe, the hopeless underdog, was brimming over with spirit and determination. The Marquand players, as they passed and kicked and ran through signals,

seemed curiously mechanical and lifeless.

"I never saw a Willis team so lackluster," Price said. "It doesn't make sense that Jake Willis shouldn't be here."

Finally, the big moment was at hand. Trigger Lamar went out to the center of the field to meet the Bedlowe captain and the officials. The coin was tossed, and Bedlowe won the call. Then the teams trotted out on the field. Marquand stretched out wide across the forty yard line for the kick-off.

There isn't any other game that begins with quite the same thrill as the kick-off in football. There is the moment of waiting, the signal from each captain that he is ready, the slow advance of the kicker toward the ball. Then the ball is arcing down field toward the receivers. Somehow this always brings the fans to their feet. The defending back catches the ball, and starts upfield. For the first ten or fifteen yards he moves fast, unmolested. There's always the outside chance of a break through and a long run. On this play, players are still nervous. They'll always tell you that they don't settle down till the first sharp impact of a solid block or tackle on an enemy player.

The Bedlowe star was a pony back named Kane. He was a hundred-and-fifty-pound streak of light. With a powerful line in front of him he would have been another Buddy Young. He was poison in any case. He took the opening kick-off and started straight up the middle. The Marquand team began to converge and then Kane cut sharply for the sidelines. For one breath-taking second it looked as though he might go all the way, but Trigger Lamar, with a desperate burst of speed, just managed to reach him at the sidelines, and a block that almost missed finally forced Kane to step out of bounds.

"Sluggish," Orland Price said in the press box. "I never saw a Willis team so sluggish."

**B**EDLOWE was playing for scores. They didn't expect to win, but they were going all out for the marbles from the start. On the first play from scrimmage, a beautiful fake at the center of the line sucked in the Marquand secondaries and suddenly the ball was arcing down field in a long pass, and little Kane was racing under it like an infuriated water bug. At the last minute he reached up, seemed to snatch the ball out of the air with his finger tips, and was off to the races. He calmly kicked the extra point after touchdown and Bedlowe had seven points before the game was even a minute old.

They got a big hand from the crowd. Bedlowe to score was a triumph in itself. Everyone knew that Marquand's power would crush them. When Jake's team started to roll there'd be nothing left of little Bedlowe.

But Jake's team didn't roll. They took the next kick-off, but on the second scrimmage play Bob Wedge fumbled on a line buck and an alert Bedlowe guard recovered. Bedlowe was in scoring territory again. They almost made it. They didn't try denting the Marquand line. They threw passes. The first one was completed in front of Jimmy Condit for a first down on the nine yard line. They tried three more, connecting with a short one on the three yard line. On last down Kane sneaked into the end zone, then cut like a streak of light for the opposite corner. Only a despairing leap by Trigger Lamar which just deflected the ball away from Kane's outstretched fingers prevented a second score. It was Marquand's ball on the twenty after that and they called time out.

In the huddle Lamar let the boys have it with both barrels.

"The hell with Willis or what you think of him," he said. "You're football players. You're playing for your school, not for him. Get in there and give out!"

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#### Backfield Lightning

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**T**HEY began to move after that, slowly, methodically. The sheer power of their line, plus some hard bucking by Bob Wedge, and one long gain on a reverse by Condit, took them down inside Bedlowe's twenty yard line. Then an offside penalty on third down set them back. Lamar called for a pass. Once more the ubiquitous Kane was on hand to intercept and start one of his breakneck downfield runs. No one even laid a hand on him as he went eighty yards for Bedlowe's second score.

The Marquand team after that was a little like an angry and bewildered bull, wounded by the picador's lances. The power was there, but it kept bogging down through faulty execution or overeagerness. They did score, just before the end of the half, when Bob Wedge burst off tackle and went plunging through, head down, for twelve yards and a score with half the Bedlowe team hanging onto him. But Bedlowe led at the half, 14-7.

The Marquand locker room was a morgue. Paul Wallace and the coaches tried to point out mistakes. The players listened, sullen, hurt. Trigger Lamar kept hoping, idiotically, that the door would suddenly open and Jake Willis would be there, with a magic formula for victory. But Jake didn't appear. However, just before it was time to go back on the field, one of the assistant managers brought him a note.

"Some kid left this for you, Trigger."

Trigger unfolded the note and read:

Dear Mr. Lamar: It sounds silly, but Kane always tips the way he's going to cut by looking in the opposite direction. If you'll watch him for that he won't break away again. Sincerely, Bill Carey.

P.S. The Bedlowe tackles are spaced

very wide on defense, which is making you run your plays inside. But they always converge on the center. They'll be caught flat-footed by a few end sweeps. B. C.

A faint smile moved Trigger Lamar's lips. This kid was a real crackpot; but he certainly had Marquand's interest at heart.

The teams took the field for the second half with Marquand kicking off to Bedlowe. Once more Kane took the kick-off and started upfield. This time Trigger trailed his men downfield in case the Bedlowe sparkplug should break through again. And it happened. Kane came straight up the middle. Someone threw a good block on big Shaver, and the midget speedster came out of a funnel into the clear, with only Trigger between himself and another score. Trigger bore down on him. He saw Kane glance to the right.

Trigger Lamar would not ordinarily have paid any attention to a crackpot note, but it was on his mind. The Carey kid had been right about K-8. And so when Kane glanced to the right Trigger cut the opposite. Kane pivoted straight into his arms and went down under a smashing tackle.

Instantly Trigger called for time out. In the huddle he told the others about the note.

"This Carey kid is crazy, I know, but he seems to have been right about Kane. Watch him. He tips the direction he's going to cut."

"Maybe we should hire Carey to coach the team," Shaver said bitterly.

But Kane was stopped. When Marquand took over, Trigger, calling signals in the huddle, glanced over the Bedlowe defense. The tackles were spread very wide and he had been calling for power plays inside on that account. "What can I lose?" he thought, and called for a wide end sweep. As young Carey had pointed out, the Bedlowe tackles converged on the center and Jimmy Condit galloped away for a forty yard gain.

Something happened to Marquand after

that. They began to get their feet on the ground. They began to play smart, heads-up football. And their manpower began to tell. They marched. They poured it on. They scored four touchdowns in that second half, the last one on a perfectly executed version of K-8.

The locker room was cheerful for the first time in a week. As soon as he'd had his shower Trigger Lamar sought out Paul Wallace in the coach's office. Wallace looked exhausted.

"Well, you finally got rolling, Trigger," he said. "That first half was pretty awful."

Trigger didn't say nothing. He just handed Wallace the note he'd gotten from Bill Carey between halves. Wallace read it, scowling. He remembered the owlish kid who'd spoken to him on the path to Jake Willis's house.

"Do you know this boy, Trigger?"

"No, sir," Trigger said. "That is. I've met him, but I don't know him." He told Wallace about the business on K-8.

Wallace shook his head. "Funny thing. There's something familiar about him but I can't place it."

"We owe him something," Trigger said. "I'd like to find him and tell him so."

Trigger didn't find him that evening, but Paul Wallace did. When Wallace finally left the fieldhouse it was dark. He was going down the path when someone called to him. It was Bill Carey.

"I know you've been anxious about Mr. Willis, sir," Bill said. "Well, he's back in his cottage now."

"How do you know?"

"You'll find him there if you go now, sir," Bill said. He started away.

"Just a minute," Wallace said. "We owe you something for that note you sent Trigger between halves."

"It wasn't anything, sir. I just happened to notice."

"I should have seen what you did," Wallace said.

"You can see a lot of things, high up in the stands, that you can't see on the bench," Bill said. "Mr. Willis usually has someone in the stands to spot those things."

"That's supposed to be my job," Wallace said, "but with Jake away—"

"He's home now," Bill said, and faded into the darkness.

**J**AKE WILLIS lay on the bed in in room, staring up at the ceiling. He hadn't shaved for three days. His eyes were hollow and red-rimmed. If he heard the knocking at his front door he paid no attention to it. Nor did he turn his face when Paul Wallace walked into the room.

"Hello, Jake," Paul said.

"Cripes, leave me alone," Jake said.

"I can't, Jake. I've got to talk to you."

Jake rolled over on his side, face to the wall.

"I've been covering up for you for three days, Jake. I can't do it any longer," Paul said. "I don't know what's the matter. I don't know what's eating you. But you're just hanging on by your fingernails. The boys are dissatisfied. The sports writers and the athletic committee don't understand why you weren't at the game. The boys are going to complain to the committee and you're going to be asked questions."

"Leave me alone!" Jake said in a harsh voice.

"Jake, I'm your friend," Paul said. "I've been your friend for twenty years. I know something's terribly wrong and I want to help. But you've got to tell me how."

Jake laughed, a hollow, bitter laugh. "There's no way you can help. There's no way anyone can help. I'm through. I know that, Paul, so get on the gravy train. Maybe you can have my job."

Paul reached out, took Jake by the shoulder, and turned him around. "You

can't quit, Jake. You've got to see it through. You've got to fight, whatever it is!"

Jake sat bolt upright on the bed. "Get out!" he shouted. "Get out!"

Paul took a deep breath. "Okay, Jake. It that's the way you want it." He turned and started slowly out of the room.

"Wait," Jake said, his voice shaking. Paul turned back. "You have been a good friend Paul, and I owe you an explanation. Have you got a cigarette?"

Paul took a pack from his pocket. Jake's hands were so unsteady Paul had to light and hold the match for him. Jake dragged the smoke down into his lungs as though it could satisfy some aching hunger.

"You knew Laura, Paul. You know what she meant to me. Everything. When she died I—I was lost. You know that. And I hated the kid, Paul. She died trying to save him. I hated him for that. He'd always been a disappointment. He was frail, had no chance of being an athlete. He was never the kind of son I wanted, and he killed Laura!"

"She loved him, didn't she, Jake?"

"She died for him," Jake said. "He took everything away from me that meant anything. I couldn't stand the sight of him. I sent him to live with his grandparents and I never saw him again. I didn't know what happened to him and I didn't care. I didn't even read the letters the old folks wrote to me about him. Then, the first day I was here at Marquand, I saw him! He's here, Paul—a student here at Marquand." He took another deep pull at the cigarette. "So help me, I wanted to kill him when I saw him. It all came back. I—I just couldn't stand it, Paul. I couldn't stand the thought of his being here. I—I just blew my top. I can't stay here, Paul. I'm through."

"I see," Paul said. "Tell me something, Jake. What is the boy's name?"

"William," Jake said. "William Carey Willis." He ground out the cigarette in

the ash tray beside his bed. "It's no use, Paul. You can tell the committee I'm through. You should have the job. You're ripe for a head-coach position. The way you pulled that team together between the halves this afternoon should prove it to them."

"You saw the game?" Paul asked.

"From the stands," Jake said. "I couldn't have anyone see me the way I was. But you were on your toes. I could see you'd spotted the way that Kane tipped his hand, and the way those Bedlowe tackles had been taught to converge on the center."

"I didn't spot any of that," Paul said, in a flat voice.

"Oh. You had one of the boys up in the stands?"

"NO," PAUL said. "As a matter of fact some goofy kid on the campus—a sophomore—spotted it and sent Trigger Lamar a note between halves. He also figured out what was wrong with the diagram you left me for K-8. He also told me you were home, that I'd find you here."

"I don't get it," Jake said.

"The boy calls himself William Carey," Paul said.

Jake raised his eyes, "What?"

"That's right, Jake. He says he's a great Willis fan. He can diagram exactly as you do. He knew when you were first missing, and told me not to worry. He knew when you came back. He knows all about your system, all about you. He seems to think you're a pretty wonderful guy, Jake."

"William Carey!" Jake said, shaken.

"I guess he knew how you felt, Jake. He certainly didn't want to ride on your glory. But Jake, that kid has pulled us through a bad three days."

Jake Willis covered his face with his hands.

"Laura always used to help you, didn't she, Jake?" Paul said, softly. "This boy is

her son—and yours. Obviously he loves you and is very proud of you. But he seems to understand how you feel. It's pretty rugged for him, Jake. And you're making it pretty rugged for yourself, rejecting Laura's kid. She would have counted on you to handle it another way."

Jake lifted his face. "I must have been crazy, Paul," he said. "Stark, staring crazy."

"I don't think it would be very hard to find him if you'd like to see him," Paul said.

"Not now," Jake said. "Not the way I look now. I—I—"

"That's kind of silly, Jake. I think he's seen you. He knew you were here."

"Find him!" Jake whispered.

Paul went out of the room and downstairs. He walked out to the path and stood there for a minute, peering into the darkness. "Bill!" he called, softly.

A shadow moved out from the corner of the house. "Yes, sir?"

Paul walked over and put his arm around the boy's shoulder. "I think your father'd like to see you, Bill," he said.

Bill's breath caught in a little gasp. "You know, sir? And—and he knows?"

"That's right, kid. Why don't you go in?"

"He—he asked for me?"

"Yes, Bill. He asked for you."

"Gee!" Bill said. "Gee!"

He turned and hurried toward the house. Paul stood there in the dark, wiping spectacles that had grown suddenly cloudy.

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### K-8 Cross-Up

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THERE was a curious tension in the Marquand locker room when the team assembled for practice on Monday afternoon. Things had happened

over the week-end. Trigger Lamar and one or two of the boys had been closeted with the Athletic Committee. They had spilled out their grievances about the head coach. The chairman of the committee had arrived at a decision. The boys were to talk to Jake on Monday—if he showed up. They were to tell him what was on their minds. If he met their complaints with a reasonable explanation and attitude, the boys were to string along. After all Jake was one of the top-flight coaches in the country. If he failed to appear or to show any sympathy for their complaints, then the committee would reluctantly remove him. There was the matter of a contract at an extremely high figure.

As the boys got into their practice togs the tension grew. There was no sign of Jake. Then, just as it was time to take the field, the locker room door opened and Jake came in. He usually wore baseball trousers, cap, and a jersey for practice. He

was in street clothes today. He stood by the door, his lean face set in rather grim lines, his pale blue eyes moving from face to face. The room was suddenly dead still. The boys glanced at Trigger, who was supposed to voice their grievances. Before Trigger could speak, however, Jake addressed them in a low, unhurried voice.

"I know what's on the fire here, men," he said. "I sympathize with your attitude. I've let you down badly. If you should choose to ask me to leave at this point, I'd understand. I can only say this to you. I had a problem, a personal problem, unrelated to this team or this school. I—I couldn't seem to find the handle to it and I blew my top. There's no excuse for that. But the problem is solved now, solved very happily. I'd like to have the chance to go on working with you. I saw the game Saturday. I know what you can do when you're in a disorganized state. I believe you can be a winning team. We play State on

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Saturday. They're the defending Conference champions. They're stronger this year than they were last. Last year they murdered you. I honestly believe you have a chance to beat them this year. I think I can help you to make that happen. It's up to you. Whatever you decide, I'll understand."

Jake turned toward the door, his obvious intention being to let them talk the matter over in private.

"Just a minute, sir," Trigger said. Jake turned back. "I don't think we need to discuss this. We're willing to give it a real try if you are."

Jake stood there, his eyes very bright. "There's one more thing I have to tell you," he said. "It—it seems you got some help this last week from a rather strange source. A youngster who called himself Bill Carey seems to have pulled you out of the soup. He's going to be around from now on. You see," Jake's voice broke slightly, "the fact is, Bill Carey's my son."

He left as the room broke into excited chatter.

The press, headed by the dean of football writers, Orland Price, having seen Marquand's miserable showing against Bedlowe, gave Jake's team no chance whatever against State. The odds layers gave twenty points on the game. Only the Marquand old grads would come to witness the slaughter.

But neither the writers nor the odds layers knew what was happening at Marquand that week. They just assumed that State's great backfield of Kramer, Mostil, Worth and Polaski would bring the Marquand team in crisp. They didn't know that Jake Willis, the perfectionist, the slave driver, had reacquired the quality that had made him great—the quality of patience.

The acid was gone from his remarks. There was a pat on the back here, a quiet talk there with a player who was missing his assignments.

Pacing up and down the sidelines of the practice field was a slim kid, in horn-rimmed glasses, who watched every move on the field. From time to time Jake would walk over to speak to him and his pale blue eyes had a prideful softness in them that no one had seen since the days when his lovely wife had been his right bower.

They didn't know that somehow the story of a father's reunion with his son, and that son's dogged devotion to a father who had rejected him flatly, had somehow gotten under the skins of a football squad. They might have been surprised, on the Saturday of the game, if they'd heard Trigger Lamar's statement to the coach just before he went out onto the field for the toss of the coin.

"This one is going to be a present for you and your son, coach."

THEY'LL be telling the story of that State game for years to come. They'll tell how the State team, three deep at every position, looked like one of the great teams of all time. They'll tell how Marquand, with only a handful of top-ranking players, looked sharper than they had the week before, but still hopeless underdogs. They'll tell how a powerful State line refused to give an inch in the first scrimmage plays, and how only a combination of brilliant kicking by Trigger Lamar, and some sloppy ball handling by the State all-star backfield kept things even during the first quarter. They'll tell how Lamar kept calling for the fake reverse and the naked reverse over and over, and how State smeared both these plays. They'll tell how everybody tipped his hat to Marquand's stubborn play, but just sat back and waited for State to explode. Touchdowns would come in an avalanche any minute. Everyone knew that.

Then they'll tell how suddenly, out of that repeatedly smeared reverse, came a variation; how Condit, the wing-back, flipped the ball to Lamar just as he was

being flattened, and how Lamar heaved an incredible pass way over the State safety man's head, and how, miraculously, Harry Locke was there to catch it and scamper over for the first score of the game. That was K-8.

They'll tell how State, stung by this surprise score, unleashed all its magnificent power in a drive down the field after the next kick-off. They didn't pass or use deception. They just drove. First Kramer and then Polaski smashed at the smaller Marquand line, ripping off solid gains with each attempt. With a first down on the Marquand six yard line big Polaski exploded off tackle. Bob Wedge hit him head-on just as he was crossing the goal line. The ball popped out of his arms and an alert Marquand left end covered the ball out on the three yard line. They'll tell you that was bad luck, conceding that Bob Wedge had tackled viciously and that the Marquand end had been alert. But State had discovered its power now. They'll say it was luck that Trigger Lamar's punt bounced away from the State safety man and rolled and rolled until Locke downed it on the State fifteen. An eighty yard kick out of danger.

State started its power drive again, but this time the clock stopped them inside the Marquand ten yard line. And so Marquand, battered and bruised, led 7-0 at the half. It was a minor miracle, a moral victory, but State had shown its power and the next half would be just too bad.

High up on the rim of the stands Paul Wallace and Bill watched the game, the telephone that was connected with the Marquand bench in Bill's fist. They watched, and there were charts in front of them, and occasionally Bill would talk to Jake on the bench, telling him what they saw.

This was something the experts won't tell you because they didn't know about it. All they saw was a State team, assured of its power, start another long march the

minute the second half began—five, eight ten yards at a rush. Kramer and Polaski were unstoppable. Worth, the quarterback, didn't bother with passes, or trick plays. He had the power and he was applying it. Worth didn't know that as his team got a first down on the Marquand four yard line and a time out was called that little William Carey Willis spoke over the phone to his father down there on the Marquand bench.

"Dad?"

"Yes, Bill."

"They're so sure," Bill said. "They won't try anything but straight power. It'll be Kramer or Polaski. Forget defensive formations and have Wedge and Pond each pick a man. Let them charge head-on with the snap of the ball. Forget about passes or criss-crosses. We've got nothing to lose, and I don't think Worth has much imagination."

"Right," said Jake, crisply.

**Y**OU had to hand it to the Marquand team, was what the experts were telling each other. They'd been stubborn and courageous. But it was all over now. They watched State come confidently out of its huddle. They saw big Polaski tuck the ball under his arm and plunge at the center of the line. Something came hurtling through the line from the other direction. It was Pond, the backer-up, and his was the harder charge. Polaski, the unstoppable, was smashed backward for a four yard loss. It was surprising, but only a momentary setback, the experts thought. Once more State hiked out of the huddle. This time the mighty Kramer hit the line—or rather, he hit at it. For another human projectile collided with him in mid-air. This was Bob Wedge, off the mark with the snap of ball, concentrating only on Kramer, who found himself sitting on the fourteen yard line, considerably jarred

*(Continued on page 129)*

# HIGH TEE TERROR

He lined the ball up with the cup across that rain-soaked green. . . .



*It took a dewbird who'd never won a cup to teach the king of a hundred tournaments that a links Titan goes out the way he came in—fighting to the last putt!*

**H**IS legs ached a little as he climbed the sharp hill to the eighteenth tee. Nick McGeehan puffed along at his rear, and when they reached the level, Nick said, "You're pretty frisky for a guy playing his first tournament golf in three years."

"I guess we'll both feel the strain before it's over," George Lawson said.

He took his driver from the caddy, turning to glance at the gallery as he did so. Then he felt annoyed at himself for the

act. Dora would be at the clubhouse, talking to Nick's wife, neither one interested in her husband's play.

He teed his ball and glanced down the fairway. The eighteenth was a 585-yard dog-leg, a triangle of low trees wedging the turn. His drive was long. He felt it in his arms, in the sharp *click* as the club's head met the ball. Nick's drive was short by twenty yards, and the following two players would never end up in the money.

Overhead, the sky hung low and threat-

— **By JOHANAS L. BOUMA** —

ening, ready to open up at any moment. The air was muggy, but it was better than playing under a broiling sun, and much better than fighting a rain-soaked course. Lawson hoped the deluge would hold off until after the finals were played off.

Thirty-six holes today, the second day of the El Rancho Open. A lot of golf. He reached his ball and studied his lie, deciding on a brassie shot. He played the shot and looked up in time to watch the ball hit within eight-iron distance of the green. Good enough. There was a time he might have reached all the way, but now this was good enough.

Nick was on with his fourth shot, which left him with a long putt. Lawson's eight-iron shot dribbled past the pin. Two putts, he thought. A par on this one. Nick missed his putt, collecting a bogey. He was a stocky man who, not so many years ago, had been one of the finest players in the country.

Walking to the clubhouse, Nick said, "I'm having a drink before I shower. Coming?"

Lawson shook his head and turned to the locker room. He stripped, listening to the small talk going around. Someone at the far end of the room was telling about a Pete Adams burning the course. The name struck a cord of familiarity in Lawson, although he could not recall the player. Probably some flash-in-the-pan youngster who would die out quickly in the finals.

He stepped under the needle spray, a heavy-boned man with dark hair graying at the temples. Thirty-eight now, he thought. Six years of pre-war tournament golf. Three years Navy, and then another season on the circuit, his last season, the one in which he had won this same Open. Then a job as pro at the Beach City club because Dora had wanted it. She was tired of the constant travel, the living out of suitcases, the uncertainty of their existence. A house went with the

job, a good salary, and Dora had been happy.

He stepped from the shower and towed vigorously, silent with his thoughts, remembering the old hunger that had come back each tournament season. The rough thrill of competition, the tension before a game, the sessions with cool drinks and old friends—those were the things that stayed with a man. They were strong in their demand to be remembered.

He had tried telling Dora. He wanted, he had said, one more crack at the tournaments. They could make it for the Frisco Open, follow the circuit down the coast and then to Phoenix. She had fought him tooth and nail, telling him he had no right to recapture something already lived. Did he want her, she had asked, to become brittle and catty like so many of the "golf widows" who spent their time waiting in clubhouses, making light of their husband's chances, dying slowly inside because the inevitable ending was written on the score board?

He had silenced her with his own silence, until she had finally gone upstairs to pack. But it was there between them, and now they were like strangers to one another. In Frisco she had not followed him on his rounds, nor had he asked her. He had missed her presence in the gallery. It was the first time she had failed to be there, with her smile of encouragement, and the proud look that lighted her face when he made a difficult shot.

**H**E FELT suddenly discouraged with remembering, and he dressed quickly and stepped outside to the score board, finding his own name in third place. Jim Brooks was leading the field. Pete Adams trailed him by two strokes. Lawson was three strokes behind Adams.

His glance lingered on the name. They were teamed for the next morning's round, and a faint worry furrowed his forehead. Was he good enough to catch Adams?

Then he shrugged. Even finishing third would be better than the ninth he'd collected in Frisco, and the eleventh in the L. A. Open.

He turned away and walked reluctantly toward the clubhouse. Dora was at the bar talking to Nick and his wife. He stood in the doorway a moment, watching her. She was blonde and slender, and did not show her thirty-three years. There was a gayety about her, a forced mannerism he knew she did not feel. He had tried to penetrate the mask, but she wore it with a finality that left him puzzled.

She saw him and smiled her bright smile that held no meaning. She called, "Darling, I'll buy you a drink."

He straddled a stool next to her. He said, "No more drinks until after the tournament." A sudden loneliness went through him. No questions about the afternoon play, nothing to show that she cared a damn about his chances.

"Nick tells me you had a good game this afternoon," Jane McGeehan said in a disinterested voice. Nick's wife was a small, dark woman with tired eyes.

"I had a seventy," Lawson said.

"Isn't that marvelous," Dora said. "Maybe you'll win the tournament, darling."

Nick said, "Not if Adams keeps shooting the kind of golf he shot today. It's his first tournament as a pro, and the kid's hot as a firecracker. He'll be breaking records, that one."

"The way it should be," Dora said, and Lawson turned to look at his wife. "There's something wonderful about youngsters breaking into a sport, cracking records. It's their right. On the other hand, it's a pathetic sight to watch former champions trying to regain laurels they think lost, trying to bring back something they've already had."

In the silence that followed, Lawson pressed his elbows sharply against the bar. This was the first time Dora had ever

spoken her thoughts. He looked at Nick, who should have quit the first season he began to slip. Then, angry with his thoughts, he said, "A man is only finished when he knows it himself. Someone else can't tell him."

Dora gave him the brilliant smile. "He knows, darling, but he won't admit it. And he'll go on and on until he ends up running a bucket-of-balls-for-a-quarter driving range."

Nick climbed wearily from his stool, not looking at them. He mumbled about taking his shower and Lawson watched him go, feeling sudden anger against his wife.

He said, "Next time hit him with an axe."

She said, "I'm saving the axe for you, darling."

The anger widened in him, but before he could speak. Jane said wearily, "Don't scold her. She's right. Nick should have quit when he was ahead in money and reputation. Both of those things dribble away when you try fighting the skids. People forget how good you were. They only see you as you are now, a has-been. And has-beens are not offered good-paying jobs at golf clubs." She rose and gathered her purse, smiling a little. "That driving range doesn't sound bad, Dora. At least we'd have a home."

Dora finished her drink, not speaking. The silence settled between them. Lawson watched her, feeling the anger drain out of him, and he said, "Let's go home, Dora."

She placed the empty glass on the bar and gave him a deliberate look. "Home?"

"All right," he said sharply. "To the hotel."

**T**HEY drove to town in the humid, late afternoon. As they neared the hotel, a few drops fell, speckled the windshield. Lawson parked in the rear and walked with Dora around to the en-

trance. They kept their silence riding up in the elevator, and it wasn't until he unlocked the door of their room that Dora spoke.

"I've decided not to go on to Phoenix with you, George."

He closed the door with his back, leaning against it, and looking at her. "So this is the end of the line," he said slowly.

She faced him, not smiling. "I've sat through the entire picture, and I don't like repeat performances."

"I might win this one."

"That would be the worst thing that could happen to you. It would only mean that you would try it again next year, and the next. You reached your peak the season before the war, George. You'll never again be as good as you were then, only you won't face it."

He stared at her, the words jabbing his brain, and finding no answer against them.

He said, "You're putting me in the same class with Nick, aren't you? And this is the axe." When she didn't answer, he said, "All right, Dora. You do what you like," and walked past her into the bedroom.

Early the next morning he drove to the course alone. Dora said she would drive out later with Jane. He wondered why she bothered at all. A heavy bitterness settled inside him; he felt empty and defeated and no excitement at the prospect of today's game.

It had rained during the night. The streets were still wet and the fairways would be soggy, the play slow. He met Nick on the parking lot, and together they walked across to the clubhouse. Nick was strangely silent before he said, "I'm out of the money in this one, George."

"Yes," Lawson said.

"I haven't made expenses in three years. You tell me why I stick with it."

"Every man has his reasons."

"I've had my day," Nick said. "I don't know why I'm killing myself."

"You sound like Dora."

"Maybe she's right. Anyhow, I'm through after today. There's a little club upstate where they can use a pro." He paused and shook his head. "The youngsters coming up are too tough for us old-timers."

Lawson gave him a quick, sharp glance. "Don't include me in your old-timers. Maybe I'm not the player I was five years ago, but I can still show these youngsters a thing or two."

Nick grinned. He seemed strangely relaxed. "You're doing all right, boy. Who are you teamed with this morning?"

"Pete Adams. We go out right after Jim Brooks."

He was on the putting green, waiting out the ten minutes before tee-off time, when the voice said, "Hello, Mr. Lawson," and he turned to look at a rangy, wide-shouldered youngster with a crew

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JUMPY  
NERVES



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haircut. "Remember me?" the youngster asked.

"Why—" Lawson said, and then recognized him as the lad who had caddied for him when he won the Open here three years ago. The boy had grown. He must be around twenty now, Lawson thought. "Why," he said again, and grinned, "you're Pete Adams, the best caddy I ever had. Used to sit around and watch while I practiced, didn't you?"

The boy smiled. "I guess you were partly responsible for my taking up tournament golf. And I learned plenty watching you."

Lawson felt a sudden warmth that this boy should remember him. He said, "According to your score, you've learned more than what you got from me."

"But maybe not enough," Adams said, and now, watching him, Lawson saw the uncertainty in him. He was tense as a strung wire—it showed in his eyes.

"That part of it can't be taught," Lawson said. The boy flushed, and he continued, "Don't worry about having the shakes. It wouldn't be natural if you didn't. I'm like a treed cat before that first drive."

"You don't show it," the boy said.

Lawson tapped his chest. "All bottled up in here. You'll learn that in time. Like mush, and nothing to hold you up."

**A**DAMS took a deep breath. "I'm glad we're playing together. It'll seem more like a game."

"It is a game," Lawson said, "and don't ever forget it. Sure, we're all in there for the money, but if you think about it from that angle, you might as well quit. The competition is tough enough without fighting dollar signs. Play to win and the checks will automatically come your way."

"I guess that's what I felt when I carried your clubs. The way you enjoyed playing, I mean, and never worrying about the score."

"Worrying about your own or the other fellow's score doesn't improve it," Lawson said. He saw Jim Brooks and his foursome move toward the first tee, and he said, "Here we go, Pete. Lot's of luck."

"Yeah," the boy said and wet his lips. "Here we go."

A large gallery mobbed around the tee. Dawson crowded through behind the caddies and watched Brooks' drive. It was a nicely hit ball, good for 200 yards. It landed, hopped once and died. On a dry fairway, Lawson thought, that same drive would have rolled another thirty or forty yards.

They watched the gallery split up, most of the spectators following the leader, but a sizable number waiting to see what this youngster, this guy Pete Adams, had to offer. Lawson felt suddenly saddened because it was so. Then he shrugged. Let the boy have this moment. After all, it was old stuff to a guy named George Lawson. He smiled bleakly at the thought. It was almost identical to what Dora had said.

Pete Adams was first off the tee. The boy rubbed his hands along the sides of his slacks before taking his stance. His drive was long but ended up in a slight hook. He's pressing, Lawson thought.

He took his own drive, splitting the fairway with a ball that fairly screamed. The play went on, Lawson and Adams each taking a par on the first hole. They were even into the fifth. On the short, 120-yard sixth, Adams was uncertain off the tee. His eight-iron shot developed a definite hook and carried the ball into the rough.

"Watch that wrist action," Lawson told him as he stepped past to the tee. His own shot cleared the apron and rolled toward the pin.

Adams' ball was almost out of sight in the wet, shaggy grass. The boy's face was pinched with strain. He blasted out and the ball lifted and carried to the op-

posite side of the green. He took two putts for a bogey, Lawson sinking his for a birdie.

"Take it easy," he told Adams as they trudged toward the seventh. "Look at it this way. There's just the two of us playing a friendly game. No gallery, no nothing. Neither one of us gives a damn who wins. You'll shoot a better game."

"Thanks," the boy said in a tight voice, "but you should be worrying about catching Brooks."

"Worrying won't do it. And what's to prevent you from gaining back those two strokes? You're not quitting, are you?"

Adams grinned for the first time. "You sound as if you want me to win this tournament."

"I want the best player to win," Lawson said. "Now watch those wrists and get in there and shoot the best game you know how."

Lawson settled to the play with the old assurance of a hundred tournaments behind him, but he kept watching the boy's game. For one playing his first tournament, he was good. His drives would match those of the best pros in the game. He was long with his irons and his putting needed no comments. And enough competition would give him the confidence he lacked.

The play carried on to the back nine, and Lawson made his strokes without effort, his thoughts wandering to his own problem. He turned often to search the gallery, knowing he would not find her there. He could understand her rebellion. A woman needed a home, the feeling of security. And there was himself, growing older, reaching that stage of life where he too needed those things.

**H**E WATCHED Pete Adams take his drive on the eighteenth. Some of the strain had gone from the boy. His swing was an effortless thing. The club seemed almost part of him.

Lawson took his own drive, feeling pride that he had had a small part in starting Adams on the road to tournament golf. The boy might beat him, and the thought was not pleasant. It was hard for a man to admit that his best years on the course were behind him, that the days of his life were marching on. And yet it was true. Facing it, he was not saddened by the thought. He felt, rather, a warm contentment that it should be so. He had made his mark in the game, but that didn't mean he was finished. There were many youngsters like Pete Adams he could help up the ladder, teaching them what he had learned over the years. And there was his way of life.

They finished on the green and he hurried to the telephone booth without waiting to check the results of the first round. He put in his call to Beach City, afterwards finding Dora sitting with Jane and Nick in the bar lounge. He heard Jane's laughter. It was a contented sound in the big room, and he smiled a little. Nick's quitting did that, he thought, and then looked at Dora. Her's was not a happy face. He hurried over.

"The happy warrior," Nick grinned. "How'd it go?"

"I didn't wait for the results," Lawson said. Dora lifted her eyebrows but remained silent.

Nick and Jane rose as he took the chair beside his wife. Nick said, "We won't be around this afternoon. I'm out of it anyway, and we've a lot of packing to do. We'll drop by the hotel tonight."

Lawson watched them walk out arm in arm, and he looked around as Jim Brooks approached the table. Brooks smiled his greeting to Dora and said, "That husband of yours was really hot out there this morning."

"Was he?" Dora asked, and there was no interest in her voice.

Brooks looked his surprise. "Didn't he tell you? Came up with a snappy sixty-

nine, which is plenty good considering the soggy course."

"I forgot to check," Lawson said. "Are you still leading?"

"The same two-stroke lead. You and Adams are tied for second place. That teams us up this afternoon."

After Brooks had gone, Dora said, "I've changed my mind about not going to Phoenix with you."

"It's not like you to change your mind."

She looked at him as if what he said amused her. She said, "I guess belonging together never changes."

There was a light drizzle falling when they went out for the afternoon round. Brooks had honors off the tee. He was not long with his woods, but he was dangerous with his irons. Adams was second. He winked at Lawson, a changed boy from that morning, and his drive was a thing of beauty. Lawson shouldered into his ball in a way that brought applause from the few spectators willing to brave the rain. He glanced at them with that old instinctive look, and then a blank expression crossed his face.

Dora offered no smile of encouragement, but she was there. He crossed over and fell in beside her, and she answered the unasked question in his eyes. "As long as I'm going along for the ride, I might as well go all the way."

"I've missed you," he said.

She didn't answer. She thrust her hands deep into the pockets of her raincoat and moved away from him toward the gallery. He watched her mingle with the small crowd, knowing it had been hard for her to do this thing. Then he walked to his ball and took his shot when it came his turn.

The drizzle turned to steady rain as they finished the first nine. Lawson felt the weariness in his bones. He studied each shot carefully. Puddles of water were forming on the fairways, and a man had to watch his play. The greens were slow

and tricky, and a high ball could dig itself a hole and hide, the ground was that soft.

He still managed to keep an eye on Pete Adams' game, noting small errors he would caution the boy about after the game. His stance on his iron shots was not what it should be. And there were other things that would improve his game. Lawson remembered the errors and stored them away.

THEY were hiking up the hill to the eighteenth when Dora fell in beside him. "A birdie on this one will win for you," she said, knowing he paid small attention to the scoring during play. "You and Adams are tied. Brooks is two strokes behind."

He grinned down at his wife. "I'm playing this one for fun. Let's see how it comes out."

He was aware of a puzzled uncertainty in her, as if she sensed something she did not fully understand. She said, "You have always enjoyed playing, but this is the first time this season you have a chance to win. It should certainly mean something."

He nodded slowly. "It means something, but not nearly as much as it used to mean."

She gave him a peculiar look and turned away. He stepped to the tee and let go with his drive, not looking up until his follow-through was complete. A murmur rose from the gallery, and he saw the ball go low and steady as an arrow in flight. Pete Adams was next with his best drive of the day. It carried past Lawson's ball, and he knew suddenly that this boy had what he'd had during his first years of pro golf.

They played out their shots to the green. Pete Adams was on the apron in three. Brooks took a four to reach the green, and Lawson's third shot put him even with Adams.

*(Continued on page 130)*

# BUSTAWAY CLEATS

By  
**DANIEL  
WINTERS**

With beautiful blocking  
he got away for a sixty  
yard jaunt. . . .



**I**T WAS almost time to close the Coffee Cup. Johnny Tuttle was wiping off the tables and I was counting the cash. We'd been running the place for three years now, and it had paid our way through Carlton. Neither of us had a dime except what the Coffee Cup made for us.

There were only two people at the counter, Harry Abbot and some guy I didn't know. Harry said, "You gonna take the game tomorrow, Cal?"

I nodded. "Tomorrow's game, and next week's."

I counted the quarters, and in the back

*Yard by cleat-hungry yard they fought their greatest battle . . . this strange team of destiny that gave more glory in defeat than it earned in victory . . . a team that had nothing—nothing but seven linemen eager to take a licking, and four backs who owed the world one!*

of my head, beyond the numbers, I hoped I wasn't talking just to hear myself. Tomorrow we hit Northern, and after that the season would wind up with the game against State. If we could take them both it would mean a perfect season.

Harry turned to Johnny Tuttle. "You be in there tomorrow, Johnny?"

Johnny shrugged his big shoulders. "I dunno, Harry. I hope so."

Johnny had played all of ten minutes during the season, which was a little remarkable, when you considered that he'd been All America the year before.

I counted the dimes and thought about Johnny. We came from the same town, and now we shared the Coffee Cup. It was our last season at Carlton, but we had plans for next year, too. At least, we'd had plans before Johnny broke his leg in the first game of the season. I didn't know what would happen to the plans.

Harry Abbot was full of questions tonight. He said, "Both you guys gonna play pro ball with the Hawks, like you intended?"

**J**OHNNY finished with one set of tables. "I dunno, Harry." Johnny wasn't very talkative, these days. He'd been clammng up for weeks, now. And I knew why.

I was going through the paper money when Neeley came in. The door was locked against late-comers, but he banged on it and Johnny looked up, saw who it was, and went to open it. Neeley came in and said, "Thank's, Tuttle. I figured I could catch me a glass of milk."

Johnny said, "Sure."

And I wondered how he really felt about Neeley. For Neeley was the guy who had jolted him out of a season's work, who was so hot the coach couldn't yank him when Johnny had been able to play again. Neeley was so good that he was probably doing Johnny Tuttle out of a fine pro contract.

I finished with the money, checked the amount on a pad, then put the dough in the canvas bag we use. It had been a nice week. We'd make a night deposit at the bank, as we usually did, then go home and worry about tomorrow. I set the bag on the counter and said, "Anything with the milk?"

Neeley shook his head. "Just the milk."

I got it for him, and he put down his dime and grinned at me. "The last one."

"You want some money?" We could always spare a few bucks to anyone who was hard up.

He shook his head. "I get by. I always get by, Reed."

The guy I didn't know finished with his coffee and stood up. "How much do I owe you?"

He'd had coffee and pie. I walked down to him and told him, "A quarter," and he picked a quarter out of some change and laid it on the counter. I said, "Thanks" and turned to the register and rang it up. Then I looked for the money in the bag.

It wasn't on the counter.

I didn't get it, at first. I looked around, gave a quick peek into the register, looked along the counter again. No bag. Four hundred and seventy dollars—but where was it?

I turned the thing over in my mind fast, trying to remember my exact actions. I'd put the bag on the counter just as Neeley had come in. I'd gone to the icebox for his milk, and when I'd come back the bag hadn't been there. Or had it?

The stranger had just gone out the door. I went over the counter fast, opened the door and said, "Wait a minute, pal."

He was small and I'm big, so he waited. I ran my hands over him fast, hitting the pockets hard. The bag had been fairly bulky. It wasn't on him. He was puzzled. "What the hell—"

I said, "Excuse me. We've been missing a lot of silver lately. Sorry." I went back into the store.

Neeley looked at me, and so did Harry Abbot. Neeley said, "What's the matter, Cal?"

I looked at him fast, but his eyes looked all right. I'd known him for a couple of months and didn't have much reason to like him or dislike him. I knew he was broke most of the time, though. He could have taken the bag when I went for his milk, or he could have grabbed it when I went to take the stranger's money. He *could* have.

I shook my head. "The guy forgot some change, is all."

I thought, *Harry Abbot?* It wouldn't be Harry. I'd known Harry for four years, and he had plenty of money. His people were loaded.

And Harry was giving me the eye. He didn't say anything, just looked from me to Neeley, and his eyes widened a little. He seemed to get it, but he didn't say anything.

I looked around on the floor. No bag. I scratched my head and wondered if I was going a little punchy. I leaned on the counter, and felt the vibration of the freezer underneath it and told myself to remember to get it fixed. But no bag.

**N**EELEY drank his milk and got to his feet. He stretched and said, "Well, see you guys tomorrow. Don't forget to put in some sack time. Those gents will be tough."

I looked him over carefully, but nothing bulged. You couldn't be sure, just looking. I said, "Good night," and he went out.

Harry Abbot looked at me. "You have trouble, Cal?"

I raised my eyebrows. "Trouble? No trouble until tomorrow, Harry."

Harry paid his bill and left. He was a little slow about it and I figured he would ask some questions, but he didn't.

When he had gone, I locked the door

after him and turned to Johnny. He knew something was wrong and was looking at me.

"The dough," I told him. "I counted out the week's take, put it in the bag. Four hundred and seventy fish. It flew away."

We looked. We looked all over the place, and I finally gave up. I said, "It's Neeley or Abbot. I frisked the other gent who was here. He didn't have it."

"What would Abbot want with it?"

I shook my head. "It doesn't figure to be Abbot. He has plenty. Then it's Neeley."

Johnny didn't say anything to that, but I could see he was thinking hard. I left it up to him, wondering what he'd say.

Because there was no reason why he should like Neeley. The guy was a transfer from downstate, and when Johnny had hurt his leg, Neeley had gone right in there at left half and had played one hell of a brand of football. I quarterbacked the club, and I'd worked with them both, but I honestly couldn't say which was the better man. Neeley was maybe a little faster, but he didn't have Johnny's power.

But he had Johnny's job, which was the big thing. Johnny's leg was sound, he said, but Jeff Blake, the coach, was riding with Neeley, the kid who'd had the big season. You couldn't blame him. Neeley was as hot as a new pipe.

Ordinarily it wouldn't have mattered. But to Johnny it did. He'd needed this year. Needed it bad. Sears, who coached the Hawks, had talked to us last year. He'd talked big money, and he'd also said that the jobs and the dough depended on how we went in this, our last season of college ball.

And Johnny hadn't gone at all. First the leg, and then Neeley, had kept him out of the game. There'd be no big fat contract waiting for him. The pros aren't handing that heavy money out to a guy who hasn't shown all season and whose leg might be permanently on the bum. They

buy on the hoof, and they buy healthy. I was all set. I'd had a fine season and didn't have anything to worry about except Johnny.

Now he said, "I don't think it was Neeley."

"The guy's always broke. He could use it."

Johnny shook his head. "I don't figure him that way. He seems honest."

"I should have given him a once over."

"You can't do that to a guy you know. What if he didn't have it?"

"It would have been embarrassing. But it's a little embarrassing anyhow. To us. Almost five hundred. That isn't paper cups and we aren't millionaires."

**T**HAT was an understatement. Johnny and I both came from the same town and the same side of the tracks. The wrong side. We'd never had any money, and neither had our families. This Coffee Cup was the biggest thing we'd ever run into. There were the contracts we'd get from the Hawks, of course. Or would there be two contracts? I didn't think so.

And Johnny had a wife and two little kids to think about. He'd married while he'd been in the Army, and I knew how he'd been planning. Pro ball and law school at night. But he'd been counting on that big contract. He'd been slanting his whole future with that in mind.

He said, "Let's look again. Maybe you put it somewhere you don't remember."

We looked, and I tried to think what I'd done with the bag. But I knew. I'd put it right on the counter. And it wasn't there now.

Johnny said, finally, "Okay, it's gone. I'll bet you didn't go over that little guy carefully enough."

Maybe he was right, but I didn't think so. I kept thinking of Neeley, but I didn't say anything more about him until we were leaving. Then I told Johnny, "I'll

just take a run up to his room. It won't take me a minute."

He shook his head again. "You wouldn't find anything. Besides, I don't think he took it."

"What makes you so sure?"

He shrugged those big shoulders. "I dunno. He just doesn't seem the type. Let's forget about it."

It wouldn't be easy. No matter how you figured it, five hundred dollars had been lifted right out of our pockets. We'd have to make it up somehow.

I said, "Well, it's on me. I was the goofy guy, putting the sack right where anyone could walk off with it. I'll put four hundred and seventy in the account on Monday."

He looked at me. "Where will you get it?" He was grinning.

"I'll get it." I didn't know just how, but there must be some way. About a quarter of that money was our profit, and I was supporting Mom and Joey, my kid brother, as well as myself.

"It's on us," Johnny said. "It wasn't your fault. It could have happened to either of us."

I tried to talk him out of it, but it was no dice. I walked to Elm with him and said, "Well, forget about it for tonight, anyway. Get a good night's sleep. Tomorrow'll be a rugged day."

He said, "Especially for me. Sitting on that bench."

I punched him on the shoulder. "You'll be in there. How can Blake keep you out?"

I went to my room, and I knew that Jeff Blake wouldn't have any trouble keeping Johnny out of the Northern game, tomorrow, or the one with State next week. There was nothing wrong with Blake except that maybe he liked to win too much, if that's a fault. He was young, and he had a big job, and he'd do anything to win and keep that job. It was nothing in his life that it was important

to Johnny Tuttle to play tomorrow, and again next week, in order to show the Hawks he was still the Johnny Tuttle who'd been so terrific a year before. Jeff Blake had Neeley for a halfback, and in Neeley he had a sure thing. I couldn't see him taking a chance on Johnny.

He didn't, next day. Northern came to town with a big, rugged club that had lost only one game. They wanted the crack at us, because if they knocked us over it would square for their loss and make their season. Everyone pointed for us.

**I** THOUGHT they were going to do it, in the first half. We kicked to them, and after that it was tough for us to get our hands on the ball. They had Duke Noble, a terrific back, and early in the game we couldn't seem to stop him. And when we got our hands on the thing, accidents happened. We fumbled twice, and I couldn't get the passes working, and they intercepted two of them. They led us at the half, 14-0.

Jeff Blake was sore, in the dressing room. He was a big guy, good-looking, about thirty-five, I guess the youngest of the real big coaches. And he hadn't gotten where he was by just being nice. He rode into us and let us have it. He picked the club to pieces, then told us how we could put it together again.

He was smart, knew what he was talking about. And I knew Johnny Tuttle

would never get into this game today. Blake wasn't trying any experiments this afternoon.

We went out there, and we started to get rolling. I pitched a couple that clicked, and Neeley got his legs under him and ate out the yards. We held onto Northern, and we got two scores to even the count by the end of the third quarter.

The fourth period was a pip. Northern fought like a bunch of wild horses, and we slugged it out with them. I hit Lou Monroe with a long pass that was good for forty-five yards and a score, and with five minutes to go, Neeley skittered thirty yards through tackle for another. It was the ball game.

I thought for a minute Blake would send Johnny in, and it would be good, for I knew the Hawks had somebody up in the stands, and even five minutes of going would convince them he was all right, if he was all right.

But Blake didn't take a chance. He wanted another score if he could get one, and Neeley stayed in the line-up. We didn't score, but neither did Northern. It was our game, 28-14.

I didn't see Johnny Saturday night. He asked me if I minded if he didn't come down to the Coffee Cup, and I told him it was all right with me, that I'd get some kid to help me. He said, "Thanks, Cal," and went off. I knew how he felt. He didn't care to see anyone that night.

**Next time try...**

**GLOCKENHEIMER**

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We were closed on Sunday, and I just moped around and thought about all that dough we were missing. It was bad enough for me, but it meant more to Johnny. I tried to think just how I could make it up to him, but nothing came to mind.

Something came to mind on Monday night, though. About eight o'clock Neeley came in. I hardly knew him. Most of the time he dressed like an unmade bed. But not tonight. He had on a new tweed jacket that must have set him back fifty bucks. His flannels were good, his shoes and shirt brand new.

He grinned at me and strutted a bit. "Neeley, that well-dressed man," he said. "You like the outfit? And there's more to go with it."

"You're looking mighty smart. You rob a bank?"

The words weren't out of my mouth when I realized where all those new duds had come from. Our fine little four hundred and seventy in a canvas bag. I started to burn up.

"I should rob a bank," Neeley grinned. "The town is crowded Saturday night, after the game. A bunch of old grads are having a party in a hotel room and I must come up for a while. There's a crap game going on, and I have ten bucks I got for my Stadium tickets. I walk in and the dice treat me handsome. Four hundred fish to Mrs. Neeley's little boy. A nice night's work."

Well, he had a story, anyhow. I couldn't stand there and tell him he was a liar.

I looked at Johnny. He was making fresh coffee, and he glanced at Neeley, took in the new duds, and didn't say a word. It was a little raw.

Kenny Lait and Harry Abbot came in, then, and Abbot looked at Neeley and whistled. "Best dressed man on the campus. You win a radio quiz?"

Maybe it was because Abbot had a lot of dough and Neeley had none, but Neeley

didn't like Harry. He said, "Why, isn't it all right for the common people to buy some clothes once in a while, Abbot?"

Abbot shrugged. "It's all right with me."

"That's dandy," Neeley said. "As long as it's all right with you, everything's fine." He turned around and walked out.

AND the next day, around school, I began to hear a few things. About Neeley and his new clothes and the money that had disappeared out of the Coffee Cup. Nobody was definite about it, but the stories were linked up. Abbot, I knew, must have been doing a little talking.

Neeley was in the Coffee Cup that evening. He wasn't wearing his new duds, and there was an ugly look on his face. It was good that the place was nearly empty when he came in.

He walked right up to the counter. He said to me, "I hear you lost some money in here the other night."

"That's right. Almost five hundred bucks."

"And I turned up with some new clothes, so you guys are saying I took your bundle. Right?"

I shook my head. "No one said anything like that."

His voice was tight. "Sure they did. I've been hearing it. A couple of people didn't know I was in the room, and I got the whole story."

I said, "Now, wait a minute, Neeley. No one—"

He pointed at Johnny Tuttle. "And I know who was shooting off his mouth. Just because you get laid up for a while and then can't get your job back, Tuttle, you shoot off your mouth too fast."

Johnny said, "Knock it off, Neeley. No one's accusing you."

"Sure they are. I smell bad all over the school, just because you blow your top. So I want outside with you, Tuttle. I'm

gonna have a lot of fun battin' your ears off."

Johnny said, "Look—"

But Neeley wasn't having any. He walked to Johnny and slapped him across the mouth. "You want it here or outside?"

Johnny looked at him, then at me. There was no way of getting out of this one. He said, "Outside. I own half this joint."

It was outside in the alley. The few customers followed them, and I locked up and went too.

It wasn't good to watch. They were both good, both tough, but Johnny was a little better, a little tougher, Neeley was a mess when it was finished. He'd been down three times, and he had a tough job getting up from the fourth flooring. A couple of other guys and myself stopped it. I told them to take Neeley home and get him cleaned up. I took Johnny into the back of the store and washed his face and got him looking human. He didn't say anything except, "That Abbot has a big mouth. That kid didn't steal anything."

I didn't know for sure, but Johnny is usually right.

It was Thursday afternoon when the freezer, which had been giving us trouble all along, finally broke down. I called the repair people, and they came along in about an hour. The head man looked it over and shook his head. "It goes to the shop, kid. We can't do anything with it here. An overhaul job."

I said, "Take it. It's no good to us if it's not working. But get it back as soon as you can."

He and his helpers disconnected the wiring, started to move the big affair. They got it away from under the counter, an awkward job. One of them said, "Hey, what's this?"

It was the canvas bag I'd lost. I took it as if I couldn't believe it, and slowly I figured out what had happened.

That night I'd put it on the counter,

the freezer had been acting up, vibrating like a tractor running over cobblestones. I must have put the bag on the edge of the counter. The vibration had knocked it onto the freezer, and from there it had rolled to the inside edge and dropped down between the freezer and the wall. It was almost impossible, but it could happen. If they hadn't moved the machine, we'd never have found the thing.

There was quite a crowd in the joint, and I thought of Neeley, and then I made a lot of noise about finding the dough. Everybody was happy, and I knew the story would get around the school real fast. Neeley would be saved a lot of trouble.

I'd seen him at practice, of course. His eyes and mouth were swollen, but he wasn't cut at all. He just looked at Johnny and me and didn't say a word.

Johnny was quiet, too. This was his last chance coming up, and he knew he wouldn't be about to do anything about it. State had a record as good as our own. They'd played the best and had yet to drop one. They wanted our hide as much as we wanted theirs. Which meant that Blake would play Neeley on offense and Jerry Dunn on defense, just as always. Johnny wouldn't be in there at all. Blake would be taking no chances with a cripple.

**WE** KICKED to State, and Lennon, the big fullback we'd been hearing about, brought it right out to the thirty. It looked as if it would be a busy day.

They had stuff, all right. They were smart, fast, powerful. They brought the thing down to midfield before we could stop them, then Metz booted one outside on our ten. These guys would take a lot of licking.

Neeley came in, then, with the rest of them. I gave the first play to Berloti, and he got five in the middle. He got three again, then I sent Neeley into the tackle.

He ripped off twelve lovely yards for a first on the thirty. We were out of immediate trouble.

I passed to Monroe for six, then Neeley took it again. He went to the weak side, got four before they stopped him. But he didn't get up.

When I got to him he was sitting on the ground holding onto his leg, and his face was scowling with pain. He said, "The damned knee. I suddenly felt something give."

Gus Teague, the trainer, came out, and Jeff Blake was with him. Blake's face was crowded with concern, but he kept his mouth shut while Gus worked on the leg. Neeley grunted a couple of times, then shook his head. "No soap. It's something that won't come out with rubbing."

A couple of guys carried him off the field, and Blake trailed them, his head down. The stands gave Neeley a terrific hand, but I was watching Blake.

I saw Johnny Tuttle get off the bench and go to him. They talked for a couple of minutes, then Blake shrugged his shoulders. After all, he had nothing to lose. Johnny came running on the field, adjusting his helmet.

When he reached us, there was a trace of a grin on his face. He said, "Cal, I've had the whole season off. I'd like a little work."

"Today," I told him, "you'll get a little more than you want."

He worked like a horse. At first I was afraid that the leg mightn't be just right yet, but I needen't have worried. This was Johnny Tuttle again. This was the guy I had played with for four years in high school, four years at Carlton. This was class and power, speed and know-how. This was a man to have on your club.

We all worked. State was big and tough and they knew their business. They had a great line and fine backs in Lennon, Metz, Ritchie. Tim Moler was as fine a center

as we'd met all year, and he kept our guys busy getting out of his way.

They scored first, in the second quarter. It was a long, sustained drive that you just couldn't stop. They kept eating off the yards, and finally they pushed it across and kicked the point. The seven points looked big from here, but I knew they need more than that.

I put Johnny to work, and I started chucking passes. Johnny ran like a fresh horse that needed exercise. He ripped into the tackles like a locomotive, poured around the ends for plenty of yards. His leg was as sound as ever, but there was one thing I knew. He'd had an inactive season. He couldn't be expected to keep this up.

With beautiful blocking he got away for a sixty yard jaunt and a score in the second quarter, with five minutes to go. I threw a block for him, hit the ground hard, and watched most of it from a prone position. Johnny had lost nothing. He had all the old wizardry, the timing that made him great. It was lovely to watch him go through a broken field. He scored, and I kicked the point.

We got another, just before the gun. We worked it up to the State thirty, then they hung onto us. I pegged one to Ryan, out in the flat, and he lateraled to Johnny coming around.

Johnny weaved through the three guys, then ran into trouble. And he ran through the trouble with all the power of a buffalo. He was stumbling when they hit him again on the eight, but he managed to keep his feet and he got over. I kicked it.

The gun went off as we kicked off to them, and big Weber pulled down Ritchie on the twenty-two.

Blake didn't say much during the half. He eyed Johnny and said, "How's the leg, Tuttle?"

"Fine. Nothing wrong with it."

"Good," Blake said. "You're playing a nice game. Keep it up."

**B**UT I knew Johnny as well as I knew myself, and I could see the strain on his face. He couldn't keep it up. Not the pace he'd been maintaining. I figured I'd take it easy on him during the second half. The guy hadn't worked like this for a year. He was corked.

Neeley was in the room, sitting on a rubbing table. He was still dressed, and he looked at me and didn't say anything. I wondered if he felt as bad as Johnny had, being out of a game.

They must have given that State club a needling during the half. They came out loaded with fire and ready to chew nails. It took them exactly three minutes to tie

Johnny inside and outside, and me chucking passes. We had bad luck. Passes just dropped off the ends of fingers, and once Johnny got out in the clear, at midfield, and slid right on his back going through a muddy spot. At the end of the third quarter we were still seven points behind.

We scored in the first five minutes of the last period. State had to kick from their forty, and Johnny took it on our own twenty. He started to go.

He went right up the middle to the forty, then cut for the right sideline. He hugged it until he was past midfield, where he was trapped. Monroe threw a lovely block for him and Johnny went across the field, almost to the other side-



Stevens came down with the ball in his hand and kept on running. . . .

up the ball game. Metz made twenty yards, then Ritchie passed for twenty more. They took two first downs the hard way, then Metz came busting through the tackle with about seventy-six guys in front of him. I never had a chance at him. They smothered me, and Metz went on to score.

In five minutes they had another. This time it was a pass, Ritchie to Stevens, the big end. Stevens just ran downfield as fast as he could, and Ritchie heaved it. Stevens and Lane went up in the air, and Stevens came down with the ball in his huge hands and just kept on running. He scored all off by himself. Metz converted. It was 21-14, and things were looking bad.

We went to work. It was Berloti inside,

line. He was hit, threw off the tackle, and headed right down the stripe. The bumped him outside on the three.

Berloti took it over on two tries. Johnny was so pooped he could barely stay on his feet. I converted.

He got a little rest during the kick, and we stalled a bit before the kick-off. When we booted, he was in good shape. I kicked to the corner, and Metz grabbed it and came back. Berloti made the tackle, and he didn't get up. He was out like a light, his nose spread all over his face.

Simmons came in for him, and he was a good boy and he tried hard, but he was no Berloti. The club felt the difference. And when he fumbled, with about six minutes

to go, and gave them the ball on our thirty, he was a sorry guy.

And he went out. I'd noticed the little group talking on the sideline but hadn't given it much attention. I saw the guy running onto the field to relieve Simmons. It was Neeley.

He was grinning as he adjusted his hat. I said, "The leg all right?"

He nodded. "Fine. All it needed was a little rest. I'm taking Berloti's spot."

"You know his plays?"

Neeley said, "I'll make out."

Johnny had been listening. He said, "Look, kid. I've been playing this system for years. I know them blindfolded. You run in your own spot and I'll make like Bertoli. Okay?"

Neeley grinned at him. "Okay."

And something came into the club. We stopped State dead and took the ball on our nine when they kicked outside.

We went to work, then, and it was a pleasure. With two backs in there like Johnny and Neeley, a quarterback has a soft time. They ran crazy.

**I** GAVE Johnny a blow, let Neeley get warmed up running an end. Johnny inside, Neeley into the tackles and running the ends, me passing. We had about twelve minutes to play, and we gave an exhibition. Johnny was much faster than Berloti off the mark, and when he went into those holes he hit just as hard. Neeley was a ball of fire, and when I pitched I couldn't get off the target.

It was a parade. We scored in four minutes, and on the first play, after we got the ball again, I passed to Neeley for twenty-five yards. He shook himself into the clear for a score.

Johnny got another, busting through the middle on the forty and going all the way, running beautifully. The thing became a panic. State was off balance, and we piled it into them. The final score was 48-14.

In the dressing room, Johnny and

Neeley and I somehow got together. I said, "There was nothing wrong with your leg, Neeley."

He grinned at me. "No, doctor."

"So what was the big idea?"

He sobered. "I did a little thinking. Johnny wanted to get into this ball game."

Johnny said, "I sure did."

"I heard talk. About the Hawks, and how they weren't sure that Johnny could go, after the leg got busted. I figured it wouldn't do any harm to find out. After all, I've got another year here."

Johnny looked at him. "How come?"

Neeley shrugged. "I had the wrong dope on you two. I found out you never claimed I took that dough, although it looked mighty suspicious." He looked at Johnny. "And I like the way Tuttle handles his dukes, but I want no part of him. Hell, you guys could have searched me, when the money was missing. You didn't. So I owed somebody a break. And when you found the bag, you let everyone know in a hurry just how it had been. I liked that."

There was nothing much to say. We showered and dressed, and Blake came in and said some nice things, then left. Neeley looked at Johnny, then at me. He said, "Tuttle's wife ever give him a night off, Cal?"

"Once in a while. Why?"

Johnny was grinning. He said, "I can take one tonight. What's on the books?"

Neeley rubbed his hands together. "You fellows like to make some new clothes? Those gents are running that friendly little game again. With the luck we had today, it might be our big evening, too."

I looked at Johnny, and he was grinning. He said, "It might be fun."

I said, "I might as well go along. I'll be seeing a lot of you two from now on, I guess. You come along to the Hawks when you get out of here, Neeley. We'll have a time."

And we would.

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# TAKE THE BUM OUT!

*"You're back in the bushes, kid, with one of your spikes in a rookie's grave and one still touching a big league rubber. You can go back either way—but one is called a comeback!"*



Johnny felt the presence of the base runner behind him....



By **JOHN D.  
MacDONALD**

**H**IS eyes remote, his face bleak, P. J. Lace sat high in the stands behind home plate. His solid hands rested on meaty thighs and he was as wide and hard as a man of fifty can be. He sat and mourned his son. He mourned a little death that had occurred within his son.

Johnny Lace was on the mound. He should have exuded the confidence of a big leaguer in exile among the bush leagues. But there was no confidence in

him. P. J. Lace, watching from afar, could see the taut nervousness, the deep-drawn lines parenthesizing the tightened lips.

The count was two and two on the batter. It was the top half of the sixth and the team for which Johnny was pitching, the Bay City Sailors, were in front over the Jamiston Jets by a score of one to nothing.

The first batter had undercut the ball for a pop that looped back over second base. The green second baseman had been slow to move and the ball had brushed the tip of his gloved fingers,

which put a runner on first and an error on the board.

The second batter, the head of the Jets' batting order, was a lined, tough, seasoned veteran whose fading legs had bumped him down the ladder. He was in his second year with the Jets and he knew how to crowd a shaky pitcher. He moved in on the plate and casually pulled back his head to let a high one on the inside go by for a ball.

With the count three and two, Johnny had poured one in low and on the outside, putting himself in a hole with a man on first and second and none out.

With two and two on the third batter, Johnny seemed to lose smoothness of motion. He was as jerky and erratic as a man on strings. He was taking too long a time for the pitch.

P. J. felt the tension infect him and he leaned forward a little further. His wide palms were damp and the blunt fingernails cut with steady pressure.

The man at the plate waited. In the first inning he had hit a long line drive and had been cheated out of a good base hit by a youngster in left field with legs like an antelope.

The pitch came down the alley, the batter stepped into it, and P. J. saw the white flash of the ball before the sharp crack of the impact reached him. The runner pumped toward first, his head turned so that he could watch the flight of the ball. As he rounded first he settled down to a pleased jog-trot. The three men crossed home plate. The Sailor rooters began the usual jeer. The catcher and two other infield men came out to the box, stood and spat and talked and didn't look Johnny Lace in the face.

**T**HE pitch to the fourth batter was good. It broke sharply, cut the heart of the plate. The second pitch slanted across the inside corner for the second called strike.

The jeers of the crowd faded a little. The batter managed to tag the third pitch for a steaming ground ball halfway between the third baseman and the shortstop. The shortstop made a hopeless try for it. The outfielder came in fast enough to field the ball smoothly to second, holding the runner up on first.

Once again Johnny Lace tightened up. The jeers were renewed. He walked the fourth batter. After he had given a ball and a wild pitch to the fifth batter there was a conference at the mound. Johnny walked slowly out of the infield, his spikes scuffing the dust as he crossed the baseline. The pitcher who had been warming up came out.

P. J. Lace yanked his Panama a bit more firmly on his head, stood up and moved into the aisle, and out of the park.

His long black sedan was parked in the open pasture by the fence. He drove slowly and thoughtfully back to the small city where he was registered in the only presentable hotel.

When Johnny Lace walked into the hotel room, his father was apalled at the changes which had occurred during the past year. Johnny was still tall, lean, bronzed, with the big hands and square powerful wrists of a pitcher.

But his gray eyes had a whipped look and there was bitterness in his face.

They were awkward with each other. "You watch the game, dad?" The brief handshake over, Johnny turned toward the hotel window.

"Ah—yes, son. I saw the game."

Johnny's laugh was short and bitter. "I'm really in there, aren't I?"

P. J. stood beside his son, put one hand on Johnny's shoulder. Johnny shrugged it off, moved a bit away. Johnny said, "I can feel it in the air. The confidential approach. This is just a game, after all. Give it up and come back with me. I'll find you a nice soft slot in one of my mills and you can be the owner's

son and build up a good golf game."

P. J. grinned ruefully. "I had something like that in mind," he admitted.

Johnny was suddenly both serious and pleading. "Can't you see? I've got to lick it. Once it's licked I can quit with honor. But if they drive me out I'll always carry it around with me."

"I've thought of that. But maybe you're taking too much out of yourself trying to lick it."

It had been very different four years before. Johnny had come out of an Ivy League college with an impressive string of victories. It had been pretty well determined that after school he would go into the family business. But the scouts were clustering around to sign him up and it had seemed a good thing to spend a few years on a professional ball club. After all, there had been plenty of time. Johnny had been just twenty when he got out of college.

Paul Lace remembered taking the time off to travel over to Massachusetts and see Johnny starring on the farm team of the club that had signed him up. That first year his won-and-lost record had been impressive.

And the following year Johnny had graduated into the big leagues—a capable kid, popular with his team mates, a reliable performer on the team's pitching staff.

There had been no reasonable way to explain it. During the season he had been knocked out of the box a few times on off days. He had taken it with good grace.

It happened in the third game of the Series. Johnny's team had taken the League pennant, was conceded a good chance to take the Series. They lost the first game. The manager threw in the top man of his pitching staff and lost the second Series game at 2-0. He had tagged Johnny Lace to pitch, and win, the third game.

THERE was no logical reason for the way Johnny reacted. There may have been emotional reasons. The Series is big time. Fast, hard, rough, dangerous big time. The boys don't fool. The crowd doesn't fool. It is hair-trigger baseball and a large boo for the boy who pulls a dummy play.

And, in front of nearly eighty thousand people, with an additional twenty million listening in, Johnny Lace was knocked off the mound in the first half of the first inning. The manager left him in as long as he could, but when the earned runs reached four, he had to snatch him out of there. They lost that game and the Series.

A boy plays hard, plays with all the guts and courage and energy he can muster. And it isn't good enough. Something happens to him. Something that isn't pretty. It happened to Johnny Lace.

Oddly enough, the manager didn't catch it in all its implications until the actual schedule started the following season. Up until that time he hadn't censured Johnny. He thought of it as just a bad guess. Series fever. Too bad. But nothing to get excited about.

And then, as Johnny started to pitch in the second season, it became obvious that he could hold his own until somehow two men managed to get on base. Then the Series situation was duplicated in Johnny's mind and he lost the fine edge of precision necessary to continue pitching. The fat pitches over the heart of the plate weré murdered, and the other men were walked and Johnny Lace was thumbed out of the game.

After the fifth time it happened Johnny was sent down to a Class A farm league. He lasted two months.

When Paul Lace spoke in quiet fashion of Johnny's taking too much out of himself in the process of fighting this weakness of his, the young man's face became the face of a stranger.

He said coldly, with hard emphasis, "It's my problem. Stay out of it! If I have to slide all the way down to sandlot ball with industrial teams, I'll do so."

"But what will it get you?"

Johnny smiled. "You might call it self-respect."

He walked to the door, shut it softly behind him. Alone in the room, Paul Lace sat on the edge of the bed, his face impassive. What had started out to be a game, something that would be good for his son, had turned into an intricate trap with sharpened teeth. Paul Lace was tired. He had burdens that needed sharing. There was nothing left for him but to return to his offices, alone. Johnny Lace had to work out his problem on his own.

There was meager consolation in the fact that maybe a lesser man would have stopped trying to lick the bugbear of tension. Paul Lace knew that his son had inherited enough of his own stubbornness so that he would go on and on, fighting what might be a hopeless battle. Other men have battled psychic tension, breaking themselves in the process.

One prominent golf professional, after blowing up on the course in tournament after tournament, finally put a bullet in his head. There was a man who was a genius at chess. At last he began, in tournaments, to make childish moves that resulted in quick defeat. He could not overcome this tendency. He sits in a small room in an institution with a chess board in front of him. He has moved one pawn across the board so many times that it has worn a groove in the hard wood. He never speaks.

Paul Lace felt the chill breath of fear as he thought of what this endless battle might do to his son. Already there was a strangeness about Johnny. He sat in the darkness of his room, his big hands clenched, his brows drawn into a knotted line that shadowed his eyes. . . .

THE good-natured banter in the dressing room of the Bay City Sailors stopped abruptly when Johnny Lace came in and walked over to his locker. The green tin door banged.

Tige Hancey, third base, said, "The atomic kid! You know why he's the atomic kid?"

In true end-man fashion, Barletini, left field, asked, "No. Why is Lace the atomic kid?"

"Because he can blow up with the biggest bang in the business."

It got a laugh. Johnny Lace, stripped to the waist, walked over to where Tige was lacing his shoes. His fists were clenched. Tige ignored him. Johnny stood, the flat muscles across his shoulders tight, and then something seemed to go out of him. He went back to his locker.

Tige called after him, "Give us a break today, Lace. Let 'em hit it over the fence. Then we don't have to work so hard."

Johnny was surprised that he had been slated to pitch. He had read in the expression on the manager's face that he was due for another drop down the ladder. Soon they would be trading him for a sack of peanuts. He had expected to sit in the dugout until the deal had been completed and he could pack up and leave.

He felt the deep cold dread as he knew that he would have to go out there onto the mound and wait for that moment when his muscles stopped obeying him. The feeling of blowing-up was so familiar. Rigid neck muscles. Cold sweat on his palms. A taut breathlessness. At those moments the batter seemed to tower over him, to wave a bat as big as a telegraph pole. And the plate looked the size of a dime. The yells of derision from the stands would be like the scratch of fingernails on a blackboard. And he would feel as alone as a man can feel. Alone and completely helpless.

With wooden arm and sodden hand he

would throw the leaden ball down to where the huge bat would connect and drive it at his head.

But it was one more chance to try to lick the thing.

As he walked out toward the bullpen, Shorty Gordon, the catcher, slapped him on the shoulder and said, "Today you don't blow, kid."

Johnny didn't trust himself to answer.

The Middletown Roamers were leading the league. During his first year in the big leagues, when they were comparing him to Feller, Johnny could have mowed them down with a fair chance at a no-hitter.

The stands were filling slowly and the sun was hot and bright. He fired a few down the line to Shorty, smiling wryly at the amount of stuff he could muster when there was no batter there. A blazing fast ball, a floater that went in with so little spin he could count the stitches all the way to the plate, a curve that he could either slant in a slow fade, or break sharply across the inside or outside corner.

The Roamers were up first. The Sailors took their field positions. Johnny dusted his hands, wiped them on his pants, wound his big fingers on the ball.

First batter up. Shorty wanted them close and high. Wind-up. Left foot high, arm back. Throw with back, shoulders, the ball speeding down. Right where he wanted it. A called strike.

Next pitch the floater, also high and close. The batter, fooled, tried to hold back his swing, stretched, pulled a dribbler off to Johnny's right. The shortstop pounced on it and the throw to first beat the runner by ten feet.

Shorty wanted them fed low to the second batter. The first pitch was too low, Shorty snatching it out of the dust with a quick lift that didn't fool the umpire. The second pitch was a called strike down the middle. The third pitch was one that cut the outside corner and the batter swung hard and missed. The batter hit the next pitched ball, overcutting it so that it dropped dead in front of the plate. Shorty whipped it to first in ample time. The count on the third batter went to three and two. Johnny poured on the coal and sped one right down the middle. The batter flung his bat away in sheer disgust.

The Sailors got a man on first, sacrificed him to second and the third batter hit into a double play to make it a short inning.

Johnny Lace, feeling competent, feeling the tension well under control, mowed down the next two men that faced him. The third man was out on a pop fly that fell directly into the second baseman's hands.

In the bottom half of the second Hancey caught one and bounced it off the left-field fence. The fielder got too anxious on

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his throw to the infield and Hancey made it all the way around, sliding in to beat the ball.

Johnny Lace walked out to the mound to pitch to the seventh man to face him. Somewhere, deep inside him, he could feel the tension mounting and he forced it back, forced himself to breathe deeply, to relax.

But the count went to three and two and the tension fluttered angry wings. It put him off just enough so that the sixth pitch was wild, the batter jogging to first, taking a long lead toward second.

Johnny felt the presence of the base runner behind him. There was a faint tightness in his back and shoulders. He shrugged it off. After a called strike, the batter slid his hand up the bat and made a perfect bunt. It trickled out toward Johnny. He pounced on it, and, as he whirled and threw, the ball slid out of his fingers too quickly. The first baseman made a good try for it, managing to knock it down, but the sacrifice had turned into a safe hit and with none out, a man roosted on first and another on second.

The tension could no longer be controlled. Johnny couldn't take a deep breath. The batter who faced him looked enormous. There was a dull roaring in Johnny's ears and he felt the trickle of cold sweat down his ribs. The ball felt too large and too heavy.

**H**E KNEW that his wind-up was shaky and rigid. The delivery was ragged. The ball, which he had intended to be a fast ball, slid on the sweaty fingers, went wild. By the time Shorty could recover it, the runners had advanced to second and third.

Johnny's mouth was dry and in his ears was the din of the crowd, the angry yelps, the pleas, "Take the bum outa there!"

He stood very still, watching the batter. The baseline rhubarb was rowdy and

confident. The Roamers saw the ball game within their grasp.

The next two pitches were balls. With the count three and nothing, Johnny managed to get one across the corner of the plate. The batter was waiting him out. Johnny walked him on the next pitch to fill the bases.

He thought, *This is my chance. This is the way it always happens.* But there seemed to be no way to regain precision, to regain control over leaden muscles.

Perspective was crazy. The batter was too close, the plate too small. The crowd noises had the sound of delirium, reminding him of a childhood operation, of the roar as he went under the anaesthetic.

He made the next batter a present of a medium ball down the alley, right in the groove. He had tried to put stuff on it, but his arm wouldn't behave. The batter swung hard and the ball, on a vicious slant, went like an arrow between the shortstop and the second baseman. The fielder gathered it in on the second bounce and made a nice throw to second, holding the hitter at first. But two runs scored and there was a runner on first and third with none out.

There was no chance to lick it. It was too late to lick it. They would yank him out. Strange that they didn't gather 'round and try to stiffen him up.

The next pitch was a ball, and the next was a fat one. The crack of the bat was like a pistol shot. The ball went by Johnny, six feet over his head. The fielder came in fast, misjudged the ball. He tried to reverse and back up, but the ball went over his head. It was a clean triple, scoring two more runs.

Johnny wanted to be taken out. He didn't want the nightmare of standing out there so desperately alone, while the crowd made mock of him, while the batters hit him at will. He had allowed four runs and still there was none out and a man on third.

He felt as though his right arm was made of brittle sticks. His fingers felt weak and pulpy on the ball. His teeth were clamped so tightly that his jaw ached. Why didn't they take him out? No one came near him.

He walked the next batter, and the next. The bases were filled. The crowd had begun to chant and stomp their feet.

Johnny felt as though he would faint. He looked through mist toward the dug-out, tried to tell the manager by an awkward gesture that he wanted to be taken out. There was no response.

He beckoned to Shorty. Shorty came slowly out onto the mound.

"I'm—I'm all through, Shorty. I can't pitch."

"Brother, you can say that again. But you don't come out."

"What!"

"Like I said, you don't come out. Charlie give everybody the word. Don't ask me why. Maybe he's gone nuts. But that's the way it is. He says you pitch the whole game even if we got a score of a thousand to one. It ain't baseball, kid. I don't know what it is. But you stay right there and sweat it out. Maybe the game gets called on account of darkness before this inning is over."

Johnny couldn't comprehend. He had the crazy idea that this was one of the nightmares he had about pitching. Yet this was reality.

"They can't leave me in here. I can't pitch!"

"Brother, you're in and according to Charlie, you stay in."

Shorty Gordon turned and walked back to the plate.

Johnny wondered what would happen if he walked off the field. But he couldn't do that. He had to be sent out of the game.

The next pitch hit the ground in front of the plate. He managed to get one pitch over the plate before he walked the batter,

forcing the run. Somebody hurled an empty pint bottle out of the stands. It hit and slid across the grass toward him. The umpire walked over, picked it up and put it in his coat pocket.

Five runs had scored and still there were none out. He felt as though he were standing in water over his head, trying to throw the ball. He lobbed it in over the plate and the ball was going so slowly that the batter knocked it almost straight up in the air. Shorty caught it for the out.

The next pitch hit the batter on the thigh, forcing the sixth run in. The crowd stomped and whistled. The next batter hit a line drive that smacked into the short-stop's glove. Two down. Johnny walked the next batter, forcing the seventh run. The next batter reached for one, smashed it far out into right field along the foul line. As it faded foul, the fielder gathered it in for the third out.

Johnny Lace walked in wooden desperation to the manager and said, "Why didn't you take me out?"

The manager looked at him coldly. "I don't have to give reasons for what I do."

"I can't go back in. You'll have to send somebody else in."

"Nobody tells me what to do, Lace. You'll go back in and you'll pitch the rest of the game." His voice was loud enough for the others to hear it. They looked sulky and baffled. It was beyond their experience, seeming to them to be some grotesque way of punishing all of them.

Affected by lethargy, by the sense of having already lost the game to an impossible situation, they quickly accumulated three outs.

Johnny Lace walked back to the mound. He was greeted with a roar of disapproval from the stands.

**I**T WAS the top of the fourth, the score 7-1. He felt weak and dizzy and afraid. His pitch was an awkward travesty. The batter slammed it for a

clean base hit, yelling, "Thanks, pal," as he took his lead off first.

It was a nightmare. The ball was enormously heavy and the distance to the plate was infinite. He walked two more batters to fill the bases. The tiny bits of control he had retained in the third inning were gone. In desperation he threw with all his strength. The ball whistled down the middle and the batter lofted it into the right-field bleachers to make the score eleven to one, with none out.

Johnny stood in apathy. The ball, thrown out by Shorty, hit him a painful blow on the chest and dropped into the dust at his feet. Two wild pitches and two that hit the ground in front of the plate walked the next batter. The stands had begun to quiet down, realizing that this sort of thing was rare in organized ball.

He walked two more men, filling the bases again. The runners started at the crack of the bat. The ball took a flat bounce, plumped into the shortstop's glove. He had moved over toward second to take the hit. With the ball he tagged the runner who had started for third, took two quick steps to second base to put out the runner coming in from first and then hurled the ball to first, beating the runner by a stride.

The stands exploded. The shortstop had put himself in the record books with that play. The runner who had crossed home plate from third couldn't believe that the three outs had been accomplished before he could score.

Johnny Lace walked in from the mound, his spikes scuffing on the grass.

The triple play had done one of those inexplicable things to the spirit of the team. The batters came up to the plate, tense and eager. The first pitch was nailed for a double. The next man up slammed the ball out of the park. The opposition pitcher, momentarily rattled, walked the next man. The Sailors were so far behind

that sacrifice hits were out of order. They scored four runs before the Roamers sent in the relief pitcher who retired the side. The score was eleven to five and the Sailors were almost back in the ball game.

Johnny came out to the mound for the top of the fifth. He walked the first two batters and the stands began to rock with the rhythmic stomp of feet.

Johnny knew that he was going to have to stay right there for the rest of the game. He finally realized that the manager meant what he said.

He stood and looked around at the infield, at the dead, unfriendly faces.

And Johnny Lace began to laugh! It started as a chuckle deep in his throat, bubbling up into a series of yelps of laughter that bent him double, that started the tears running down bronzed cheeks.

Shorty came running out. He said, "Pally, if you're going nuts, maybe you better walk off."

Gasping, Johnny Lace stood up. He looked down at the batter who stood outside the box knocking the dirt out of his cleats. The batter was normal size. The plate looked big. Johnny Lace tensed his arm, then swung it loosely.

He thumped Shorty on the chest with the back of his left hand and said, "Run back to where you belong, little man. And see if you can handle the stuff I'm going to feed that poor innocent batter."

Shorty gave him a wide-eyed stare, then grinned and trotted back to home.

Johnny turned and stared at the two runners, who immediately shortened their leads off first and second.

"Relax, you guys!" he yelled. "You're going to die right there."

Fear was gone and tension was gone because suddenly there was nothing left to be afraid of. The worst that could happen had happened.

The ball felt small and light in his fingers. Neither Shorty nor the bench gave him any signal.

His shoulder and back and arm were as loose and fluid as water.

The left foot came up, slapped down, the arm coming across into the follow-through, all the weight on that left foot, the knuckles of his right hand nearly touching the ground.

The ball was a tiny white marble, whizzing down the middle, suddenly returning to normal size after it rested in the pocket of Shorty's mitt.

"Steee-rike ONE!"

An incurve that came down, looking wide and wild, breaking back to cut over the outside corner.

"Steee-rike TWO!"

The rhythmic thumping and clapping of hands began to slow down, to die out. The pitch was a floater. The batter nearly broke his back, but the bat had whooshed over the plate before the ball got there.

All of the thumping had stopped and the park was silent.

He fed the next batter two strikes, a ball, and the third strike. And still the silence was unbroken.

Johnny felt twice life size. The two men on base behind him didn't matter. They weren't a threat.

HE FADED a slow-breaking curve across the inside corner, got the second strike on a foul tip off Shorty's mask, retired the side with a pitch that steamed as it cut the outside corner.

He took an ovation that nearly tore the grass out of the infield. He had suddenly become that darling of American sporting spirit, the underdog who comes back.

His teammates wore wide, foolish grins and slapped him on the back.

"Now we go get those boys," Charlie said.

Johnny was up, and struck out. The next man hit a clean single. They pushed him all the way around and the fifth inning ended with the score 11-6.

No man reached first in the top half of the sixth. Johnny felt able to throw the ball through the eye of a needle at a hundred feet.

In the bottom half of the sixth the Sailors knocked the second Roamer pitcher off the mound with four healthy base hits that, by heads-up ball, netted three runs.

It stayed 11-9 throughout the seventh.



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In the top of the eighth, an error by Hancey at third put a man on first, and a fumbled bunt put two men on base.

Johnny grinned and bore down. He disposed of the next batter in four pitches. The man went down swinging. He forced the next batter to hit an ineffectual pop fly.

With two down the base runner tried to steal third on the pitch. Shorty Gordon flashed one down to Hancey for the third out.

In the bottom of the eighth, the Sailors scored another run. It was scored on a fluke, but it didn't make the run any less valuable.

With the score 11-10, Johnny Lace fed the first batter one that was a little too good, a shade higher than where he had wanted to place it. His heart was in his mouth and it slowly slid back into position when the left-fielder made an effortless catch looking into the sun.

Alarmed by what might have happened, he tightened down, feeding the next two batters balls that looked just good enough to bite at. They fouled their way into two counts and then went down swinging.

Tige Hancey sat next to Johnny Lace in the dugout. The first Sailor at bat fanned out. The second one slammed a clean base hit into left-center and stretched it to a double, barely beating the throw.

As Hancey stood up, Johnny said, "How about one for the atom kid?"

Hancey walked out in his cocky way, tossed the extra bat aside, braced himself in the box. The Roamer catcher stepped

out to the side of the plate. It was smart ball. The tough little third baseman had the second best home-run record.

The pitcher threw the two pitches well outside for two balls. He threw the third one. As it left his hand, Hancey leaned over into the line of the pitch and connected with the ball.

The left-fielder raced back, looking over his shoulder. He went back and back. Then he stopped and put his hands on his hips and watched it soar over the fence.

A wide, heavy-set man of fifty shuffled along with the crowds as the stands emptied. He heard the note of hysteria, of emotional exhaustion in the voices around him. The name of Johnny Lace was on every lip.

Paul Lace smiled. A great weight had been lifted from his shoulders. In another year or two, Johnny would be back with him. A Johnny who would be whole and sane and sound. A confident and victorious Johnny.

There was little chance that the manager would talk. No, the manager would be glad to be labeled a smart man, a bush-league genius. There was a danger that, if it hadn't worked out, Johnny might hear of it.

And Johnny would have resented the interference.

Johnny would have been annoyed to learn that his father had convinced the manager of the wisdom of keeping Johnny on the mound—regardless. The manager had gambled and won—and had done Paul Lace a priceless favor. A favor which had given him back his son.

### — TO OUR READERS —

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# — BIG HORSE —

*Together they thundered into their last homestretch—the horse that had one thing to lick . . . the man on his back—and the jockey who had one of three things to sell . . . a race, his life—or a thoroughbred's heart!*



Winter Day and Black Nugget were still fighting it out as Thunderhead began to come up fast with long, powerful strides. . . .

**T**HE horse was very big. He had a neck like a bull and massive haunches. His legs looked absurdly slender.

"There is a lot of horse here, Willy," Farmer Jones said fondly. "He will carry you."

Willy Ketchel looked again at Thunderhead. The horse looked very sleek and fit,

everything considered. But that did not really mean anything.

In comparison Willy did not look sleek. He was also very big—for a jockey. He had put on weight when he hit the skids. Or maybe his weight was one of the reasons why he had hit the long downgrade. He weighed a pound over one-thirty,

— **By WALLACE UMPHREY** —

which is a lot of weight indeed for a horse to carry around a track.

"He will carry me all right," Willy agreed. "But the question before the house is how? A gimpy horse! Maybe he will pull up lame and leave me at the post."

"Have I ever lied to you, Willy?"

Farmer Jones regarded Willy out of sadly blue and innocent eyes. He was a tall, stooped man with a fringe of white hair growing like a picket fence around his sun-burned pate. He gave the impression that alfalfa was growing out of his ears, but that impression was wholly illusory. Willy knew that Farmer Jones was very shrewd.

Farmer Jones had one failing. He went for the bottle as much as a baby. Perhaps even more.

**N**EVERTHELESS, Willy hesitated. He needed to boot home a big winner very badly. Very badly indeed. Riding a gallant old has-been would do him no good. No good at all. He needed a win, so they would start giving him hot mounts again.

"Just look at his record, Willy," Farmer Jones said. "Why, one year alone his take-home pay was almost two-hundred grand."

Willy said, "Yeah. But when was that?"

That had been three years ago, while Thunderhead was a three-year-old and before he had pulled up lame. Finally Thunderhead had been entered in a two thousand dollar claiming race, and Farmer Jones had acquired him. Much to the amusement of all and sundry. They said that Farmer Jones had bought himself five bucks worth of glue.

Willy did not know. Farmer Jones was very smart, but he was also sentimental. Everybody said that Thunderhead was finished. But Farmer Jones had bought the gallant old champ and then he and the horse had disappeared.

"We have been resting, Willy," Farmer Jones said. "We have been out in the country. Sea water runs have strengthened that gimpy leg. I think Thunderhead is fit. He set the track record here and I think he can do it again. After all, Thunderhead is a thoroughbred."

"I am a realist," Willy told him. "Even a thoroughbred gets old. I do not believe in miracles."

Farmer Jones was being very serious and righteous and honest. "I don't know, Willy. I wouldn't kid you. But I have a great and lasting faith in Thunderhead. I am entering him in the Handicap."

Willy said, "I still don't know."

"Look, Willy. I will not lie to you. I'm hoping Thunderhead will make a comeback. I have just enough dough to enter him in the Handicap and to buy us an occasional hamburger."

"Does Thunderhead like hamburgers?"

"We will get the hamburgers, Willy. He will get hay." Farmer Jones looked at Willy out of clear eyes. "Because of Thunderhead I have even stopped drinking."

"That," agreed Willy, "is true devotion."

Farmer Jones said, "Maybe it will rain. A gimpy horse likes a soft track. I feel that he can win."

Willy was still not convinced. "There are a lot of fresh young jocks around. Why not get one of them to ride him?"

Farmer Jones said firmly, "Because you are the best money-rider around. I do not care what anybody says. Thunderhead can carry your weight, Willy. And I am afraid of shenanigans. You may be getting old and you may be unlucky, but you have never thrown a race."

Willy examined Thunderhead again. Thunderhead *was* a lot of horse. Willy sighed and said, "Okay. I am still not convinced, but okay. And don't feed me any more of that pap about Thunderhead being a gallant old thoroughbred. I am a cynic."

Early the next morning Willy worked Thunderhead. The dew was still on the grass and the air was crisp. The track was fairly dry. Thunderhead did not pull up lame. But the time for six furlongs was one-fifteen.

Willy watched a swipe cool off the horse. He shook his head. One-fifteen was not good time.

"He was a little slow," Farmer Jones agreed. "But he didn't pull up lame."

"Look, Farmer," Willy said. "Let's not kid each other. We are both smart about such things. There is a vast difference between six furlongs and a mile and a quarter."

"A muddy track," said Farmer Jones, "and he will win in a breeze."

A man and a girl came toward them. The girl was new, but Dan Dexter was not. Dan Dexter was a clean-cut young man, but there was nothing clean about the way he operated. He ran a big future book. He had so much money that he had to hire some people to help him spend it and other people to see that nobody took it away from him. It was all quite complicated.

"Hullo, Farmer," Dan Dexter said pleasantly. "Hi there, Willy. What are you two up to?"

Farmer Jones grunted. Willy grunted. Thunderhead snorted.

"I hear that Thunderhead is a doubtful starter," said Dan Dexter. "After this morning, I can see why."

Farmer Jones said, "He will start. We do not like any part of you, Dexter. Please go away."

**D**AN DEXTER was not insulted. He laughed, but his eyes were very cold. Willy turned away. The girl was walking along beside the horse, talking animatedly to the swipe. Willy decided she was a very nice-looking girl indeed. There was something very fresh and wonderful about her. Willy de-

cidely cynically that she could not have been acquainted with Dan Dexter very long and still retain her youth.

Unaccountably, Willy had a strong desire to take a sock at Dan Dexter. He told himself it was because Dexter was dirty, because Dexter was pushing the needle into Farmer Jones. Willy could think of lots of reasons.

He looked around carefully. A couple of Dan Dexter's brawny strong-arm boys were lounging against the fence a hundred yards away. Willy swallowed his base desire to take a poke at the bookmaker. And besides, Dan Dexter was quite big and fully capable of taking care of himself.

So Willy looked at the girl again. She was a small girl. No taller, he noted, agreeably surprised, than himself. That was a nice thing in a world where so many women towered over him.

She came closer now. Dan Dexter was still talking and Farmer Jones' face was red. Willy watched the girl and heard Dexter saying, "The suckers are sentimental. They all fall for a good story about a champion coming back. You're sure Thunderhead will start?"

"He'll start," Farmer Jones said angrily.

"I think," Willy heard Dan Dexter say, "I shall take a load of Thunderhead money."

The girl smiled pleasantly at Willy. Willy coughed loudly. Dan Dexter frowned and pulled the needle out of Farmer Jones and grudgingly performed the introductions. The girl's name was Margaret Ames.

"You can call me Maggie," she said. "Everybody does."

"Come along, Maggie," Dan Dexter said possessively. "Let us get away from all these has-beens. It depresses me."

Willy watched them depart. At a discreet distance they were joined by Dan Dexter's two muscle-men. Willy sighed and said, "Lovely. Very lovely indeed."

"I have never considered Dan Dexter in that light."

"I mean Maggie."

"I would like," muttered Farmer Jones, "to catch Dexter some night in a dark alley."

The next morning when Willy reached the track he felt something weighing on his mind. He found himself looking around for something. He finally admitted to himself that he was on the lookout for Dan Dexter and Maggie Ames. Neither of them was in evidence.

Willy felt a little letdown. He worked Thunderhead, and the track was dry, and the time for six furlongs was only a second better than the previous day and still not very good.

"Give him time," said Farmer Jones cheerfully.

Another day went past. After the workout Willy dropped into the nearby restaurant for a cup of coffee. Maggie Ames was sitting on a stool and she waved and smiled. She was alone, looking as fresh as the morning dew. Willy sat down beside her.

"Where's Dexter?" he asked.

"Out of town. He has a lot of business interests."

"I know," Willy said.

Her gaze was curious. "What do you mean by that?"

Willy told her that he didn't mean anything by that. They talked about horses. Maggie was from a ranch in Wyoming and she loved horses. Willy learned that Dan Dexter would be out of town for ten days.

**T**HE next morning she was again at the track. And the morning after that. They talked about things other than horses now. Willy learned that she was working at a night club as a hat-check girl. He was a little amused at the idea of one of Dan Dexter's women working at anything.

"You'll miss your beauty sleep," he told her, "if you continue to come down here every day."

"I'm young," she said gayly. "I can take it."

It made Willy a little envious. He was thirty-two and he had been wondering lately if he could take it any more. But he wouldn't admit that he was getting old. Maggie touched his arm and there was compassion in her eyes. Willy felt she understood.

By this time Willy had learned quite a bit about her. She had a father and two brothers.

He looked at her and shook his head. She was highly susceptible to glamor, obviously. To her a guy like Dan Dexter was glamor. She did not seem to fully understand about the bookmaker. Willy wondered if she were being awfully clever or just a little dumb or simply naive.

One day it rained. The track was muddy and Thunderhead did the six furlongs in one-eleven, breezing. Farmer Jones was highly elated.

"See, Willy? What did I tell you? A gimpy horse likes a soft track. Tomorrow let's try him on the mile."

Some of Farmer Jones' excitement penetrated Willy's thick armor. He told Maggie about it later. The next morning she was there to watch. A small gray man was standing beside her.

The track was still muddy. Thunderhead covered the eight furlongs in one-thirty-eight. A lot of people were watching. When Willy brought Thunderhead in a jockey said, "Wow! If I didn't have a mount in the Handicap, I'd lay some dough on him myself."

Willy said carefully, "A mile and a quarter is still a very different thing. I don't know. I think I'd take Black Nugget."

Black Nugget was the favorite.

Maggie introduced the gray-haired man to Willy. He was her father. He had a

weathered face and sun wrinkles at the corners of his eyes and he was no larger than Willy. He smiled at Willy and said little. Maggie's two brothers were also in town, but they were out seeing the sights.

"What do you hear from Dexter?" Willy asked Maggie.

"I write him every day, Willy," Maggie said.

Willy felt as if a knife were slicing through him. It was a thing to sublimate and nothing in his manner showed it. He talked about Thunderhead and Maggie's father listened. Then they went away.

"Look, Willy," said Farmer Jones. "Don't fall too hard for that filly. She's Dexter's property and I don't want you hurt."

Willy laughed.

A couple of newspapermen were nosing around. Farmer Jones began talking to them. Willy drifted away.

That night he picked up Maggie and they went to a place where they could have dinner and then dance a little. It was Maggie's night off. Willy borrowed some money and a car from a friend, and he drove Maggie around in fine style.

"Tell me about Thunderhead," Maggie said. "Honestly, what chance has he got?"

They were parked overlooking the ocean. For a time Willy lost his air of cynicism. He told her that Thunderhead might have a pretty good chance, if conditions were just right. She nodded and said that Dan Dexter had a great faith in Willy's judgment and ability. With the mention of Dexter's name, conversation lagged.

Maggie said suddenly, "Dan will be back tomorrow, Willy."

WILLY was glad that Maggie couldn't see his face. And he couldn't keep the bitterness out of his voice. He said, "It's been nice knowing you."

"What do you mean, Willy?"

"Don't try to kid me, sister."

She said furiously, "Dan doesn't own me."

"Maybe not," Willy said. "But his money does. I wish I had a million bucks so I could get into the bidding."

Maggie was icily calm now. Willy drove her home. He dropped her off and she left him without speaking. Willy felt lousy. His dislike for Dan Dexter was more intense than ever.

Next morning the papers carried a long story about Thunderhead. The story was about Willy and Farmer Jones, too. It was a highly sentimental piece, about three gallant has-beens who were hitting the comeback road. It irked Willy but he could see the truth in it.

The story in the newspapers was picked up by the press service and appeared in Sunday editions all over the country. It was good sob stuff, and it had a strong effect on the betting. In the future books the odds on Thunderhead began falling. From 3 to 1 the odds dropped to even money and then to *no quotation*.

Dan Dexter, it was rumored, was not happy. He was loaded with Thunderhead money at 3 to 1. It could be that Dan Dexter might take a terrific beating.

But Farmer Jones was happy. He said, "Well, didn't I tell you, Willy?"

"Races aren't won in the newspapers," Willy reminded him.

Willy ran Thunderhead. The track was firmer, and the time for the mile was still good. Willy found himself feeling eager. Perhaps a has-been could come back. Perhaps being a thoroughbred was what counted. Black Nugget would be a very tough horse to beat, but if the track were right—

Maggie was not at the track. Willy was stubborn, and he had his pride, but he knew he had to see Maggie again. She was not at the restaurant, either. But Dan Dexter was.

He was sitting alone at a table when

Willy entered. His two large strong-arm boys were at the counter. Their broad backs looked a little fearsome to Willy. Dan Dexter was wearing a gorgeous suit and an affable smile.

"Well, what about Thunderhead, Willy?" Dan Dexter asked.

Willy grinned. "The papers scare you?"

"No. I helped plant the story. But what you think does."

"How do you know what I think?"

Dan Dexter leaned across the table. "Maggie has been telling me. You're a cautious character, Willy, but you're sold on Thunderhead. That worries me. You know horses."

"You sicced Maggie on me to find out about Thunderhead?"

Dan Dexter smiled. "Could be." He got up and left.

Somebody pulled out a chair across from him and Willy looked up. It was Maggie's father.

"I heard most of that," Maggie's father said. "That Dexter guy says you know horses. I reckon he's right."

Willy remained silent.

"I've known horses all my life, son. But I don't know a danged thing about racing. You know both."

Maggie's father was dressed in stiff store clothes. Somehow they seemed as out of place on him as Willy would be riding a Shetland pony. Both Maggie and her father were no bigger than Willy. Willy had always thought they bred them big in Wyoming. He wished Maggie's father would go away and leave him alone.

"Me and the lads," Maggie's father told him, "we like the looks of Thunderhead. He's a thoroughbred. Maybe we'd like to lay a little money on him. Trouble is, this 'no quotation' business on the future books got us hamstrung."

"Try Dan Dexter," Willy said.

"That Dexter is mean and dangerous, son. He could make a lot of trouble."

There was a silence. "How's Maggie?" Willy asked.

"Kind of down," her father said. "Reckon you know why."

"Sure," Willie said. "She sold me out."

Maggie's father shook his head. "I'll forget that. Dan Dexter has treated her real nice. I reckon you got the wrong slant on things, son."

**N**EXT morning Willy ran Thunderhead the full ten furlongs. Willy let the gallant old champ have his head. The track was dry but Thunderhead breezed home. The time was two-six and a fifth.

Farmer Jones was excited. "Did you see how he stepped out, Willy? A wet track and he'll tie his old record."

Even Willy was convinced. Thunderhead shaved another second off that time a day later. The horse was strong and getting stronger all the time. Willy did not see Maggie but she was in his thoughts.

He ran into Les Johns, who was Black Nugget's trainer. Les Johns slapped him on the back and said, "You've got a horse, Willy. But Black Nugget will give you a good fight."

"Look," Willy said. "If Thunderhead wins, how about a job with your stable? All I need is hot mounts again."

Les Johns flushed and looked away. "We'll see."

"I want to know now," Willy told him, aware of the evasion. "I need heavy dough."

"Don't we all, Willy? Look here," Les Johns said frankly. "You're old. You're overweight. Only a freak horse like Thunderhead can carry you."

"You think I'm washed up?"

"Oh, you'll get something," Les Johns told him.

Thunderhead looked better and better. Maggie was still in Willy's thinking. One night when he couldn't sleep he called up

the night club where she worked. He was informed she had quit her job. He called her apartment and learned she had checked out. The new address she had left was that of a very swank hotel.

Dan Dexter, Willy told himself, had finally bought Maggie with heavy dough. Well, to hell with it, Willy thought.

One morning Willy got to the restaurant a little earlier than usual. Dan Dexter was there waiting for him. His two shadows were not far away.

"Glad to see you, Willy," Dan Dexter said.

Willy said nothing. He kept his eyes lowered. He hated the bookmaker and he itched to try slapping him down. But Willy knew he had the last mount of his life now, and he didn't want trouble. There would be no mounts for him after the Handicap. And Willy wanted to go out a winner.

Dan Dexter said, "I want to talk to you."

"Is it about Maggie?"

"You go for her, huh?"

Willy kept on looking away.

"She's expensive," Dan Dexter told him. "Even if you win the Handicap, your share won't be enough."

"Probably you're right," Willy agreed.

"I like you, Willy," Dan Dexter said heartily. "How'd you like to make yourself fifty grand?"

"It's not hay," Willy said.

Dan Dexter smiled. "Thought you'd listen, Willy. You're smart. Now here's how it is: The future books all over the country have closed up on Thunderhead. I don't blame them. Maybe you already know that I'm loaded with Thunderhead money at three to one. All right. Now suppose I'd offer Thunderhead again to the boys at those odds. How much could I get laid down in the next week?"

"A million."

"Right. More than I could handle if— Well, you see what I mean?"

"Yeah. But if Thunderhead won you'd be sunk."

"Right again. But if Thunderhead lost?"

"You'd have the world," said Willy, "with a frame around it."

Dan Dexter nodded pleasantly. "It's a clean-up. We'd both be rich."

Willy shook his head and said, "I don't know."

Dan Dexter said, "You'd be able to afford Maggie."

"Huh?"

"She's not for me. She's a thoroughbred," Dan Dexter said. He flushed and added defensively, "We're not."

Willy looked thoughtful and Dan Dexter grinned and took a fat wallet from his pocket. It was bulging with very large bills. Willy shook his head and said, "Your word's good. Dan Dexter nodded and put out his hand. They pumped arms briefly.

IT WAS cloudy the evening before the race. It might or might not rain, and the uncertainty put Willy on edge. He went down to have a look at Thunderhead, and Farmer Jones was there. Farmer Jones had a full bottle of whiskey on a box in front of him.

"Whoa," Willy said. "I thought you'd quit."

Farmer Jones did not look up. "I'm worried about the future book, Willy. Dan Dexter is no fool. He's taking three to one on Thunderhead and I don't like it. Maggie's old man laid fifty grand with Dexter today."

Willy felt as if he'd been clubbed. "Fifty what?"

"Fifty grand," Farmer Jones repeated.

"Don't worry," Willy managed. "Maybe Dexter is taking a chance."

"Dan Dexter does not take chances," Farmer Jones reminded him. "The fix is his way. Willy, you've been talking to him lately."

Willy remained silent.

"I think I'll get drunk." Farmer Jones looked broodingly at the bottle, then slowly shook his head. "No. Thunderhead is a thoroughbred. He's not better than I am." He put the bottle away and looked happier for it.

Handicap day was stormy. A steady drizzle fell and gusts of wind whipped the rain across the infield and blew it into the stand. The track was going to be muddy. Very muddy.

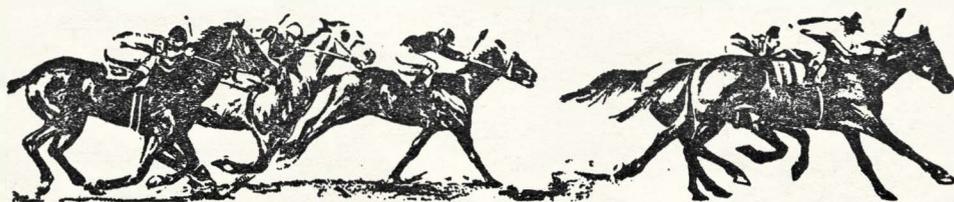
Willy had too much on his mind to pay much attention to the preliminary races. Dan Dexter had popped around earlier to see him. Dan Dexter had seemed a little worried.

"No slips, Willy," he said. "We don't want anyone to get wise. Look. Eddie Meehan is riding Beau Pride. He'll take

While he changed his clothes, Eddie Meehan didn't look at him. Willy was very calm now. Except for Willy and Eddie Meehan, everybody was jittery. This was the big race and there was a big field and the track was muddy and dangerous. Anything could happen, and it almost always did in the minds of the jockeys before the race.

When they went out, Eddie Meehan gave Willy a thin smile. Eddie Meehan was the toughest and meanest jockey on the track.

Without any help Willy rode Thunderhead into his stall in the starting gate. The gallant old champ stood as quietly as a workhorse after a hard day. Willy could feel the deep muscles quivering. The sense of gameness, of power, of terrific speed made Willy catch his breath.



There was an opening and Willy gave Thunderhead his head and drove for it. . . .

you out on the far turn. It will look all right, and we'll have a good alibi."

"Okay," Willy said.

Dan Dexter said coldly. "Don't get any ideas, Willy. I've got some pretty tough boys working for me. I wouldn't want them working on you."

After the fifth race, Willy walked toward the jockeys' room. He felt lousy, although that was not unusual before a big race. Over and over he told himself that what he was doing was okay. He had always been honest and what had it got him? Now he was an old man in the racing game and he was broke and he wanted Maggie.

It wasn't as if throwing a race was something new. It had been done before. It was all right if you didn't get caught at it.

Thunderhead was certainly a wonderful horse.

Some of the other jockeys were having their troubles. The assistant starters were yanking at the plunging horses and cursing. Equinox kept backing out of the stall. Winter Day was in a lather, and finally managed to unseat his rider. Beau Pride, with Eddie Meehan up, began kicking but Meehan cruelly brought his mount around. Black Nugget, the three-year-old, was quiet. The three-year-old, Willy found himself thinking, was the horse he had to beat.

Then the head starter yelled, "Come on!" and the bell rang and they were off, the horses sliding and bumping in the slick mud. And Willy forgot everything but the race.

It was a clean start.

**R**AIN drove into his face. Winter Day took the lead, going around the first time. It was a killing pace. Equinox took out after the leader and refused to be shaken. Behind and running strongly was Black Nugget. The rest were a tangle, with Thunderhead in the middle of the pack.

Willy had not got off as well as he had hoped. Still, the gallant old champ was not a sprinter. He did not have an early foot, but he always came up strong at the end.

Already the jockey up on Winter Day was using his whip. Willy was still lost in the tangle of short-priced horses, but he wasn't worried. Thunderhead was running strongly, fighting for his head.

Mud was flying everywhere. Willy felt the powerful muscles under him and a sense of pride kept everything but the race blanked from his mind. He knew the horses all around him would begin to fade before they reached the middle of the backstretch. Then he'd get clear and send Thunderhead after the sprinters who were now in the lead. In the homestretch those sprinters would be wobbling and that's when Thunderhead would be in.

A big horse bore out a little wide. There was an opening and Willy gave Thunderhead his head and drove for it. He made it but he was still in the tangle.

Rain was falling in torrents. Winter Day was beginning to tire but hung on gamely. All the jockeys except Willy were plying their whips. Thunderhead never needed the bat. Thunderhead was always game.

All Willy could hear was the thunder of hoofs and the shrill cries of the jockeys. He drove toward an opening which would get him clear of the pack and in the open, fourth behind the three mizzlers he had to beat.

A big horse drove toward him. A big horse with Eddie Meehan up.

In the excitement Willy had forgotten

about Dan Dexter. He had forgotten everything but the wonder of the thoroughbred under him.

Willy carried a little wide before he remembered what it was all about. He swerved and yelled, but Eddie Meehan only grinned and kept on boring over. The opening in front of Willy was beginning to close. If he missed it, Thunderhead would lose the race. He was supposed to let it happen. He was sure it would look all right.

And in that moment Willy remembered a lot of things. He remembered Farmer Jones looking broodingly at a bottle and then putting it away. He remembered Maggie's old man laying fifty gees on the nose of Thunderhead. He thought about Thunderhead, a gallant old thoroughbred who couldn't lose, and he thought about Maggie.

And with the thought of her came something else. The swank hotel where she had moved was probably where her father and her brothers were staying.

Then Willy thought about Dan Dexter. Willy did not want to get beat up.

But Thunderhead was a thoroughbred. So was Maggie. And Farmer Jones too, in his way. All the money in the world would not buy Maggie.

Eddie Meehan was still boring over. The opening ahead was getting smaller. If he missed it—

Thrown up by flying heels, a gob of mud smacked Willy in the face. He was blinded but the opening ahead was clear in his mind. He gave Thunderhead his head and leaned down to whisper in the old champ's ear. He could feel Thunderhead respond. Beside him Eddie Meehan gave a startled cry. Willy held his breath. Then Thunderhead was flashing past Beau Pride, flanks scraping. Thunderhead slipped in the mud and then forged ahead. Willy dug the mud out of his eyes and Thunderhead was in the open, running fourth.

**F**AR ahead in the rain Winter Day and Black Nugget were fighting for the lead. Equinox, in third place, was fading badly. Thunderhead came up fast and the two horses were neck and neck and then Equinox was left behind. The leaders were turning for home now, ahead of Thunderhead by half a dozen lengths.

Willy leaned down and said, "Now, boy."

The gallant old champion answered. Thunderhead was fearless. Willy felt the surge of muscles, and he let loose a savage laugh of triumph. To hell with Dan Dexter and what he could do. Willy was not afraid of the bookmaker now.

There was a tumult from the stands. An announcer began to shout, "In the stretch, it's Winter Day by a neck, Black Nugget by five, Thunderhead by four and coming up to challenge the leaders. . . ."

Winter Day and Black Nugget were still fighting it out as Thunderhead began to come up fast with long powerful strides. Then Winter Day slowly faded. Willy pulled Thunderhead even and the two horses were neck and neck and then Winter Day was falling back. Now only Black Nugget. Willy brought Thunderhead up. Less than half a furlong to go. Johnny Erin, up on Black Nugget, cast a backward look and then began to use his whip in earnest. Still Thunderhead crept up. They were neck and neck and the wire loomed ahead and then they were under it and Willy knew Thunderhead had won.

The ceremonies were pretty hazy. Afterwards Willy weighed in and started for the jockeys' room. Just outside he ran into Dan Dexter and his two muscle-men.

He felt the two tough gorillas slide along beside him, hemming him in.

The crowd flowed around them and nobody was curious.

"You ruined me, Willy," Dan Dexter said tightly. "You'd better come along

easy. It wouldn't do to die here at the track, would it?"

Willy was still smiling. "I don't like you, Dexter," he said. "I don't like the fix. I don't like the cinch bet."

He wasn't afraid. His last race and he had booted home a winner. Nothing else seemed to matter very much. That had been the end of something for him—not this thing that was about to happen.

Suddenly Maggie's old man shoved forward. Behind him came two huge sunburned young men.

It was pretty furious while it lasted. Willy got in three nice licks at Dan Dexter before Maggie appeared with a couple of track detectives.

Willy was sitting on the ground, nursing a bruised lip. He stared hazily at the two huge young men. They were Maggie's brothers, all right. Maybe they did breed for size in Wyoming.

Maggie dropped on her knees beside him. That ought to mean something but Willy didn't quite know what. Farmer Jones came up, all smiles.

"Willy, you did it! I was a fool to be scared—"

"You're the fool," Maggie said to Willy. "Dan Dexter was nice to me and that's all. I was lonesome. I never pumped you for information to pass on to him. My things are all packed to go back to Wyoming."

Willy said hopefully, "Maybe you won't have to go, now."

Maggie said, "I'm still going."

Willy looked hurt and Maggie's father said, "Better come along too, son. I've got a big stock ranch. We're gonna breed race horses."

Farmer Jones interrupted. "I've still got that bottle. Maybe a drink all around to celebrate—"

There was a big crowd around them and everybody was talking at once—except Willy. He was too busy looking at Maggie.



# ALL-SPORTS QUIZ

By CLIFFORD WOOD

**P**ICK up your mental bat and see what you can do with the following twenty deliveries. You'll find among these quiz pitches some that are high, hard and hoppin', some soft and fat, others curved and a little tricky. If you bat out all the answers you're a full-fledged expert. An average in the 900's is excellent; in the 800's good; in the 700's fair; anything less—well, you're in a bit of a slump and you'll no doubt do a lot better the next time. Score 50 for each correct answer.

(Answers on page 91)

## Baseball

1. What well-known umpire holds the record for officiating in the most World Series?
2. As a major league manager, Bill McKenchie won pennants with which three clubs?
3. Who selects the players for the All Star teams—a group of experts, or the fans?
4. What famous American Leaguer piled up a twenty-four-year batting average of .367?
5. How can a pitcher lose a no-hit, no-walk game?

## Football

6. True or false? The numbers on the players' jerseys are only for personal identification.
7. How can a team suffer a 15-yard penalty with no action whatever having taken place on the field?
8. When must football players wear sneakers, tennis shoes, or rubber cleats?
9. In the ten years to 1946, Sammy Baugh tossed 1735 forward passes, completing (check one): ( ) 503, ( ) 992, ( ) 1101, for an all-time record.
10. What is meant by a team's "umbrella?"

## Hockey

11. What is the "sudden-death" period?
12. A hockey team consists of a goalie, center, two defensemen and two—?
13. True or false? There are no limitations on the number of substitutions that can be made during a game.
14. A player's individual record is credited with both two points and one point for goals scored. What marks the difference between the two values?
15. The term "crease" applies to (check one): ( ) a foul, ( ) player's equipment, ( ) a zone on the rink.

## Miscellany

16. What sport leads all others in paid attendance?
17. When does a polo team consist of three men instead of four?
18. The first modern Olympic games were held in Athens, Greece, in (check one): ( ) 1850, ( ) 1896, ( ) 1904.
19. True or false? Former amateur tennis champ Jack Kramer won both the singles and doubles championships at Forest Hills in 1948.
20. In horse racing, who are the so-called "gentlemen" jockeys?

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# ONE PITCH FOR

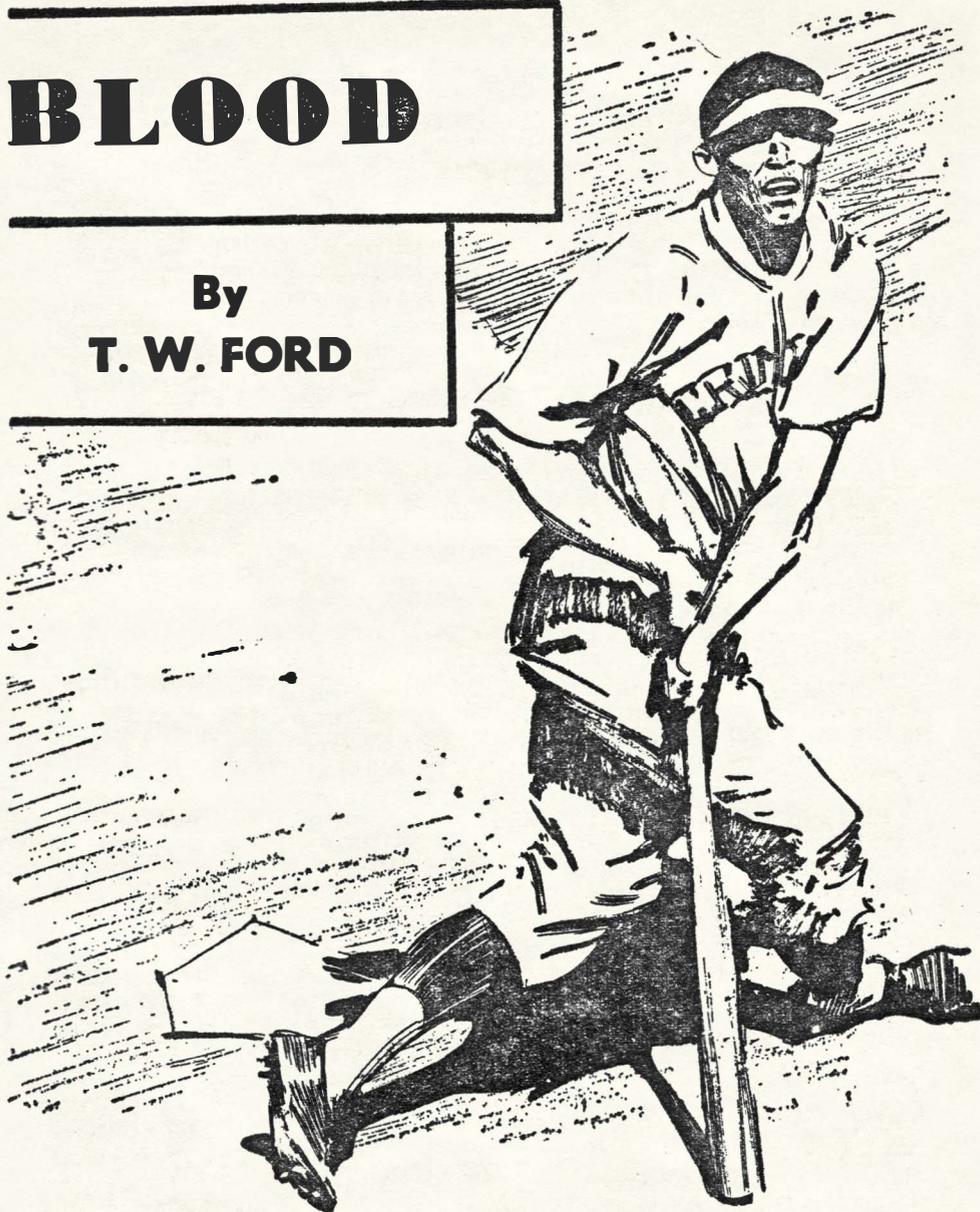
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Linkler, the Mogul backstop, yanked off his mask, then tore after that high foul. . . .



# BLOOD

By  
T. W. FORD



**C**HUNKY and a little on the small side for a hurler, he came walking in from the bullpen. Unhurriedly. Cockily. A Mogul fan shouted at him, "Whiff them bums, Kid!" Kid Marty Cook gave him a big slow wink that yelled self-confidence. At the infield edge, Jess Pillen gave him the ball.

"Know you only had one day's rest,

*The kid had a big mouth—  
and a pitch to go with it—but  
it took eight other guys on his  
own team pulling for him to  
lose to give him the one thing  
a big-leaguer needs—a high  
hard one where his heart  
ought to be!*

Kid. But we want this one real bad. But bad!" The stout Sphinx-faced Mogul pilot ground a fist into the other palm. It was a dramatic gesture for the usually unemotional Pillen.

The rook hurler gave a nonchalant nod. "The Big Boy can do," he said in piping voice. Then he was on the hill, boyish-looking with that lock of yellow hair that always managed to straggle over his forehead, his face soft and sensitive with the stamp of youth.

Slowly, he surveyed the loaded sacks. Top of the sixth with the Moguls leading, 2-0. None down and three potential runs straining at the leash. One ball, no strikes, on the man wagging the lumber at the plate. But the Kid betrayed no sign of tension.

He took three warm-up tosses with Eddie Hain, the shortstop, and Pole Yaeger, over from first, standing behind him. The last one was a hot-rock pitch. Despite his lack of stature, the Kid had incredible swift on his fast one. Then he signed he was ready, disdaining the fourth and fifth throws to which he was legally entitled.

"Okay, Kid," Hain said. "Don't give that Carro anything low on the outside corner. He murders that pitch."

"The Big Boy hates violence," Kid Cook quipped, nodding to Dal Linkler's sign. The sharp thrust-around of the shoulders. And a jug-handle curve in there on the hands for a called strike as the hitter was ordered to take.

Several thousand female fans shrieked approval. The women thought the Kid was cute. Then the crowd was gasping. Carro had lashed into one of those hot-rock pitches. It rocketed low up the third-base line. But it struck foul by scant inches behind the bag. The Kid stood quietly, fanning himself with his glove.

"Roll him over and let's see the color of his panties, Kid!" chirped Hain from shortstop.

THE Kid just smiled thinly at Carro and fed him two curves on which he refused to bite. Three and two, the full-up count. The whole park held its breath. But the Kid slowly checked the runners again. Before he delivered, he shook off Dal Linkler behind the bat twice. And then it was a smoking fast curve. Knee high and on the outside. Carro's pet pitch. Carro checked his swing, figuring it to break outside of the strike zone, never believing the rook would throw to his strength. And it nicked the corner for a called third strike.

The crowd went wild. But Kid Cook, arms akimbo, was serenely staring at a gleaming transport plane overhead.

Taking his time about going back to work, he got a two-two count on the next man, made him lift a foul back of the plate. Linkler, the Mogul backstop, yanked off his mask, then tore after that high foul, nailing it with a sweet diving catch back near the wire.

Kid Cook worked on Rowson, left-handed hitting star of the Crimson. A swift that was a ball. A curve that darted in below the chin for a strike. Rowson swatted a weak change-up pitch. The Kid was just learning that delivery. It was a lofty fly curving over the foul line in right. Monk Evans set himself under it. And the Kid, pocketing his glove, headed for the bench.

There was a sob from the throng. For the tricky wind, blowing plateward, locked the ball up there. It dropped short. Evans raced in but the ball bounced out of his glove at ankle height. A new life for the hitter.

It was enough to shake up a veteran. Jeers rang from the Crimson bench as he had to return to the mound. But he just shrugged and slowly re-buttoned a button on his shirt before throwing again. A curve, wide. Rowson tagged the next one, a low rising liner to the right of the box that was tagged for extra bases.

But the Kid flung over, climbed a ladder, and broke its flight, though he couldn't hold it. It dropped between first and second. The flashy Flip Cotton, second-sacker, swooped in on it. The wrist-snap toss to first and there was the third out. The Kid had extinguished the fire with the bases loaded, not giving up a single tally. The crowd's applause rattled out like gunfire.

"Those guys just think they're tough," the Kid said off-handedly as he donned a windbreaker. "Never had *me* worried. I knew I had 'em."

Eddie Hain's lips curled. The sensation of the International League two seasons back, he'd expected to be the Mogul star this year. Then this cocky Kid had to walk into the picture. Hain rasped out, "Big Boy, there were eight other guys on that field they had to beat, too. Remember?"

It was the tip-off, that remark, on things to come. But Jess Pillen, down at the end of the bench, ignored it.

Turk Shurd nudged him. A seamy-faced veteran, Turk was signed as a third-string catcher and coach. "Hear that, Pillen? Sounds like a little jealousy brewing. Prima donna stuff, maybe."

Pillen shrugged as Evans at the plate parked a double into left-center with one down. "Ball players are always shooting the lip." He was rated a smart field general with an uncanny sense of the right moment to derrick a hurler. He was only

interested in the way a player handled himself on the field. Their personalities interested him not a whit. His critics accused Pillen of being standoffish, cold-blooded.

"Maybe," Turk Shurd said. "But they don't love the Kid."

Pillen only grunted as the next man fled out. He figured this to be the Mogul year. A young club with speed that had jelled with experience. And this rook, Kid Cook, bought during the winter from the minors, had come up with a string of slick wins. Pillen wasn't worrying.

"Watch these birds punch holes in the ozone this time," the Kid dropped as he sauntered to the hill.

**L**INKLER threw him a sardonic look. "Look, Big Boy, maybe you don't need me behind that bat, huh? Maybe the outfield can have a picnic, too, huh?"

The Kid only gave him that slow broad wink in reply. But he was in hot water almost at once. On an inside curve, the Crimson hitter deliberately did not pull back far enough and let the ball graze him. He got his base. The Kid smiled and chucked a double-play ball to the next hitter on the one and one count. But the ball took a bad hop and caromed off Eddie Hain's shoulder. And with none down and runners on first and second, the Crimson pilot sent up a pinch-hitter. The Kid only

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smiled and looked over his shoulder toward the bullpen. They were throwing hurriedly out there.

He made the pinch-hitter hit into a double play. Hain's hurried toss to eagle-beaked Cotton was in the dirt. But the latter dug it out and wheeled to arm it to first for the twin killing. Two down with a lonesome runner on third. And the Kid stood placidly buffing the nails of his bare hand on his monkey-suit shirt. The infield saw and their triumphant yipping abruptly died. The Kid got the final out of the inning on a swinging third strike.

"Don't know why those guys bother bringing bats up to the plate," he mentioned in the dugout.

Dead silence greeted the cocky remark. The rook's smile never wavered. But the observant Turk Shurd caught the unsure nervous twitch at the corner of his mouth. He seemed the picture of confidence as he worked the eighth, though, giving up but one hit. Then, in the top of the ninth, when it seemed as if he would wrap up the game for two out of three in the series with the league-leading Crimson, the gimmick came up and hit him.

With one down, a Crimson slashed one past Hain at short that the runner managed to stretch into a double. Hain hadn't looked too hot, though it was no error. Cotton and Pole Yaeger came in.

"Sure, sure," the Kid said as if bored. But he was a little scared inside. He stiffened against the galloping jitters. He looked as cocky as ever, though. He got the next man to ground out. The runner held at second. A pinch-hitter pumped a curve high into left. It looked like the ball game. And then Crusso lost it in the sun.

The ball bounced off his shoulder and merrily on to the wall. The runner from second scored. The pinch-hitter, a feather-footed Joe on the bases, went all the way around to slide in under the relay to the plate for an inside-the-park homer. The score was tied.

Backing up the plate, the apparently imperturbable Kid said, "Oh, well, even bushers gotta have some luck, I guess." But he was sweating blood, little nerves jerking like plucked harp strings at the back of his neck. But he whiffed the next Crimson just as calmly as if he hadn't been robbed of a neat ninth-inning victory.

With the Crimson hurler handcuffing the Moguls, the Kid went on through the tenth. The eleventh. The twelfth. And not giving up a hit. The crowd was applauding him every time a man was retired. The thirteenth he opened with a walk. The spring was gone from his arm. But he only bared teeth in a chuckle as the Crimson jockeys ranted that he was tiring. And he set down the next three bat-swingers in order.

In the home half, the Moguls broke through. A walk. A steal of second on a pitch into the dirt. Pillen had the runner bunt-sacrificed to third, following an intentional walk. When the peppery Hain flied to deep left, the man on third dashed home after the catch with the winning run. It was a stirring win.

In the clubhouse the rest of the club felt like forgotten men. The sports writers were jammed around the Kid. He stood smiling lazily as the barrage of queries came at him. A writer said he must have been tired toward the end, at least.

"Don't know." He shrugged. Tired, some, and damn scared a couple of times, he'd been. "Shucks, I was breaking their hearts at the plate. I sorta knew I could go till we got the big run."

Another man said that third-out fly, lost in the sun in the ninth, the fluke homer, must have been a heartbreaker. The Kid pushed back that recalcitrant lock of hair.

"Aw, I just thought of my girl back home, Gloria. How she'd be listening on the radio. So I said to myself, 'Big Boy, you can't let little Gloria hear you get

licked.' That was all there was to it." Like hell, it had been. It had made him feel sick.

His naivete brought a round of chuckles from the scribes. But down the room, Dal Linkler toweled a hair-matted chest and grumbled, "Something's gotta be done about deflating that stuck-up rook." Others nodded.

On a nearby bench, veteran Turk Shurd overheard. His grizzled face stiffened. He knew a ball club's danger signs.

**I**N THE double room he shared with Monk Evans, the coffin-faced right-fielder, Kid Cook sat at the desk writing his daily letter to Gloria, the hometown girl. The gangling Evans, who looked as if held together by wire and spit, came over to bum a cigarette. The Kid always carried a pack. About once a week, he was seen smoking one himself. A couple of puffs, anyway. Monk lighted up, glancing down at the letter that began, "Dearest Baby."

"She doesn't write to you so much," Monk commented.

"Oh, sure." The Kid tapped a pocket. "Just got a long, long letter from her today. Gee, I sure am lucky to have a honey like that with a million-dollar yen for me. A gorgeous redhead. Her dad owns half the town. And she even turned down a Hollywood offer to wait for me! Gosh! Monk, you oughta see her. Long blue-gray eyes and—"

Monk Evans had been through that routine before. He said something about a bowling date and left. A few minutes later Kid Cook flung down his fountain pen and went out.

When Monk returned to the room, he sought the morning paper with the advertisement for those new-style sport shirts. He finally located it in the waste basket. As he opened it up, the torn scraps of the Kid's letter fluttered over the desk. Monk recognized the "Dearest Baby" on one

piece. The outfielder frowned. Monk's eyes switched back to the basket. He bent over it and scooped up scraps of another torn-up letter. Yesterday's, he saw from the date on a severed corner piece. The chambermaid had evidently neglected to empty the waste basket this morning.

Stuffing the torn scraps into a pocket, he went out again. Downstairs in the lobby he sighted Hain and Flip Cotton and Linkler the big catcher. He held the ripped-up letters before them in one of his big hands.

"The Kid's letters—two of 'em—to the gorgeous Gloria," Monk explained. "Found 'em like this in the waste basket. Brothers, I got a hunch Mr. Big Mouth hasn't got a babe at all! I think this Gloria is just part of a big bluff to make himself sound like big-time stuff!"

Eddie Hain funneled a streamer of cigarette smoke from his pursed lips and snorted, "Yak, yak, I smell a rat! If we could only hang that on him publicly and—"

He paused and followed the swiveling eyes of the other three. Pole Yaeger, Mogul first-sacker, sleek hair glistening like black patent leather, was emerging from the hotel grill with his newest flame, Miss Lili Barra. Miss Barra was a torchy little brunette number with starry eyes—a chorus girl at liberty at the present time. Eddie Hain gave a muted wolf whistle as Pole Yaeger convoyed her down the lobby.

"Good evening, ya bums!" answered the Pole. He kept going.

Hain's eyes narrowed thoughtfully as he followed their course. "I got ideas," he said slowly. And when Pole returned after depositing his little hunk of pulchritude in a taxi, Hain handcuffed him and let fly. "Pole, my pal, how about turning your little dream girl loose on Kid Cook?"

Pole snorted. "For why? I got no complaints. She—"

"To cut the Kid down to size," the

shortstop rushed on. "If she could make an eighteen carat fool outa him?" Eddie Hain talked on rapidly.

Practically the whole club was in on it when Pole Yaeger dropped down on the dugout bench beside the Kid before the Blue Sox game the next afternoon. Their ears stood at attention as the Pole fed the bait to the rookie moundsman.

"Say, Kid," Pole led off like a guy asking a favor. "I'm in a little trouble and you can help me. A dame I know is crazy to meet you. She keeps pestering me till I'm crazy, Big Boy."

The Kid smiled in a shy way. "I'm real flattered, Pole. But— Well, I'm engaged to that girl back home, Gloria, so—"

Pole chuckled and dropped a hand on the Kid's knee. "Cripes, Big Boy, I'm not asking you to marry the babe. You see— she's a cousin of a hot dish I'm running around with now. And it would build me up some with that gal if I could get an introduction to you for her cousin. My gal would think I was sorta big stuff then," he larded the bait with flattery. "This cousin, she's not hard to take, either. Real cute. And she goes for you, Big Boy."

The Kid's ears reddened. "I— Well, I could send her an autographed baseball."

"Aw, Kid, it would only take a coupla minutes. She said she'd be down at the hotel after the game today. Gees, won't you help a pal?"

That did it. The Kid agreed to accompany Pole Yaeger back to the hotel after the game.

**H**UNKERED down by the bat rack, Turk Shurd cut his shrewd eyes from the Kid back to Pole Yaeger in the dugout. The veteran Turk had caught the conversational play on the bench. He wondered what was cooking. Pole, the club wolf, was never known to give a teammate an in with any female.

After Davis neatly tamed the Sox, 5-2, with his sinker and sneaky change-up stuff, Pole annexed the Kid and they rode downtown together. The latter suddenly got sheepish as they entered the hotel and tried to bolt. But the big first baseman had a vise-like grip on his left arm. Inside the lobby, Miss Lili Barra, striking in a champagne Shantung ensemble that made her hair glow like black fire, rose languidly from a chair.

"Hello, Toots," Pole greeted her. "Where's your cousin, Jane? This is Kid—"

Lili picked up the relay and carried on from there. She ignored Pole, playing the blue-gray eyes, grave with awe, on Kid Cook. "I don't need to be told who you are, Mr. Cook. I've watched you pitch so many times I feel I really *know* you. But really!"

The Kid surprised himself with a fast snapper. "I just hope the hitters never get to feeling that way about me, Miss Barra."

"I don't think there's much danger. Pole was saying last night that the hitters never get familiar with the Big Boy. Never. My dad back in Potneyville—he's seen you pitch on television—he says you sure can use your brain as well as your arm."

Pole asked where Jane was again. "She's always late for a dinner date. And I'm starving."

"So am I," Lili said suggestively.

"Icsnay, Toots. Jane and I would like to have a little privacy for a change. You go home and raid the icebox, baby." He spoke harshly.

Lili was a good actress. She looked hurt. "Eating by one's self is so lonely," she said in a very small voice.

Kid Cook went overboard. He was surprised at himself when he heard himself inviting her to dinner. When they walked into the push-and-chromium intimate smart spot she suggested, he was over-

awed. The prices on the menu reminded him of a league-leading slugger's batting average. But Lili, giving with the full power of the neon-light glow in her long eyes, soon made him forget everything else but her. She used the ancient but always successful technique of getting him to talk about himself the while she listened with a rapt look. When, leaving her at the door of her apartment house later, the Kid made a dinner date for the next evening, he was a gone goose.

The forenoon after that second date, in the locker room, Eddie Hain showed the Kid an item in one of the Main Stem gossip columns. It went, "Wasn't that Kid Cook, the Mogul mound wonder boy, billing and cooing over dinner at *Le Coq d'Or*, with Lilli Barra, the curvaceous chorine?" Kid Cook glowed with pride. Later, he slipped out to pick up his own copy of the tabloid.

"He's gone for her, hook, line and sinker. He's falling fast," Pole Yaeger confided to the other plotters. "Talked to Lilli on the phone this morning. Last night in the movies he told her she was the most wonderful girl he'd ever known. Ha!"

"That just about proves there's no Gloria," Hain crowed. "Pist! Soft pedal it. Here he comes now. Hi, Don Juan!"

When the Kid took the mound two days later against the Rockets, Lilli was in a box behind the home-club dugout. She

brought a big blush to his boyish face every time he came in after the top of an inning. And he was resolved to show her one of his greatest pitching exhibitions.

"You gotta be a real big star for a girl like that," he told himself as he returned to the mound in the top of the fifth. He had a tidy 2-0 lead, had pitched to only thirteen batters, one over the possible minimum. And he had already racked up six strikeouts. He whiffed the first man to face him to make it seven. He'd forgotten all about pacing himself.

The next man drew a free ticket to first. The runner broke for second on the next pitch. Flip Cotton took Linkler's peg and snapped it on the sliding runner's leg for the out. And then the keystone man went to his knees, hook-nosed face twisted with pain. There was a gash in his right stocking and the crimson of blood from a spike cut leaked through it.

**F**LIP COTTON clambered to his feet, snorting fire and curses as he charged the base runner. Once aroused, the second baseman had a savage temper. On top of that he was a tough customer when he started to pitch the fists. The base umpire jumped between the two men. Pole Yaeger, coming over on the double, tried to haul Cotton off. "You dirty bum!" Cotton spat at the Rocket man.

Then he ripped free of the Pole. But

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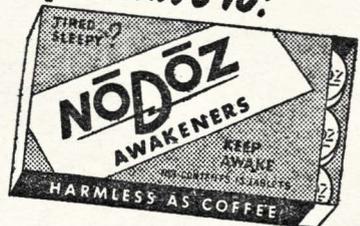
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he was off balance and stumbled sideward as he tried to get at the Rocket. One of his flailing hands caught the umpire on the shoulder as Jess Pillen hustled up from the dugout, too late. The arbiter thumbed toward the clubhouse. Cotton was out of the game for having jostled him. Eddie Hain kicked dirt and spat angrily. The second-sacker was the man they could least afford to lose, because the Moguls lacked a first-class experienced replacement for him. Ellers, a lanky kid up from Baltimore, took over at the keystone. But Kid Cook looked as confident as ever as he returned to the mound and proceeded to retire the side, fanning the last man.

"Take it easy, Kid," the wise Turk Shurd advised when they came into the dugout. "You got four more frames, you know."

The Kid got through the sixth unscathed, though one of his hot-rock pitches was plastered for a double. It was then he realized his arm felt very tired.

It was in the seventh that the loss of Flip Cotton proved costly. With one down, the replacement, Ellers, messed up a blue blazer. The next hitter ran up on a knee-high curve and smashed one to short. Hain came up with it, flipped to second. Ellers, raw and nervous now after his boot, took it as he skipped over the bag to pivot and whip to first. But his hurried throw pulled the Pole off the bag and the hitter was safe. And the base umpire ruled the runner at second safe, too.

"You didn't touch the bag," he said, pointing at Ellers.

It was a heartbreaker. But Kid Cook made himself appear as utterly nonchalant as ever as he went to work on the stocky opposing catcher. He was pushing the ball up there now, snapping his elbow naturally to put the swift on it. Fatigue bit into the flipper like acid after every delivery. The count went to three and one. He sneaked a curve in on the hands for a strike. Then the money pitch, the fast one

Linkler had called for. The Kid put everything behind it.

But it wasn't alive that time. And the Rocket catcher tagged it solidly. It rode into left-center, bounced on the rim of the wall, and fell into the bleachers for a homer. Three runs pushed the visitors into the lead. Kid Cook made the next man roll out to third, swaggered even a little more than normal as he entered the dugout.

"That busher had his eyes closed and horseshoes in his pocket when he slapped that one," he told nobody in particular. He waved off the proffered windbreaker. He was batting second in this inning.

And then he wasn't. For the first man up tagged the Rocket pitcher for a single. Jess Pillen called the Kid back. He saw a pinch-hitter moving out to bat for him. His eyes misted up for a moment. He was going out of the game, and behind in the score. From the clubhouse window, he watched the relief man work the last two innings, giving up no runs. But the last Mogul went down swinging in the bottom of the ninth with the score board still reading 3-2 against the Kid's club. He banged the window sill with a big fist. The defeat would be charged against him.

When he met Lilli again for dinner that night, he felt a little ashamed of himself. But inside half an hour, she had lifted him out of the funk. It wasn't his fault, she told him.

"If that silly substitute second baseman had clicked off the double play, the side would have been out, Martin," she insisted. "He gave them an extra out! It was unfair to you. Why, you were pitching marvelously!"

He took her hand under the table. "Gee, you're sweet!" Afterward, when she insisted on walking home from the movies instead of spending his money on a taxi, he thought she was more wonderful than ever. After leaving her at the apartment, he was sort of dizzy going down the block.

Her arms had clung hard around his neck when he'd kissed her good night. She had rebuilt his self-confidence. He couldn't wait till he saw her tomorrow.

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### Whirlwind Washout

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**R**AIN cancelled the next day's game. The day dragged. But the Kid felt as if the sun beamed on him when he dropped around to take her out to dinner. As usual, he called her apartment from the lobby phone. He was surprised when, in small shaky voice, she asked him to come up. When he entered her small living room with its smart modern decor, he tried to kiss her. But she turned away from him to drop into a chair and dab at her eyes with a wispy bit of handkerchief.

"Lilli, what's the matter? What've I done, honey?" He hung over her, scared and baffled.

"Martin, I guess we'd better not see each other any more." A little sob shook her shoulders.

His unhooked jaw wobbled. He felt as if a line drive had smacked him in the mid-section. "Angel, are you trying to drive me nuts? I—I— Gosh, Lilli, why?"

"I've heard you have a girl back home. A girl you're engaged to."

"Look, Lilli. I can explain. I—" His own voice was tight and hoarse.

She sprang from the chair. "Please, Martin—spare me that!" she cried dramatically. "I'm not going to be any man's back-street woman! His—his temporary plaything! No. Never. You—"

"Lilli! Angel, please let me—"

"You played me for a fool, Martin. Laugh. I believed you, the sweet things you said. But you never told me you were engaged! I've been an idiot. I let you

hold me in your arms. I let you kiss me—kiss me, Martin." Her voice quavered to a heart-tearing falsetto.

He thought he heard the click of a door latch. But that was unimportant now. Desperate, he flung his arms around her waist in his sitting position. She pulled back, but he held on to her.

"Gorgeous, keep quiet! Listen!" And he bared his soul. "There is no home-town girl—no Gloria at all. I never had a girl. Honest, Angel, honest! I've always been scared of them." He gulped and rushed on. "I made her up so the guys on the team wouldn't think I was just a wet kid, a jerk from the backwoods. I even wrote letters to her—letters that I never mailed, Lilli. I—I wanted them to think I was a regular guy who'd been around, sophisticated and—and everything."

She was looking down at him with an enigmatic smile. Her mouth seemed cruel and sneering. But that was impossible. "Do you believe me, Angel?" He rose.

"Cigarette me, Big Boy," she said, pulling a Mae West quote.

He began to smile as he produced his pack, then held a light for her as she put it in her mouth. "Gee, Angel, if I ever lost you—"

And then the harsh jeering laughter, like china cracking, flooded the living room. He jerked around. The bedroom door was wide open now. And in it, almost splitting their sides, were Eddie Hain and Cotton. Behind them towered Pole Yaeger, guffawing.

"So Gloria, the hotcha babe back home, never existed, huh, Big Boy?" Flip Cotton taunted. "Just a myth of a miss, huh?"

Kid Cook's hands balled up into fists. Then Lilli's mocking giggle cut through the laughter. "You poor drip," she said. And the Kid was licked then.

When he walked into the clubhouse the next day, he felt like a man against a wall and spotlighted by a blinding all-exposing beam. He wore a harassed look, face

gutted by the soul torture of hours of aimless wandering on the streets and a sleepless night. He was feeling like the world's greatest clown.

**T**ITTERS ran around the dressing quarters like scampering rats as he proceeded down to his locker. He felt his neck going a turkey red. Somebody began to sing, sotto voice, *Lover Come Back to Me*.

Across the room, Flip Cotton called to another man, "Hey, Gorgeous, lend me that special hip pad the trainer got for you, will you? I'm still bruised from that play the other day."

"Sure thing, *Angel*," the other man came back.

Somehow, the Kid got through the afternoon on the bench, though every so often one man addressed another as "Gorgeous" or "Angel." He knew every detail of his would-be romance was common property on the club now. Hollow-eyed, with a hangdog look, he watched the Moguls cop that one. But it was an expensive victory. For the lank southpaw, number one man of the mound staff, Ace Morenz, split a finger on his throwing hand in the eighth defending himself against a line-drive smash.

That evening the Kid sat unseeing through a double feature movie, then skulked hurriedly through the lobby to his room. He slept, but he felt tired when he reported at the ball park the next day. Pillen named him to pitch the opening game of the Phillies series. And when the Kid took the mound, he was shaky and unsmiling.

He walked the first man. But a great outfield catch and a snappy double play got him out of the frame unscathed. The visitors scored on him in the second after he hit one man in the ribs. His control was as wobbly as a rubber-legged drunk. But Pillen left him in because the Moguls had tallied thrice in the first.

"Ease up," Turk Shurd advised the Kid in the dugout. "You ain't throwing loose like you do normally."

The Kid struggled to do that in the third. He got the first man to pop, fired two blazing strikes past the next. Linkler came out.

"That's the stuff, *Angel*—I mean, Big Boy," he said.

That did it. The oversensitized Kid blew sky high, losing that hitter on a walk. Then a single, and a ringing double.

Gone was the Kid's former nonchalant attitude on the hill. His white-lipped mouth was pulled tight across his face, smileless lips wet from the constant nervous tonguing. Pole Yaeger yipped that they were all behind him, to take it easy. There was no old-time slow wink by the Kid to show he wasn't worried. The mask had been stripped off. The Phillies had jumped into a 4-3 lead by the time Pillen signaled the bullpen into action. When a half-warmed-up reliefer came onto the scene, it was a 5-3 ball game with but one out and runners on second and third. Even as the downcast Kid headed for the clubhouse, a single, following an intentional pass, sent those runners home.

Under the stinging shower, his hurt eyes burned with the hot bitterness of unshed tears. And through the splash of the water he seemed to hear the echo of Lilli's mocking giggles. Throughout the next two days, he was barely aware of anything he did. He saw the Moguls pull out the second contest of the series. But Riggs failed in the third. And in the get-away game on the fourth day, when his starter began to get touched up, Pillen dispatched the Kid to the bullpen. In the fifth frame, with the score knotted at 3-3, Pillen called in Kid Cook when the starter followed up with a single and a walk. The Mogul pilot was desperate to halt the losing streak before it became a real skid. He might as well have tried to plug a gap in a dike with a sieve.

The Kid was promptly rapped for a run-scoring single, wild-pitched in another run, gave up a blazing double. He walked the next hitter on four straight balls. Then he permitted a double steal as, rattled, he took a full wind-up. The usually stoical Pillen stomped out to the mound to take the ball as he called in another pitcher from the bullpen.

"What the hell's chewing on you, Cook?" the pilot barked in the presence of the infielders. "Are you letting that hot romancing of yours interfere with your pitching?" He added some ugly words.

The Kid had no answer. As he walked off he was bit by a barrage of jeers. It was his first such experience in the major leagues. He trudged, broken-spirited, into the clubhouse. He was still putting one foot before the other, blindly, aimlessly, around nine o'clock that evening, when he couldn't stand the thing eating on him any longer. The chagrin. The loss of self-confidence. The feeling of being exposed as a phoney. He turned into a small bar room, ordered a highball, not realizing he was on the block behind the team's hotel.

Five minutes later, in passing, Turk Shurd spotted him. In the hotel lobby, Turk singled out Monk Evans, gave him the crooked finger come-on, and led the way to the elevator. In his room, Turk led off without preamble.

"What's eating on Kid Cook, Monk? What did the bunch pull on him?" When Monk tried to dummy up, the veteran grew rough. "Look, I lent you over four hundred smackers this spring when those card chisellers clipped you. And kept quiet about the fact you'd been breaking the curfew rule. Now—what gives?"

Monk gave in. He told about how they'd got Lilli to make a fool out of the Kid and learned that the Kid's glamorous Gloria back home did not exist. "We just wanted to cut him down to size, Turk. It was harmless and—"

"Harmless?" blasted Turk. "You idiots, you cut him down all right. You've just busted the little guy's heart—and wrecked him as a winning pitcher, ya meatheads! Get the hell outa here!"

**T**URK finally called the room the Kid and Monk Evans shared. A muffled voice said the Kid was out. Turk went down two flights and pounded on the door. When the Kid opened up, Turk said, "Glad to see you got back so soon," and barged in. He made some small talk and then called room service for a couple of drinks.

They came and they drank in silence for a spell. Then Turk said bottoms up, finished his, re-fired his cigar, and opened up. "Kid, I just gave the third degree to one of the boys and got the blueprint. It was a dirty trick they pulled on you."

"It's not bothering me none," the Kid said, jutting his jaw. "I was just unlucky those last two games. I'm not bothered."

"Neither are the batters, Kid."

The Kid's face fell. "Guess I'm through."

"Yeah, I guess so," Turk said, not arguing the point.

The Kid's eyes bulged, then hardened. He muttered, "Aw, hell, I—I'm just a— Aw, I don't know!" It came out then, the whole story of the mythical Gloria and the Lilli affair.

Turk Shurd blew a smoke ring, then a smaller one through it. "Why did you have to create this fictitious doll, Kid?"

"It was all part of the act, Turk."

"Act?"

Kid Cook came to his feet. "Yeah, an act. Because I was scared about coming up to the majors." He strode to the open window, back to Turk Shurd. "I'm sort of a shy Joe, Turk. Like my brother, Hal. And I worry, get sorta shaky when I step onto that rubber. Yeah, even down in the minors. Maybe it's because I want to win

so bad—afraid of losing, maybe. Like Hal. He blew his big chance in the majors about nine-ten years ago—with the Reds. He was a chucker, too. And his nerves licked him. You never heard of him because he didn't last long enough."

He told about Hal. How, because he was so high-strung and lacking in confidence, the majors were too much for him. How he had a world of stuff but would blow sky-high after a few innings. He'd flopped with Cincy. And he'd hit the toboggan even when shipped back to the minors, all confidence permanently shattered. Now he had a small meat market back home.

"I didn't want that to happen to me," the Kid finished it up, voice squeaky with emotion. "That's why I put on the cocksure nonchalant manner—to show 'em I was a big-timer, and not afraid. An act. A bluff, I guess. And I cooked up the girl, Gloria, as part of that act."

"Yeah?" Turk didn't quite get that last.

"Yeah. I've always been afraid of girls, too. So the fellas wouldn't discover that, and so I wouldn't be expected to go around with girls, I made up a fiancée." He wheeled around, twisting a shirt button. "Well, it backfired all right. They showed me up for a phoney. Guess I am."

"The Crimsons would argue with you about that, Kid. Especially when you stopped 'em cold after coming in with the sacks loaded. And there were five straight wins before that. Pillen was figuring to use you maybe twice in the Hawk series coming up. They're getting tough and—"

"*Was* is the word, the right word. I'm washed up—finished." He stomped around. "Shucks, maybe I should've stayed in the boxing game."

"What?"

"Yeah, they said I had possibilities. I was a pretty hot amateur. Fought a few club fights as a pro. Won all but one by kayoes. Middleweight. But they said I

carried the punch of a light-heavy. Then I discovered my true love was baseball, dammit!"

"A puncher, eh," Turk said thoughtfully. He tried to buck the Kid up before he left. "One win and you'll be okay, Big Boy."

But he knew it had a hollow sound. The Kid's faith in himself was shattered. That was the problem. He thought of it again as he woke the next morning and showered. Something had to be done to rebuild the Kid's confidence. But his own hands were tied. He wasn't boss of the club.

The phone tinkled. It was the business office. Jess Pillen had been checked into the hospital for a few days for treatment of that sinus condition. He, Turk Shurd, would be in charge of the club in the interim.

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### 3

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#### Rookie on a Hook

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OVER his breakfast downstairs, Turk tried to think what he could do about the Kid. With Ace Morenz on the shelf and the Kid failing to win, the club was on the verge of a bad skid. The next few games could make or break them.

Turk shoved aside his food and lighted up one of his cigars. A couple of tables over, Flip Cotton was telling a couple of other players about one of his numerous field brawls.

A few seconds later, Turk was on his feet and trailing Cotton and his party out of the dining room. A vague idea about revitalizing Kid Cook's ego was taking shape in his mind. Cotton, the rough-tough lad of the league. And the Kid, though twenty pounds lighter, with ring experience and a heavy sock. Out in the

lobby, the new acting manager drew the second-sacker aside.

"Look, Flip, I'd soft-pedal that fight talk if I were you," he told him. "Big Boy is pretty damn sore. It seems he thinks you were the brains behind that gag with the Lilli doll." Flip Cotton shook his head. Turk went on, "Well, anyway, he's convinced you were the ring leader. And he's sore."

Flip bristled. "Anytime he wants trouble—"

"Easy, Flip," Turk applied the needle. "I was just giving you a tip. Down in the minors they tell how the Big Boy had a punch like a mule's kick. I was just giving you a friendly warning." He moved off.

Before they went out of the park, Turk got the Kid off to one side.

"Big Boy, you got to forget that dam-fool incident!"

The Kid shrugged. "I've tried. It's no good. It all comes back every time I look down at Linkler to get the sign. He seems to be sneering, laughing at me from behind the mask. It's no good."

Turk looked glum over his cigar stub. "I'm sorry, Kid. Because of some of the talk that's going around. They're saying you're yella."

"What?" The Kid's hackles rose a little. "Who?"

"Well, Flip Cotton mostly. He's a tough win-or-die ball player, you know. He had his heart set on getting into the Series. And now— Well, he's saying you're letting the club down in the clutch. That you're short on the old moxie!"

The Kid's eyes narrowed. "That wise-guy bum's spreading that snow about me?" He looked down at a fisted hand. "Why I'll—"

"Easy, Kid. Just keep out of his way. He's tough."

Out at the park, before they went out for the pre-game drill, the shrewd acting pilot played his final card. He emerged

from the manager's office to face the locker room full of players, some half-dressed, lounging around, batting the breeze. Kid Cook sat in a chair by a window, staring listlessly out at the park.

Turk waved a crooked-fingered meat-hand for silence. "I'm not going to give you guys any of that pep talk jive. See? Let's just get out on that field and hustle! But there is one thing. Somebody's started talk around that a certain player is yellow!" He stared at Flip Cotton.

"Now that's a damn serious thing to say about a man. Especially when the guy in question is bucking hard luck and happens to be in a losing streak."

Turk concluded, "That's all. But that kinda talk had better be stopped. Because if it isn't, that somebody with the big mouth is going to get slapped around, I'm afraid. See? That's all." He re-entered his office, slamming the door loudly behind him.

"YOU'VE gone too darn far, Cotton," the Kid said, piping voice shaky with emotion. "I got a good mind to—"

Cotton glared around that big beak of nose, smirking. "Ya dumb lippy rook, I didn't start it!" he flared back, thinking the Kid was charging him with cooking the Lilli set-up. "But if you want trouble, pally—"

The Kid's sensitive nostrils narrowed as he sucked in air. "You're a lousy liar, Cotton!" After all, Turk Shurd himself had told him Cotton was spreading the word he was yellow.

Cotton's spikes scraped on the concrete floor as he shifted his feet for the blow. Then his open hand made a flat sound as it whipped across the Kid's mouth. It was very still for the space of several pulse beats. And then the war was on with a bang and Flip snarling, "Gimme fighting room, you guys!"

He rushed, pitching those wicked hooks.

The Kid backed, spearing him expertly with a left. Then he came up against a bench and almost toppled. One of Cotton's milling fists thudded off his jaw. But the spying Turk smiled as the Kid rolled with it like a professional. Cotton was wild with swings around the head. The Kid sledged him with a short inside right. Before he could get off his heels the Kid's rapier of a left was working on him.

Baffled, cursing through a bleeding mouth, Cotton kept bulling in, swinging. They stood and swapped against a locker front. A grunt came from Cotton as a left dug wrist-deep in his mid-section. He stood pawing. There was a clean cold click. And Cotton went down as if somebody had pulled a rug from under him. He lay still.

When Turk Shurd emerged from the office, they were bringing him around with wet towels and smelling salts. Turk bluffed a glare. "A row, eh! All right, it's a fifty buck fine for you Cotton—and you too, Cook!" He felt hopeful though, as he led the club onto the field. Before the dugout, he turned on the rook.

"Start to warm up, Kid! I'm starting you."

The Kid hesitated a long moment before he finally shook his head. "You'll only kill the team's chances, Turk. Every time I gotta look down at Linkler, I—Well, I told you."

"You won't have to look at him. I'm catching you, Kid!" To himself he said, "And, oh, my aching knees."

THE stadium throng was still buzzing with surprise at the announcement of the Mogul battery, Kid Cook and Shurd, when the Kid fired in his opening pitch. The hot rock, low. But it was too fat, lacking hop. The Hawk lead-off bludgeoned it. It curved foul by a few feet just before it dropped into the left-field stands. The Kid gagged and got

his heart down out of his throat. The cold unnatural sweat leaking from every last pore made him shiver inside the uniform.

Turk Shurd's husky coaxing voice came through the boos of fans who felt cheated by the fact that Cook was on the mound. "The busher never knew he hit it, Kid! Easy, now, easy, Big Boy. Feed it to me!"

The Kid tried. Whanged his arm savagely behind each delivery, pressing, pressing, all tightened up. He threw three balls, one of them into the dirt. He was fighting his high-strung nervous system, fighting stripped of all but one last ounce of confidence. He did manage to get the "take" ball in there for a strike. Turk came halfway out to appeal to that ounce of newly regained confidence, calling, "Give him your old kayo punch this time, Big Boy!"

The Kid cut his eyes back over his shoulder to Cotton, who was playing with a bloated lip. The Kid's confidence inched up. He'd whipped the rough-tough Flip Cotton, anyway. What the hell! He flashed a hot jug-handle curve in there. The hitter splashed an easy one to third.

But he lost the second man as his control wobbled, gave him a walk after four foul balls. The *plop* of thrown balls came from the bullpen. The third Hawk swinger lined out to Hain. But the bees were buzzing in the Kid's abdomen. The guy had teed off on one of his hot-rock pitches. He missed twice and then came in with one too fat. Red Hallock, left-handed Hawk clean-up man, crashed it off the short right-field wall. Hain took the relay in, wheeled, hesitated. The fleet Hawk runner was around third and going all the way. He slid in safely.

"There he goes! Watch the big romance guy blow!" chanted the Hawk bench jockeys.

The Kid sank his teeth into his lower lip. So somebody had passed the story along to the Hawks. He'd be the joke of

the whole league. He stood shaking. His weak curve plunked the batter, putting two men on. Fans began to jeer. The Kid tried in vain for the old nonchalant look, the little smile. It was lonely on that mound. His soupbone felt stiff and wooden. And he tried to sneak the swift over the outside corner.

There was the pistol-like report as the ash met the ball. A grounder slashed like a rocket between first and second. He pinched his eyes closed an instant. "The swan song will be finished in the showers, folks," he said to himself. Then he opened his eyes to see the base runner halted between first and second and clutching an ankle. The hit ball had struck him for an automatic out. The Kid groaned inwardly. It only meant prolonging the torture.

"Get loose, Big Boy," Turk said as he dropped down beside him on the bench. "You're pressing. Just wham that apple in there and stop caring!"

**H**E GOT a chance to try it quickly as Monte Purl of the Hawks subdued the Moguls in order after lead-off Cotton got a single. Purl was a big powerhouse of a guy, bull-strong, experienced, with a sinker pitch as the siege gun of his repertoire. And he could hit, as he demonstrated a few moments later. Struggling to relax, to regain his old easy motion, the Kid walked the first man, went to three and one on the next hitter. He

had to come in with a curve and the "take" wasn't on. A blooper for a hit behind second. And then Purl stepped up and rattled a double off the left-field wall, sending in two tallies.

A 3-0 ball game. And none down. He stood sleeving his forehead, looked at Turk Shurd imploringly. Turk didn't even come out. He just signed for another curve. A twisting foul behind first. Pole Yaeger got his glove on it, then dropped it. The Kid went red-neck then, slamming down his glove and kicking dirt. He wasn't mad at Pole. It was Lady Luck he hated. Here he was out here, fighting bats and himself, battling to prove himself a pitcher. And even the breaks went against him!

There were three pitches that failed to find the plate. He walked in to meet Turk. "Derrick me, Turk," he pleaded. "Put in the bat boy. Anybody but—"

Turk spat into the dirt. "I haven't signed the bullpen—and I'm not going to. Maybe it's because I believe in you. Get pitching!"

He couldn't quit on Turk. He'd throw till he got brained by a line drive or mobbed by the fans. The idea sort of loosened him up. A smoking curve at the knees. The hitter had to go for it. It was an easy chance for Hain. One down. The Kid went on, keeping his stuff low. A hard shot at the mound. He knocked it down, faked Purl back to second, threw

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out the man at first. Two down. Lips ripped back from his teeth, waiting for the roof to fall in, he went full up on the next hitter, then got him on a swinging third strike. There was a splash of applause from the stands.

"You got three men in a row that time," Turk said.

*And it's three runs against me,* the Kid thought.

When he took the hill for the top of the third, the Moguls had only a two-run deficit. Purl had gotten careless and Crusso had powered a fat one into the bleachers.

The first man got to him for a clean single. Turk's easy coaxing voice carried from behind the plate. But the rest of the club were as voluble as a bunch of pallbearers. Somehow he got through that frame. In trouble all the way—always behind on the hitters.

He saw Cotton studying him stealthily. Monk Evans trotted in and said, "That's holding 'em, Big Boy."

"Yeah." The Kid said it toughly. He cut his eyes at Cotton again. Well, he'd done *that* anyway.

A little hope sprouted inside him as the first man got on. Turk gave the hit-and-run sign after he himself struck out. But the hitter slapped into a twin killing. The Kid went out and pitched the top of the fourth. Somehow, it was a little easier this time. His curve whipped in there more sharply. And Turk's pick-off peg on a runner who'd advanced as far as second took him out of any trouble. The Moguls were talking about putting "the wood to that bum" as they came to bat. They got a couple of men on. But one would-be run was pinched off at the plate. And Purl came through with a strike-out to throttle the threat.

**T**HE Kid set down the opposition in order in the fifth for the first time, two infield outs and a foul pop-up to Turk. Somehow his arm didn't

feel at all tired when he came in that time.

"That's giving them the old gimmick," Turk told him with a pat on the back. "You're looser now. Stick it—we'll get you some runs."

When the Kid went to the plate with one down and a man on first, Turk Shurd addressed the bench from the side of his mouth as he stood on the dugout step.

"When are you zombies going to come outa the fog?" he threw at them disgustedly. "You've damn near ruined your own chances by trying to cut the Kid down to size. Now, he's fighting to fight back out there on that mound. Trying like hell! And ya bums act like a bunch of tongue-tied ribbon clerks. Yah!"

"Whatta you mean—ruined our own chances?" Pole asked.

Turk answered as the Kid, on orders, tried futilely to lay down a bunt the second time. That one rolled foul. The bunt would be off now, of course, with a third strike coming up.

"What I said," Turk spat back. "You big shots were green-eyed because the rook was going hot and not apologizing for it. Because maybe he strutted some. So ya pulled that dame gag on him. Made a damfool outa him. And ya stripped him of his confidence, ya meatheads!"

A pause as the Kid out there checked his swing and took ball two. Purl and the Hawks staged a rhubarb on that call.

"Ya can't make a laughing stock of a poor kid, then expect him to step onto that mound in the spotlight and pitch good. No! You dopes just kicked yourselves in the tail—and maybe the pennant, too!"

"Geez, I never thought of it that way," Eddie Hain said thoughtfully. "We just—"

The crack of a hit stopped him. The Kid had scratched a single off the third-sacker's glove. The runner chest-slid safely into third as the Kid made first. Cotton was at the plate. And the Hawk infield played it deep to try for the double

play. Cotton took a ball. He was off as Cotton connected. But the latter couldn't lift the sinker pitch. The Hawk shortstop knocked it down, flipped to second for the force-out. The Hawk keystone man had to reach for the wide throw and side-armed it low onto first as he spun.

The digging Kid knew he was out. He saw the throw coming. And he made a split-second decision. Straightening a little from his doubled running position, he let the throw plunk him just inside the left shoulder. The fans yelped as they saw him break up the double play to allow the second Mogul run to score from third. And then Monk Evans stepped in there and slashed a double off the discomposed Purl to score Cotton from first. The score was knotted. And old Turk hugged the Kid in front of the dugout.

"You just gave yourself a new ball game, Big Boy! A *new* game! Come on—let's tame 'em now," he added as the next man popped.

**I**T SEEMED impossible that he'd gone this far without getting his ears pinned back. And it *was* a fresh ball game at 3-3. He could scarcely believe it. He pitched to the first hitter. And it was a wild heave, wide, going all the way back to the barrier.

"Just feed it in, Big Boy," Turk cajoled from behind the iron-ribbed mask. "This guy only hits from memory, pally."

The Kid got a curve in, sharp. A slow hopper to the left of the hill. He got in front of it easily. And the ball skidded off the heel of his glove and ran up his arm. When he tamed it, it was too late for even a throw. Then, from somebody in the infield, came, "Okay, Big Boy, okay! We're all behind ya, mister."

Eddie Hain trotted in. "You're pitching a great game, Kid. Honest! So don't let that li'l ol' miscue get ya down!"

The Kid just stared. It seemed impossible. And then Yaeger was bawling en-

couragement from first. The Kid blinked. They were behind him. And they seemed to mean it. As he checked Turk's sign, he sucked in a great gasp of air and the chest didn't seem to hurt so much.

"Chuck it in here, busher, and pull in your ears!" snarled the dangerous Red Hallock, up there again.

The Kid sneered back at him. Gone forever were the old cocky gestures, the superior smile, the negligent attitude. He was a pitcher fighting to check his skid back to the minors. Fighting to come back with a lamed ego. He was in there smoking fast to the inside to loosen up Hallock. A curve that Hallock fouled back to the wire. Then, old Turk called for a pitch-out as he caught a Hawk sign, smelled a hit-and-run or a steal. He took the pitch and whammed it to second, Hain covering against a left-handed hitter. The base umpire ruled the Hawk speedster safe. And Flip Cotton rushed out to stage a hot rhubarb.

"You blind bat!" he howled at the ump. "Eddie had the ball on him by a foot! Were ya watching the play outa your glass eye, huh?" He gesticulated with waving arms. One struck the runner standing on the sack. He promptly pushed Cotton back in retaliation. The smart Hawks weren't averse to getting him thrown out of the game if possible. Flip's glove bounced in the dust. And his cap flew off as he pivoted, hands balled up.

"Why you two-bit fugitive from the sandlots, who the hell do you think you're pushing?" Flip bawled. He thrust away Eddie Hain who'd jumped between them, advanced.

Without quite realizing it, Kid Cook ran over from the mound. "Pick up your glove and play ball, Flip," he snapped. "Play ball—or I'll put the slug on you again when we get inside."

Flip Cotton stood staring with jaw unhinged. The Kid could see the gold-capped crown on one of his molars. His nostrils

flared. Then, muttering something under his breath, he retrieved his glove and stalked back to position.

**B**ACK on the rubber, the Kid looked down the alley at menacing Red Hallock. And suddenly Hallock didn't look so big. Neither did his bat. The Kid felt like that "Big Boy" he used to call himself. Then he knew it; it came to him for the first time. He was boss of this ball game, the head man.

The fans really hit their feet and strained their tonsils with welling waves of sound. But the Kid was not surprised that he had fanned Hallock on three more pitches. Somehow, he had known he would. And that runner never departed from second till it was time for the Hawks to take the field. For the Kid made the next two hitters pop to the infield. He strode solemnly to the dugout, ignoring the cheers. Three more frames. Maybe more. Sure that chest hurt on every pitch. But he was going to go the route.

He was up yelling with the others as the now pepped-up Moguls cheered a clean single off Purl. A sacrifice moved the runner to second. And then Turk Shurd, due to hit next, abruptly changed his mind as he came back from the plate. He had yet to get on safely today. With his aged legs it really was necessary for him to pump a clean one into the outfield to get on. He jerked a thumb at rangy Dal Linkler.

"Go in and hit, chum. And get a hit," he added in a grave voice.

The Kid sat there, swallowing hard. With Turk out it meant that Linkler would receive him the rest of the game. He couldn't even yell—because of that cold sodden lump inside him—when the regular backstop crashed a single into left-center to make it a 4-3 game in favor of the Moguls. He'd have to look down at Linkler on every delivery.

Then there was the third out and he was back there on the mound. Turk had

walked out with him. And the shrewd acting manager, after a few warm-up tosses, said off-handedly.

"Nice stuff the way you shut up Cotton when that rhubarb started, Big Boy. Even Linkler there was impressed. One night last season, Cotton beat his ears off in a hotel room. Yeah." He gripped the Kid's arm. "Just keep loose. Gosh, I need a cigar!" He went off. He'd just told one damn big lie.

In the ninth, he was loose as a goose. A little treatment with the trainer's heat lamp and that chest injury would be gone, he told himself. This was his ball game; he dominated it. He faced three men, got the first on an infield roller, the second on a called third strike, a curve that buzzed in there like a dive-bombing mosquito doing a wing-slip. And then he threw four pitches to the last man. No more were needed as an exultant Dal Linkler ran out to make him a present of the ball. For three of those pitches had been strikes.

Before the dugout, his teammates almost mobbed him, yapping away, hugging him. Their skid had been halted. With Morenz on the shelf, their other mound ace had fought back to winning form. Everything was great. The Kid grinned a little, mumbled, "They were pretty tough in spots, I'll admit." He pulled on the windbreaker. He wanted to be off alone for a spell to bask in the warmth of this new-found thing inside him.

His pitching heart had been broken. And he had battled back out of the shadows of failure to prove himself to himself. To convince himself more than ever before he was a big-time hurler. There was no swaggering as he went up the foul line toward the clubhouse. He had been through the fire. He knew himself now. And no longer did he feel like a slightly unsure rook who had to bluff.

His eyes lighted on a trim little blonde in a linen suit in the nearby field box. The Kid gave her a wink. She winked back.

# HELL-BUSTER

— *“When you’re throttling a hunk of hell down the devil’s own water and there’s one lap to go, remember—you can win, lose or die—but you don’t give way to anybody!”* —

And then he was on the pole, missing the buoy’s bright orange paint by inches. . . .



By  
**JOHN  
PRESCOTT**

**Y**OU never know when it might happen, when that big break might come along. You’ve been knocking yourself out for years trying to make your own breaks, because you’ve heard that’s the way most of them come, but right now you’ve about reached the end of your tether. It’s all frazzled on the end, there, and your grip is slippery.

It’s slippery like the cockpit of the hydroplane in which you’re all hunched up

and tired out, smeared with the sticky-sweet castor oil from the busted oil line, and alternately hot from the heat coming up from the Ford conversion simmering beneath the hatch, and cold and shivering from the bath of highly volatile fuel which is raising little goose bumps on your bare arms and chest as it evaporates in the summer breeze.

You’re tired and dead-beat and fed to the ears, because the boat you built with

a lot of love and not much money, and the Ford you re-tooled and re-blocked all by yourself during one winter in a draughty garage has all gone blooey. And it didn't have to be that way, you tell yourself, because you could have quit your race in the middle of it and coasted back into the pits and called it a day. But you didn't do that.

You stayed out there with the rest of them, booming down the long stretches, cascading into the rough, wrenching turns, scating along at seventy miles an hour until it was all over. Until it quit cold. And for all that you got a big hand from a thrill-crazy crowd, the dubious satisfaction that you weren't a quitter—and a thoroughly ruined race boat.

**I**T'S ruined. You know that. You sit there in the slop and the greasy water that's sloshing around in the bilge and you stare at the instrument panel and you see that the temperature gauges are still beyond the red. And your eyes move a little and you see where the white enamel of the smooth deck is all scorched and blackened from the blazing heat that roared back in an orange torrent from the stacks. You see all around the hatch where the rest of the enamel is deckled with brown and black boils from the overheated block beneath.

You stare at these manifestations of ruin, gradually comprehending what they all mean, and your mind, still singing the echo of the raving engine, absorbs those other sounds coming into it from all around you—the frantic, razzing note of another boat going out of the pits and onto the course for the next heat; the metallic resonance of a public address system somewhere back in the stands and the flat, door-slamming sound of the five-minute gun out on the committee barge.

And you sigh bitterly, only you can't hear it now because all the other boats are barking and snarling out onto the

course, and you clamp your hands around the wheel and twist it a little from side to side. You corded that wheel once, neatly, with meter cord, to keep your hands from slipping when they got spray-soaked, but it doesn't make much difference now because it's all smeared with the castor oil and the stuff squeezes out between your fingers and along the backs of your hands.

You just sit there, feeling the stuff ooze beneath your palms, and after a minute or two it gets more or less quiet. The boats are far down the course and there's only the persistent buzzing in your head. And then someone's talking to you. It's a voice you've never heard before, but it's a distinctive voice, cultured, with each of the words neatly packaged.

"Hello, Billy Shipton," it says.

And you look next to you there at the pit-side and you see this guy hunkered down in neat flannels looking at you and at your boat. He's just like his voice, smooth and competent and with a moneyed assurance. For a minute you're startled, because you know who he is. You've seen that tanned face and easy composure before, but only at a distance, and sometimes in the papers and yachting mags. You know you're only two feet away from a million bucks.

"Hello, Billy Shipton," the guy says again. "My name's Tony Garrick." But the guy doesn't have to tell you who he is, and it's a mark of modesty or self-effacement that he does. Because you know who he is, and you're struck dumb for a minute because you can't get used to the idea that Tony Garrick is squatting down there on the sodden planks to talk to you.

"I liked your race," he's saying. "I liked the way you stayed in there. I could use you if you cared to drive for me."

"Drive for you?" You know you sound like a parrot, just repeating what he's saying, because the whole thing is too far above you and you're still trying to

grasp the fact that the greatest name in speedboat racing is right there next to you, talking to you. You hear what he's saying, but it doesn't make sense. He's saying it again, then, and it begins to sink in.

"How about it, Shipton?" and he's smiling too, a nice smile, as though he understands what's in your mind. "Can you be in Detroit the first of the week? I mean it, Shipton. I can use your driving for my outfit."

And suddenly your mind is a pinwheel, and before you know it you've flung one of those oily hands at him and he, laughing now, grabs it and shakes it a few times. And while you're still sitting there trying to mumble something or other he's up on his feet again and giving you a nice wave as he goes out of the pits and up the embankment. You sit there and watch him go. It's too much to assimilate all at one gulp, but you realize dimly that this is one of those breaks you've been dreaming of and that you had given up all hope of ever seeing.

And then, somehow, you're all slack and queasy inside, because you're moving up to the big time, and you know you've got no business up there whatsoever.

**I**T WAS a wonderful Monday morning, Billy Shipton decided. It was warm and pleasant, with a soft caress in the air and a limitless depth to the blue sky. But then it could have been blowing a howling gale, with lightning pitchforking thunderheads all over the sky and the rain slatting in horizontal sheets across the ground and it would have been one and the same.

The weather had nothing to do with it, but because it was fine, and because the water of Lake St. Clair, where the Garrick engineering plant was sprawled, was aglitter with the sun it made him feel just that much better.

Billy stood there in front of the entrance

to the steel and plate-glass edifice which seemed to stretch away to either side as far as he could see. It was overwhelming, but when he remembered that Garrick engines were used in a good many of the airplanes in the country, thirty or forty per cent of the pleasure boats, and an even greater number of the trucks and busses, he wasn't surprised, only awed.

He stood there for another moment before he remembered the directions he'd gotten by phone from the depot, and then he gripped his light valise a little tighter and began to walk around to one side, along a wide, concrete drive that went down to the shore of the lake. He was going to get right to work, it seemed—right into the middle of it the first day, sink or swim. And they were waiting for him.

Hank Canon was the first one he recognized. He could never miss Hank Canon, because even if he'd never seen him before, which he had, he'd know him from

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having seen his face on a whole string of cigarette and soft-drink testimonials; in the newspapers and Sunday supplements, sitting in the cockpit of a Garrick boat either before or after busting some world record wide open. Hank Canon always had a wide, breezy smile, and despite his girth, which was considerable, there was a muscular agility about him that was deceiving. He was in his early forties, but the smile belied that.

"Hello, kid," he said. "You're Billy Shipton, I'll bet."

Billy came out of his daze suddenly and realized that he had walked all the way down to the shore and was standing on a wide, low pier in front of Hank Canon. There were others around, too, mechanics, he guessed, and there were a pair of Gold Cup boats riding easily on the ruffled water alongside.

"Yes, sir," he said, a little uncertainly.

Canon laughed. "Let's not have too much of that," he said. Then, "Turn around, let me look at you."

Billy turned, slowly, and felt his ears get all red and puffy. His clothes weren't too good. They were pressed and cleaned, but that was about all. It was embarrassing to undergo this scrutiny. Canon startled him by patting his hips.

"How much, Billy? About one-seventy? That's a nice weight for these things."

"One-seventy-three," Billy said. He laughed lightly, and felt better for it. "You're pretty good at that."

"I guess I ought to be one of those carnival weight-guessers," Canon said. "I'm so used to stewing about my own lard that it sort of comes second nature."

Billy couldn't think of anything to say to that, so he became interested in one of the Gold Cuppers at the side of the pier. It was a beautiful boat, the most beautiful he'd ever seen—gleaming mahogany, about twenty feet of it, wide, flaring spars and a long engine hatch which looked like it had about twelve hundred horse-

power. It was a hundred-mile-an-hour proposition, and it took some of his breath away, just looking at it.

"I guess there's no time like the present," Canon said at his elbow, and he felt the valise being removed from his hand. "Hop in. She's all yours."

**B**ILLY'S hands became all thumbs, and the relatively simple operation of removing his suit coat and putting on the life vest and crash hat became something like an underwater nightmare. He did everything but fall off the pier. But Canon appeared not to notice anything at all. He stood looking out across the water at the bright buoys of the five-mile rectangular course, talking slowly and casually about the boat, whose name, it seemed, was *Banshee*.

"Billy," he said. "You drive this Gold Cup boat just like any other boat, just like that 225 that burned up on you. *Banshee*, here, is a little bigger and a little faster, but that's all. And remember, every minute you're out there, you're the boss. There's nothing more to it than that."

Billy was nodding and listening and lowering himself into the leather-lined pit. An instrument panel of a thousand, unblinking, hostile eyes stared up at him; strange levers and handles and switches prodded him, bumped his knees, but volunteered no inkling of their purpose. Only the wheel and throttle were familiar to him, and the solid buoyancy of the hull in the water.

"A lot of these gadgets don't mean a thing for the present," Canon said as he wheezed to his knees on the pier. "You won't need your blower for this run—just the throttle. That's all." He moved a lever forward and then back. "Reverse gear," he said. "Everything else will pretty much take care of itself. Okay?"

Billy croaked an "Okay," and when Canon got to his feet again on the pier Billy cautiously started the engine. It was

a sudden, booming roar, a startling thing that transcended anything he'd ever heard before. But there was no time, then, for reminiscence, for he was jammed abruptly into the howling present, and *Banshee* was skating away from the pier and out onto the course.

The soft, friendly water became a cast-iron washboard. He felt the hard pounding of the hull like he'd never felt it before, and there was no give, no resilience. The air created by the speed of his passing smashed at his face and chest, whipped the looseness of his shirt sleeves in a stinging flutter on his arms and poured into his throat and lungs in a dry, rushing torrent. It swirled beneath the goggles and brought tears spilling along his cheeks. He was on the course, then, and letting *Banshee* out.

She traveled like a far-gone maniac, moving forward with increasing gusts of power as Billy's hand shoved the throttle up. She cut her leash in leaps and bounds, lifting high up on her sponsons, driving her transom up to the top of the boiling wake; and the wailing engine was begging for more from Billy's hand. He gave it and she took it with a scream of triumph, only to relinquish it with swearing reluctance as he cut the speed to enter the first turn.

Billy went in fast, too fast, and he was swearing along with the *Banshee's* wail when the turn of the screw blasted him far beyond the buoy and he fought the wheel with startled arms to wrench her into a raking slide. With the throttle dead she came up sharp and he felt the chines trip hard on the far side and watched the white water geyser far up in the shining air and trail back aft to merge with the high rooster tail that ridged the broad wake.

She was out, then, suddenly, throttle up and broadsiding around and into the stretch on the far side. The stretch was long and Billy let her have her head, sit-

ting up straight with his head tight against the rest and with the wind beating him and funneling into his nostrils. He felt loose and shaky from the turn, but it was better now. He knew what she could do, and it was a technical matter of control. She would be no cinch for that—not by a long shot.

HE WAS cautious now. He kept a firm grip on her arm, and while he let her loose on the long stretches, feeling the healthy satisfaction of her smooth planking on the lake, he buttoned her down tight on the turns. He took them close, but slow, and when she argued for her head he kept the curb bit in her teeth and brought her into the stretches relaxed and breathing easy.

He took four laps that way, four after the first wild one, and when he'd reeled off twenty-five miles he swung her away from the course and brought her into the pier. She died gracefully, the engine sighing away into silence and the hull becoming softly buoyant and loose to control again. When he drew in closer he cut the switch and sat numb and tingling in the pit while Hank Canon took the lines and fended the boat away from the hard planking.

Slowly, and with realization that the ride had beat him out, he removed the crash hat and worked his way out of the jacket. When he put them on the pier he became aware that Canon was watching him thoughtfully. But when he faced him, Canon's grin was there again.

"She's some boat," Billy said, and his voice sounded distant and subdued because the roaring of the engine had been a deafening thing.

"She seem sluggish to you?" Canon asked. He had the hatch open and he was peering down at the sputtering and crackling engine. Billy climbed out of the pit and stood spraddle-legged on the pier.

"Sluggish? Why, no. I thought she

had more pep than anything I ever saw before. As a matter of fact I cut her down some after the first lap. I guess I'm not used to that much zip."

Hank Canon lowered the hatch and smiled. And watching him, Billy knew that Canon was playing with him.

"That's okay, Billy," he said. "I know she wasn't sluggish. She's one of the best we've ever had. Just remember that no one around here expects you to go out there and hang up a new mark—not right away, anyway. From what Tony Garrick told me you've got plenty on the ball, but we won't expect too much of that just now. Not until Saturday at least."

"Saturday? You mean there's competition Saturday?"

"That's right, Billy. And close your mouth, you can catch a cold that way."

**S**ATURDAY in Cincinnati. Billy had always liked Cincinnati and he thought that the big Union Depot and the hotels and parkways were beautiful things. He saw all those things with an eye that was only half-hearted in its appreciation. He was glumly considering the futility of pitting himself, even in a Garrick boat, against the cream of the country's drivers—old hands like Curly Ross, Stoney Jacobs, Burt Hench, Tommy Snate and no telling how many others.

"Stoney Jacobs is a hanger-back," Hank Canon was saying. "He likes to sit back in third or maybe fourth for a bit to see how things get started. But you've got to be careful of him, because you never know when he's going to turn the heat on if you're in his way. Even so, Billy, don't forget he's only flesh and blood just like the rest of 'em."

Canon's voice faded away somewhere, and Billy was in the *Banshee* and suddenly Stoney Jacobs' boat was driving its knife-sharp bow through the *Banshee's* stern a million miles an hour. He blinked his eyes and stared hard at the approaches

to the river bank. He heard some talking and he was again aware of Canon.

"Hey, kid, you hear what I've been saying? What you looking at out there. You better snap out of it, whatever it is, kid."

Billy ran his hand over his face self-consciously, dug his knuckles into his eyes, and felt himself coloring.

"I'm sorry," he said. He looked at Canon, but the other man was easing the car and trailer down the slope to the river. His face was suddenly dark and unsmiling, and Billy thought it was the first time he had ever seen Hank Canon being unfriendly.

It was all Billy had feared. It began with a late start, because the weather had been doubtful, and the five-minute gun had been delayed so many times that when they finally did touch it off Billy had a good case of the fidgets.

And out there on the river it got worse. Out there on the Ohio there was a raving tempest of sound and fury; high-flying showers of white spray, sudden streamers of blue smoke, rough, back-breaking crests from the wakes of speeding boats, and over all the clamoring and deafening discordance of ten Gold Cup boats all jammed into a wild maelstrom at one end of the five-mile rectangle, milling around for the one-minute gun.

It sounded, at last, and the boats broke for the line.

Billy was deep down at the end, fighting the *Banshee* across the cross-chop, swiveling his head in ten different ways at once and trying to maintain something in the way of position for the starting gun. As it was, he was so busy with all this, and trying to keep a frantic eye on Hank Canon's boat, that he missed the gun entirely. It was only the sudden uncoiling of the boats for the line that told him what was going on. He was eighth when *Banshee* shot by the green flag.

After that everything seemed to raise

to a different level of consciousness. There was the blaring background of incessant sound, the white and silvery clouds of mist, the sudden coming and going of bright sheets of water and the plunging shapes of other boats that loomed up at his side abruptly in the stretches, pressed in close and then crowded him into agonizing proximity with the buoys in the wide, bucking broadsides.

He fought them where he could and dared, and gave way to them when there was nothing else he could do. He had no idea of his position in the heat, but once he thought he traveled neck and neck with Stoney Jacobs, and another time Tommy Snate went by him like a ghost run wild.

They were all around him there, all the big names from the big time, fighting, scrapping, blocking, throwing him on the defensive and keeping him there. And he was not one of them. He was the lanky kid from the tanktowns and the one-shot Fourth of July regattas. He was a rank tyro blown suddenly from a sixty-seventy mile an hour home-made skow into a custom-tailored racing machine that traveled with the speed of light and made the sound of a thousand thunderstorms in its passing.

How long that screaming chaos lasted he was never sure. But it was an interminable number of nightmare hours that rolled over him in battering, spray-lashed profusion before it ended. And then, astonishingly, it was all over, and there was only the tightness in his head, the ringing in his ears and the liquidity of his limbs and muscles as he sat shaking in the *Banshee* at the side of the pit.

There was an angry hissing of the engine in the hatch, and a steady, soft drumming sound that he could not at once define. Hank Canon, was standing above him, his hands on his wide hips, his expression cold and white marks of strain around his lips.

"I'm sorry," Billy said. "I guess I got off to a bad start." It was pitifully inadequate, but there was nothing else to be said. The feeling of it went into his hands and he squeezed the wheel viciously.

"Being sorry doesn't win races, kid," Canon said. He was speaking in a flat, level voice. "I told you once I didn't expect you to set the world on fire right away, but I didn't expect you to fall asleep out there either. What's the matter, anyway? Didn't you remember what I told you about those guys? That flesh and blood stuff?"

"I'll do better next time," he said heavily.

"Listen, Billy," and Hank Canon was down on the planks of the pit. "Next time is the Divisionals. We've got to qualify these two boats in the Divisionals or we don't go to the Nationals. And there's not been one year in the last twenty when Garrick didn't have two boats in the Nationals."

"Okay." Billy ran his tongue around unaccountably dry lips. "It's okay, Hank. Everything will be all right."

"I hope so, kid. I'd sure hate to see Tony Garrick make his first mistake. He's generally right about guys, but—" Canon broke it off and got to his feet. "Let's get out of here," he said. "They've scrubbed the second heat. Let's get the boats loaded—it's getting wetter every minute."

And Billy knew the soft drumming sound was rain.

THERE was only one week before the Divisionals at Chicago, and before it was half over Billy decided it was the worst week of his life. Everything was changed, everyone was unfriendly and unsmiling. Even Tony Garrick, who came down to the pier from the plant one morning, stared stonily at him from a distance, spoke quietly to Canon, and went back up to his office.

And Canon was a changed man completely. His breezy smile was a thing of the past, as was the off-hand manner. He was a hard man to please, almost impossible, Billy found—and his driving suffered for it. Not only that, he found that he was beginning to dislike the whole business of the big time. It struck him, then, that there was a strange heartlessness about it. It was a ruthless thing, a vast, glittering enterprise which seemed to hold scant regard for the man as a person. It raised him up one day, placed a spangled crown on his head and sounded the trumpets of world acclaim—and then smashed him to rubble the next.

After a bad run with the *Banshee*—he'd had some blower trouble, unknown to Canon—when he limped into the pier, big Hank Canon really laid it on.

"What the hell, Shipton," he snapped. "This ain't no rowboat race we're going to tomorrow. You're out there on the course all alone, there's no one within miles of you, and you turn in a low seventy mile-an-hour average. What kind of a run is that?"

"I had blower trouble," Billy said. "I wasn't getting any juice." He was quiet and restrained about it. He kept his voice down. There wasn't any sense in making things worse than they were.

"Look, kid," and Canon's voice was suddenly soft too. "That *Banshee* has never had blower trouble. The only undependable thing about that boat is her driver."

Without quite knowing how it all happened Billy was up out of the cockpit and on the pier. He saw Hank Canon's round face shining through a blur and he saw Canon's heavy arm drawn back to swing. And then there was someone between them, one of the mechs, although he wasn't sure of the guy's face, and they were being held apart.

They stood that way for a full minute, hackles up like a pair of pit bulls, and then

Billy carefully turned his back and stalked away down the pier. He was sore now, and thinking clearly.

Billy was very quiet on the long drive to Chicago. He did not drive with Canon, but in the other car with one of the mechs. He kept quiet and stared out the window all the way.

He maintained that same aloofness in Chicago, even while they were sliding the boats from the trailers and into the blue water of the Burnham Park Lagoon, and even after the warm-ups when minor adjustments were required. He spoke mostly in gruff monosyllables, then, and to Hank Canon not at all. It was all very chilly and formal, but he didn't mind it. Instead, it seemed to help.

Especially so when he blew out of the pits on the five-minute gun, and he was surprised. It had not been that way at Cincinnati. Down there it had been screaming confusion and a mad welter of churning wakes and soaking spray. There had been almost unbearable tension and a sort of frantic indecision about everything he did.

But here it was not that way. All the elements were there, the same entries for the most part. Ross, Hench, Jacobs, Snate, the same five-mile orange buoy rectangle, and the same deafening racket and smoke and body-wrenching roughness. But yet it was different, for now his awareness of these things was secondary. Primarily, he was thinking of Hank Canon—and the big man's defeat. It had finally jelled to that.

HE WAS particularly careful about the start. It had been a large factor in the Cincinnati debacle, but this time he swarmed out of the end of the course with the rest of them, working up in sharp gusts to the other Garrick boat. Hank Canon turned in the cockpit and saw him, raised his arm contemptuously, and boosted his throttle for the line.

It was a good start, Billy thought. They were all bunched up and he got away fifth. He might have done better, but Canon, in fourth, had crossed his bow toward the inside and hosed him down with his showering wake. It was a sudden, cold shock, and, Billy knew, intentional. But it was a good thing, too, in a way, and while he shivered in the wind, it was just one more thing to goad him on.

The well-matched field roared into the first turn jammed into a near-solid sheet of water. Billy stayed with Canon, swinging close to the inside, chopping his throttle with the other boat, and pouring it on again to come out wide on the far side. The *Banshee* kicked up a high cascade, and when he gave her the power in the turn he felt her dig in hard and kick viciously out into the stretch. She came out nicely on Canon's left, and he kept her there all the way down to the next turn.

It was like a dream for a while, a dream where he was a part of it all and yet detached. He was aware of the noise and the hard pounding of the hull and the smell of the fuel and castor oil. He was aware of the other boats too, and the big name drivers, but it was a remote awareness, and not the overwhelming thing it had been before. His only acute consciousness was of the surprising dexterity he seemed to have acquired with his wheel and throttle—and of the sharp presence of Hank Canon on ahead.

He didn't keep track of the laps, and he wasn't sure just which one it was when things began to break. They were heading north, because the sun was on his left, and they were sparring in toward the upwind turn, when suddenly a shower of white burst up like a geyser and danced and shimmered as the wind carried it away in colored mists. The field veered with it, and when he stormed into the turn and came around to the other stretch he saw that Ross was missing and that Canon had moved into third.

That put him in fourth, and he moved up quickly, closing the gap from Ross's boat. It was an inside job, a close squeeze, and he poured on through with the *Banshee* on her transom. He saw fleeting surprise on Canon's face, as he came alongside. There was something else there on Canon's face, too—a humorous disbelief, as though he wasn't quite sure just what he was looking at.

It was all business after that. Canon's smile was gone, and before Billy was fully aware of what was happening the other boat was jamming into his side, slightly ahead, forcing him into the inside and in a direct line with the next pole buoy.

It came to him that Canon was trying to pile him up. It was a cold and lonely thing that rolled into his stomach and lay there like a puddle of lead. It was a strange and compelling sort of fascination that drew his eyes to the heavy solidity of the pole buoy, plunging with the motion of the water a mile down the course line. And then the buoy loomed close, a great orange spear that thrust up out of the blue water a scant hundred yards away and hung poised in rest to impale him or to split the *Banshee* down the middle.

And with that incredible knowledge went his last bit of respect for the other man. Canon was a killer, a bum and a tramp. Canon had not only failed him in the clutch, but was now trying to drive him out of his race and break up his boat. The anger he'd felt before was nothing now. He was wholly consumed by hate and loathing.

Without fully knowing it he was fighting him back. He was forcing the *Banshee* into the side of Canon's boat and the two of them were hurtling across the rock-hard water, bow to bow at a hundred miles an hour. And the pole kept coming closer, rising higher and higher, a long finger of doom, out of the roiled roughness of the turn.

It was seconds—then split seconds, and

a crack-up was inevitable. He gave one last twist of the wheel, to broadside the other boat and take Canon with him in the crash. But remarkably, Canon had moved. He was off to the right. And then Billy was on the pole, missing the buoy's bright orange paint by inches as he blasted into the wide, raking slide.

High up around him the bright spray rose, flinging in thick sheets off to the right and back aft into the beaten froth of the wake. The hard anger of the raging engine beat up through the hatch and transmitted its fury to the screw with a wildness that sought to tear the wheel from his cramped hands and send the *Banshee* screaming to the four winds. The water, surging along the bottom, became a concrete corduroy as he fought and lashed the shining hull across the cross-chop of the turn and into the smoother flats of the stretch.

There were other things there, too. Sudden shapes and phantoms; wide geysers of white water that hosed him down and funneled gallons of water into the cockpit; the close reek of castor oil and the tight knowledge in his head that he was fighting it out with unseen others in the turn.

And then suddenly he was clear. Abruptly and inexplicably he was in the clear and gone. He was roaring along in unpressed emptiness—with the nearest boat yards astern! And far ahead the checkered flag snapped briskly from the judges' barge.

**S**OMEHOW, it's another day some weeks back. You're through again, and you're sitting there in bitterness in the sloshing cockpit with your hands still fastened to the wheel. The heat is blistering up from the hatch and the stink is heavy and your head aches and sings. But there's a difference. You've won this time, and you're amazed at that, but there's no joy in it. You're sick to

high heaven of the big time and all it stands for.

And you look up to the side of the pit and you see Tony Garrick again. He's wearing a queer sort of a smile, and you're suddenly more mad than beat out and you start to get up out of the pit. But Garrick stops you, and so does Hank Canon. He's there too and he's smiling just like Garrick. Both of them. They look just like a pair of monkeys.

Hank Canon's talking presently, and it's hard to hear because of the buzzing and ringing in your ears.

"It was a hell of a way to go about it, Billy," Hank is saying. "But there just didn't seem to be any other way. You just wouldn't come around."

"What he means," Tony Garrick puts in, "is that you've been wandering around in a daze. You seemed to have the idea that you had no chance whatsoever in this business."

"I told you once," comes from Hank, "that they're only flesh and blood. But you didn't seem to hear me. I had to give you the treatment after that. I had to figure out ways to get you all riled up, to get your mind off yourself. I worked up a climax yesterday with that blower deal. I put the fix on that. And it worked, too. But I had to make sure it would stick, so I put that squeeze on you out there on the course—figured you'd get so mad you'd forget about everything out there except me. As it was, you got so wrapped up in the idea you took the whole field."

You sit there and listen to them, and you feel a nice warm glow all over. You know you ought to say something, but things have been moving so fast you've got to think a minute or two before your mind can catch up with them. In the meantime, though, *Banshee*—your *Banshee* now—has got an inch or so of water on the pit floor. There's an old sponge that's been kicking around down there. So, lovingly, you start to bail her out.

# — WALKAWAY CHAMP —

**W**HEN Edward Weston was ninety, he walked into the sports department of the New York *Evening Post*. He was spry and erect. Like most men of his age, he was inclined to be garrulous. His diet, he said, consisted only of rice, butter and coffee.

The object of Weston's call was to tell about a walk he intended making, from New York to Philadelphia, with a group of husky young pedestrians. Most of the sports staff were inclined to scoff at the thought that so ancient a character could keep up with men in their twenties. Few were old enough to remember the great feats of Weston, who, like Dan O'Leary and others of an older breed, had set so many walking records here and in England.

One writer was so interested that he took his car and followed the jaunt. It was an amazing exhibition. Weston set out at a fast clip and maintained it steadily, with the usual ten minutes rest period each hour. He exhibited no weariness. Bit by bit the young huskies lagged behind. Some quit altogether. No effort was made to reach their goal in the same day. After a night's rest, they resumed the grind, with Edward Weston legging it merrily ahead of the others.

At the finish, the sports writer reported, the old pedestrian was the only one of the walking club still in competition.

That a man of ninety could still be in such excellent condition is an indication that no one need ever feel he is through.

—D. M. Konkel.

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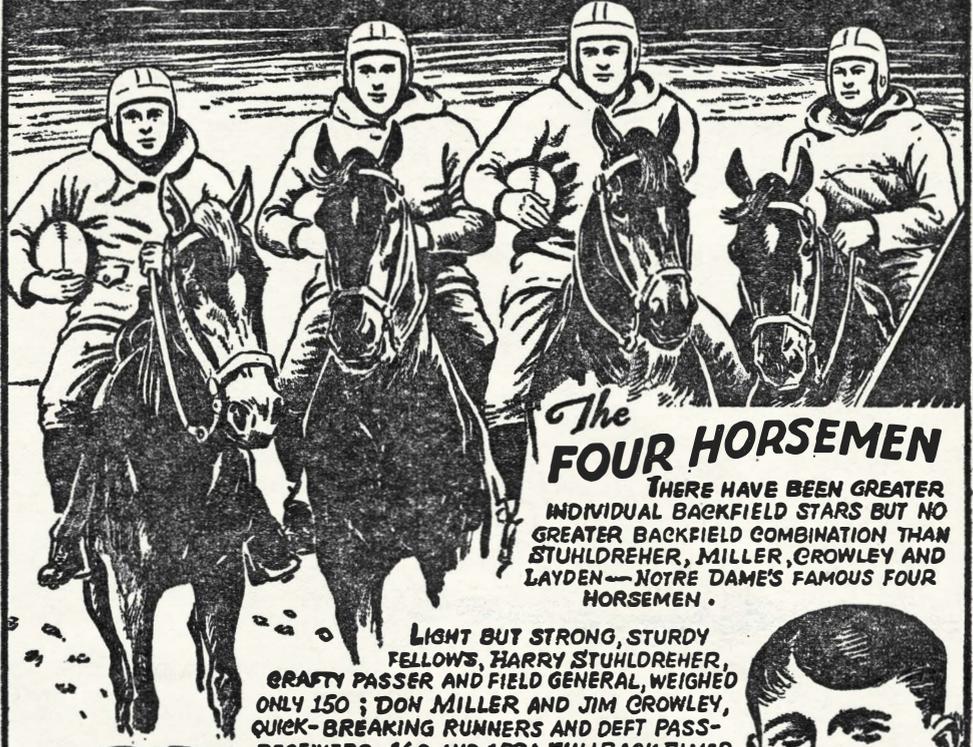
## ANSWERS TO ALL-SPORTS QUIZ

(Questions on page 61)

1. Bill Klem. He called them in eighteen World Series.
2. Pirates, Cardinals, Reds, respectively.
3. The fans.
4. Ty Cobb.
5. The winning run, or runs, can be scored on errors.
6. False. They also identify positions. 80's, ends; 70's, tackles; 60's, guards; 50, center; 10 to 49, backfield.
7. By overstaying 15-minute half-time rest period.
8. In six-man football.
9. 992.
10. A team's "umbrella" is its pass defense.
11. In event of tie, a "sudden-death" period may be played—first team to score wins.
12. Wingmen.
13. True.
14. An assist. Two points for goal made unassisted; one for goal made with an assist from teammate.
15. A zone in front of each goal.
16. Basketball.
17. When play is on an indoor field.
18. 1896.
19. True.
20. Steeplechase jockeys.

# MIGHTY MEN of SPORT

by  
Ben Nelson  
Stookie Allen



## The FOUR HORSEMEN

THERE HAVE BEEN GREATER INDIVIDUAL BACKFIELD STARS BUT NO GREATER BACKFIELD COMBINATION THAN STUHLDTREHER, MILLER, CROWLEY AND LAYDEN — NOTRE DAME'S FAMOUS FOUR HORSEMEN.

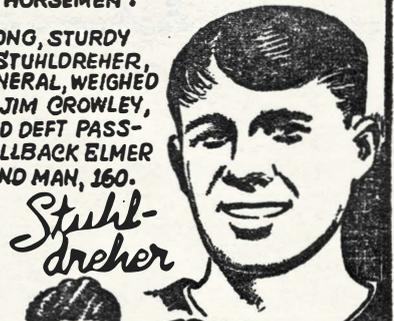
LIGHT BUT STRONG, STURDY FELLOWS, HARRY STUHLDTREHER, CRAFTY PASSER AND FIELD GENERAL, WEIGHED ONLY 150; DON MILLER AND JIM CROWLEY, QUICK-BREAKING RUNNERS AND DEFT PASS-RECEIVERS, 160 AND 158; FULLBACK ELMER LAYDEN, PUNTER AND 10-SECOND MAN, 160.

STARTING AS SOPHOMORES IN 1922, THEY ABSORBED THE ROCKNE PRINCIPLES OF SPEED AND DECEPTION AND MADE THE HUDDLE FOLLOWED BY ROCKS BACKFIELD "HIKE" SHIFT AND LIGHTNING STAB A THING OF GRACE AND DEADLY EFFECTIVENESS.



*Crowley*

THEY REACHED THEIR PEAK IN 1924 BEHIND A LIGHT BUT FAST LINE THAT RANGED FROM A 168-POUND GUARD TO 189-POUND CAPT. ADAM WALSH AT CENTER.



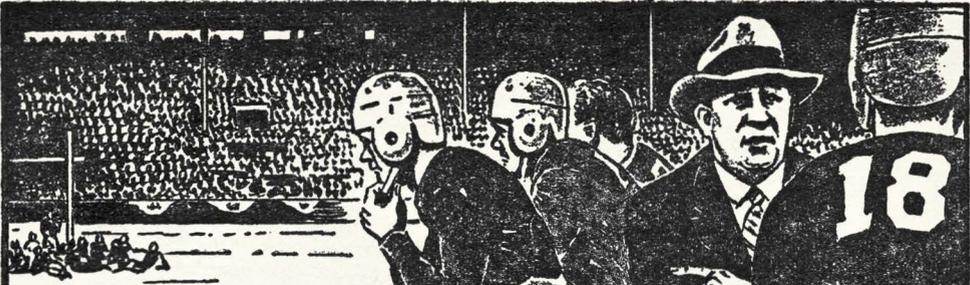
*Stuhldreher*



*Miller*



*Layden*



AFTER MOWING DOWN WABASH AND LOMBARD, ROCKNE STARTED HIS "SHOCK TROOPS" AGAINST ARMY, RUSHING IN THE FOUR HORSEMEN AT THE PSYCHOLOGICAL MOMENT. TAKING THE BALL ON THEIR 20, CROWLEY AND LAYDEN REELED OFF 31 YARDS. STUHLBREHER PASSED TO CROWLEY FOR 12. MILLER ROUNDED END TO THE 10. LAYDEN SCORED. THE GAME ENDED, NOTRE DAME 13, ARMY 7.



PRINCETON SUCCUMBED, 12-0; GEORGIA TECH, 34-3; WISCONSIN, 38-3, AND THE IRISH TACKLED NEBRASKA, PRIMED TO AVENGE 2 STRAIGHT DEFEATS.

ROCKNE THREW IN HIS REGULARS AS THE MIGHTY CORNHUSKERS BULLED OVER: A TOUCHDOWN. FROM THEN ON THE FOUR HORSEMEN RODE ROUGHSHOD, EACH MAKING A TOUCHDOWN, MILLER 2, AND CROWLEY KICKING 4 CONVERSIONS TO WIN 34-6.

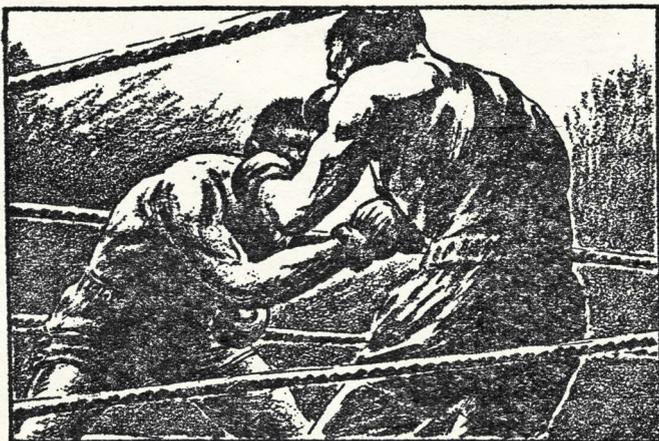
NOTRE DAME FINISHED OFF NORTHWESTERN, 13-6, AND GARNEGIE TECH, 40-19, FOR THE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP, AND WENT INTO THE ROSE BOWL AGAINST A STANFORD TEAM WITH THE GREAT ERNIE NEVERS.

FOLLOWING A PLACEMENT AGAINST THE SHOCK TROOPS, THE REGULARS TOOK OVER. LAYDEN SCORED 3 TIMES, CROWLEY KICKED 3 EXTRA POINTS AND THE IRISH WON 27-10.

IN NAMING STUHLBREHER ALL-AMERICAN QUARTERBACK, CAMP SAID THAT, SO ADEPT WAS HE AT DIRECTING THE OTHERS NO ONE COULD TELL WHICH OF THEM WAS BEST!



*Not even Father Time could knock out one ace who kept on fighting—and winning—long after other men call it quits!*



Sam was a potent puncher. . . .

## DURABLE DUKES

**F**ROM his boyhood in Weymouth, N. S., to his existence on a pension for the blind in Boston and Harlem, life has been a comedy for Sam Langford, the old "Boston Tar Baby," and, really, an uncrowned heavyweight champ.

Even in the recent years, shorn of sight and money, living in small furnished rooms, forced to ration himself on food and wearables, he has more humor than a boil.

Though often broke between many lush years of plenty and luxuries, Langford has never deviated from a policy of not only seeing but practicing the sunny side. Losing his vision due to head punches has failed to check the laugh tide that wells up within him and has to have a steady outlet.

Langford traveled all over the world several times to keep his ring bookings. On one of these expeditions, to Australia, he

was asked his age. He came back with, "What did Joe Woodman, my manager say? Was it twenty-nine or thirty-nine?" Woodman had been trying to prune the Langford family tree by about a decade, so that folks wouldn't think Sam was a ring antique. Sam was still trading wallops when in the fifties and when his opponents were merely shadows in his declining vision.

After chasing Cleve Hawkins, a colored heavy who styled himself the Canadian Wolf, for ten rounds, Langford was exhausted. He draped himself on a stool, and called for the matchmaker. Between wheezes and puffs, he ordered, "The next time I fights here, match me up with a fighter, not a runner." After he recovered his wind, he philosophized, "I do hear them wolves don't do no fightin' only when in the pack. But, I'll play my cards better next time."

— By **WILLIAM McNULTY** —

Sam had a very disconcerting way of embarrassing opponents before and during bouts. One was to hand an adversary a piece of paper bearing a number as the referee was giving the usual pre-battle instructions. The foe would look at the number, and then inquire what it meant. "That's the round I'm goin' to knock you out in," would be the explanation.

The start of a ring date between Langford and Gunboat Smith, of New York City, was delayed at Boston because of a dispute over the choice of referee. Smith's manager was insisting on his choice. All through the acrimonious debate in the ring, Langford was parked on his stool, taking no part in the word slugfest. One of the customers called out to him, "Sam, you should carry your own referee."

"I do," shot back the happy hammerer. "Here it is." He held aloft his right gloved fist. The battle finally got under way, and Sam won by a kayo in the fourth stanza.

**L**ANGFORD was such a potent puncher he had great difficulty in getting bouts. The opposition often insisted on special treatment before stepping into the same enclosure with the short slammer. Because of the scarcity of opponents, Sam had to face the same scrappers time after time. For instance, he tangled with Joe Jeannette, of Hoboken, N. J., twenty times; Sam McVey, of San Francisco, fifteen times; Jim Barry, of Chicago, eighteen times; Dan "Porky" Flynn, of Boston, ten times. A number of others faced Sam from three to nine times.

The Hub Hacker made a number of ring appearances at the ritzy National Sporting Club in London. One of his opponents there was "Gunner" Moir, then the British heavy title-holder. The English peers figured Moir as peerless, and were amazed and chagrined when Sam flattened him pronto. As he watched the disgusted dress-suited figures file out of the arena, the thin-thatched thumper chirped, "I

guess I'm in on the noble stuff, too. Didn't I send the Gunner down for the count with my dukes?"

When in his waning years in the mayhem atmosphere, Langford hooked up with "Bearcat" Wright, of Alabama, who was about half Sam's age. It was at Galveston, Tex. Langford could have stopped the youngster, but let it go the distance of ten chapters. When questioned afterward as to why he was so charitably disposed, the veteran laughed and said, "What's the use o' puttin' Wright in wrong. He's comin' and I'm goin'."

Usually, one who tastes of the luxuries and extravagances of life and is then relegated to poverty and disability, becomes embittered. Not old Sam. "I ain't got no alibi. I had plenty o' good times, had this chicken, and even if I ain't got no turkey an' champagne any more, I still have my memories."

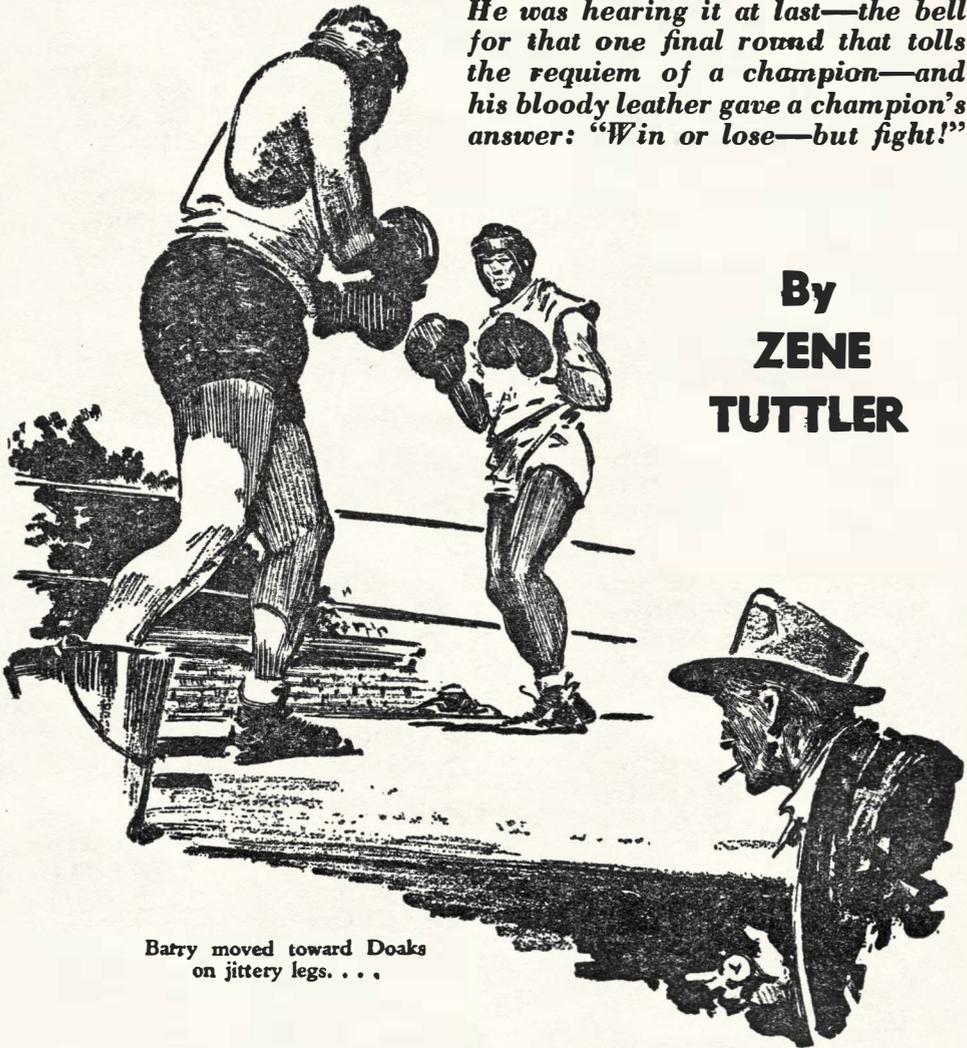
The late Bill Muldoon, when a member of the New York Athletic Commission, arranged a benefit for Langford and picked up \$5,000 in Madison Square Garden. The old physical culturist and ex-wrestler banked the five grand as a trust fund from which Sam was paid the interest. But Sam wanted no part of this. To him, money was always meant for quick spending. When he insisted he wanted to buy a poultry farm in Massachusetts, Muldoon took the \$5,000 out of the bank and turned it over to Sam. It wasn't long before it was gone—and the chickens and hens didn't get it all.

Sam was able to find his way (he totes a cane most of the time on the streets) into a barber shop operated in Boston by Luther Manuel, a colored ex-heavy who once lost to Langford via the kayo route. Jokingly, Manuel claimed Langford had been lucky to beat him in that bout. Whereupon, Sam, stretched out in the barber chair waiting for his old ring foe to shave him, came up with, "You coulda done it if you had that razor!"

# Murder in Leather

*He was hearing it at last—the bell for that one final round that tolls the requiem of a champion—and his bloody leather gave a champion's answer: "Win or lose—but fight!"*

By  
**ZENE  
TUTTLE**



Barry moved toward Doaks  
on jittery legs. . . .

**T**HE staccato words banged against Biff Barry's clouded mind like flak against the sky. The doctor was saying, "That terrific battering you took in your last fight left you with a blood clot. Maybe the next punch will dislodge it. Like Russian roulette, put one bullet in the cylinder, spin it and pull the trigger. You may get away with it once or twice, but sooner or later you're killed."

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Barry tore his blank eyes from the wall and tried to look at Doctor Adams facing him across the desk. The doctor was calm and impersonal, his sharp brown eyes studying Barry. Barry licked his lips.

"Thanks, Doc," he mumbled. "I—I—" He turned numbly towards the door and stood there, square shoulders slumped in defeat, his level gray eyes filled with misery.

Doctor Adams put an arm around his shoulder and said, "No more fights for you, champ. Absolutely no more fights. Another punch may kill you. Understand?"

Biff Barry, middleweight champion of the world, swallowed hard and walked out into the late spring sunshine. The air suddenly seemed cold and crisp. Brittle, like the thread holding his life. Doc Adams was right. The doc knew all about blood clots and how they could kill you. And Doc Adams was wrong. What did the doc know about his having to fight again no matter what happened to him?

HE SHUFFLED down the street towards the ramshackle cottage where he lived with his wife and three children and there was a bitter smile on his lips. Even the house he lived in was rented. The middleweight champ of the world could not afford to buy a place for his family. That was a hot one! He would throw back his head and laugh at that one if the twisting grief in his heart and the knifing misery in his head would let him. Now that at last he stood on the threshold of the big money, he had been forbidden to fight again on penalty of death!

He stopped in at the corner delicatessen and Max, the owner, greeted, "Hi, champ! How does it feel to be the world's champ? Haven't seen you since you won the title last week. Thought you'd have a butler or chauffeur doing your shopping now." Max laughed with his head thrown back, showing a gold-lined mouth.

Barry said, "Fine. Give me a pound of bacon. How much are the eggs today?"

Max roared and winked at a woman customer. "Always the kidder, Biff Barry. Him the world's champ and he's worried about a couple cents more or less for eggs!"

Barry's eyes narrowed, but he forced a

twisted smile to his lips. Sure, he was the champ. His crown was tinsel and as permanent as a soap bubble. It was like giving a man dying of thirst cool water and dashing the cup from his lips before he could drink. He did not forget a quart of ice cream for the kids and left the store with his arm full of bundles.

Max held the door open for him and yelled, "Good luck in your return fight with Spike Naylor, champ! Only you don't need any more luck. You've always had more than your share!"

Barry gritted his teeth and walked towards the weather-beaten cottage at the end of the street. He turned up the broken cement walk in front, stepped on the rickety porch and pressed the button. He squared his shoulders in a desperate last-minute attempt to drive the harassed look from his eyes and the bitter thoughts from his mind. Mary answered the door and looked puzzled. He always used the back entrance.

"Drink! Food!" he exclaimed. He held up a quart of milk, smoked fish, and ice cream. "Champagne! Caviar! Nectar from the gods!"

It was flat, very flat. Mary smiled and put the groceries in the refrigerator, and Barry found himself feeling glad the kids were still in school. They would expect more than that from the champ. A bicycle, air rifle, scooter, chemistry set, boxing gloves.

Mary said, "Broadway Jim called while you were gone and said he'd drop over to discuss the return fight with Naylor." The false front he had assumed dropped like a mantle from him and Mary spotted it in a flash. "Something's wrong, Biff. What is it?"

He evaded her eyes. "It's nothing. I— Well, I just don't feel so hot. Guess that battering Spike gave me a week ago still bothers me." He sat down on the living room couch and stared at the floor. He was a damn poor actor and a worse liar. How

well would he be able to act with Broadway Jim Grogan, his manager? And with Spike and Matt Murdock, Spike's manager? Everything depended now on how well he did.

She said, "Don't worry, Biff. You'll give him that beating back and plenty more when you fight him again."

Barry winced. The only way he had wrested the crown from Spike Naylor was by being a human punch-blotter. He had taken everything Naylor had dished out until Naylor was arm weary from punching. It had been a close decision, but it would be different next fight. Naylor had not bothered to train seriously, underestimating Barry. Spike would be out for revenge on the man who had stolen his crown and would shoot the works in their next fight. That is, if Biff Barry ever fought again.

The doorbell rang and Mary let in a portly, silver-haired, red-faced man. Broadway Jim Grogan had a firm theory that words were like money in the bank. The less you wasted, the more you had when an emergency came up. He put his gray hat and topcoat on the couch and said with his eyes on Barry, "They wanna sign right away for the fight." His keen blue eyes stabbed at Barry.

**B**ARRY licked his lips. This was it. The big decision now was his to make. Should he follow Doc Adams' advice and save his life by not fighting again? Or should he gamble his life on one big haul which would give him the things he had set his sights on long ago? He was thirty-two now. For twelve years he had been fighting hams and second-raters for minor purses until, under Broadway Jim's tutelage, he had plodded his way to the top.

"Some men mature late," Grogan had kept telling him. "Keep plugging and you'll get there."

But the same men who matured late,

Barry knew, slipped awfully fast once they got to the peak.

He had been at his peak for the Spike Naylor fight. He had one more good fight left in his system. One more good fight in which to get forty percent of the gate, buy that small drug store in the quiet neighborhood where he and Mary had been raised, and where he could bring his family up right. A forty percent cut of a good gate would turn the trick.

Barry hesitated. Grogan waited until Mary left, then snapped, "What did the doc say?" Barry looked up, startled. "You think I'm gonna let valuable property out of my sight? You're nuts! What the doc say, Biff?"

Barry could not tell him. Broadway Jim never would let him go in the ring if he knew. All Barry had to do was keep quiet and no one, not even the Commission, would know. Their superficial examination before the fight would not reveal the presence of a blood clot which would kill him with any hard punch.

He said, "I'm getting punchy, Broadway. Doc's afraid another couple hard ones to the head might scramble the eggs for good, see? What can I do? I got to fight! I got no other choice."

Grogan scowled at the floor and thought a long time. The mantel clock ticked and Barry waited. Grogan finally said, "Couple other things you could do. If you wanted." He looked squarely at Barry.

"What?"

"You could stall for a year. Exhibitions, radio, endorsements."

"I fought too long to be a cheese champ."

Grogan's eyes glinted approval. "You could quit."

"I need the dough too bad to quit. You know that."

Grogan licked his lips. "That leaves only one other thing, Biff." His eyes wavered and he looked at the floor. "Only one other thing."

Barry's gray eyes turned to flint. "I'm glad you didn't say it, Broadway."

"Yeah, Biff, I know. That's for rats like Matt Murdock."

"How much dough we got left, Broadway?"

Grogan consulted a little black book. "After taxes, back expenses, bills long due, and debts incurred while you were in the service, we've got five hundred and fifty-nine dollars and sixty-five cents left from the Naylor fight."

"Okay," Barry grated. "Tell them we'll sign for the fight. To be held thirty days from now."

Grogan's eyes flashed. His face reddened. "You nuts? They won't go for it!" He jumped to his feet and waved his right hand. "Not enough time to get in condition." He waved his left hand. "Not enough time to ballyhoo the fight. The public will stay away in crowds!" He waved both hands together. "Six months is the right time for a scrap like that and six months it will be. I'll get in touch with Matt Murdock right away." He grabbed for his hat and topcoat.

Barry shoved him back on the couch. "We're both in condition from the last fight and won't need more than a month to sharpen up. More training will only make us stale. As for the public, our last fight is all the ballyhoo they need. It's thirty days, Broadway."

Grogan scowled at the floor a long time. Finally his eyes lighted up and he said, "I think you got something there, Biff."

**S**PIKE NAYLOR and Matt Murdock beefed plenty about signing for a fight so soon when they met in the Commissioner's offices. Murdock refused to sign unless Naylor got six months in which to get ready.

"Naylor afraid of me?" Barry asked in a mild voice.

Naylor's blue eyes flared, his jaw muscles bunched. He looked like a big-jowled

mastiff ready to leap at an intruder's throat at one word from his master.

"Afraid of a lucky bum who horse-shoed his way to the title?" cackled Murdock. Murdock was sharp-eyed, sharp-nosed, sharp-chinned. He could have been a gambler, a burlesque promoter, a racketeer or anything which called for a corkscrew mind. "Don't make us laugh. It's the public."

"Public be damned!" exploded Grogan. "The last fight is still fresh in the minds of the fight fans and they're clamoring for a return go. I say strike while the iron is hot!"

"I say six months!" sneered Murdock.

"Okay!" snapped Grogan. "If we're going to wait six months, I'd just as soon make it a year. We'll go on exhibition tours. London, Australia, the West."

The Commissioner did not like that. He said, "Too many return fights are left dangling in the air until loyal fight fans lose all interest. Grogan is right. Both men are in top condition from their last fight and thirty days should be enough time. It will set a fine precedent for other title fights."

They signed with Naylor glaring at Barry, and Murdock scowling at Grogan.

Grogan let Barry pace himself the first week of training at Madame Gray's outdoor camp. The champ was the best judge of his condition. Barry shadow-boxed, jumped rope, punched the bag, and did road work. Barry avoided sparring sessions in the ring and Grogan said nothing about that. But he was worried about something else. The light touch was missing from Barry's routine. The champ did not laugh and failed to react to the camp's usual horseplay which took a fighter's mind off the grind.

He told Barry about it at the end of the first week. "You're holding back, Biff. There's something on your mind."

Barry blinked. "Nothing on my mind. Maybe I'm a bit stale."

Grogan shook his head. "I've seen you

work lots harder than that without getting stale. When you going in the ring to spar?" Grogan's eyes lanced at him.

Barry got up and said over his shoulder, "Third week."

Barry tried to put some pep into his workouts during the following week. Grogan was watching him too closely. He would have to be more careful. He played his cards with the camp retinue and joked and laughed. But it did not take. Grogan studied him with a thoughtful look in his eyes and Barry knew that the manager was wise that something serious was wrong. Barry was concerned over that, but he was more concerned about his sparring sessions which would be coming up soon. He could not postpone them indefinitely. He would have to work out some defense against a hard punch which would jar that blood clot loose and kill him. He could not tell his sparring partners to pull their punches. There would be little point to such training and the news could leak back to Matt Murdock that something was radically wrong with him. The Commission might get wind of it and start snooping.

Grogan had a big surprise for him the last day of the second week. Mary and the three kids pulled up in a car driven by "Smoky" Joe Doaks, Barry's sparring partner and trainer. Barry stepped back from the sandbag he had been pummeling and blinked at him. He looked angrily at Grogan. Grogan was helping them out of the car.

Tommy, aged ten, and Jack, aged eight, ran a race from the car to Barry. "Hi, pop!" greeted Tommy. "Hi, champ!" greeted Jack. Barry grinned and ruffled their hair, kissed Mary, and picked up Sue, aged six, and walked to the house porch with them and sat down.

"What round you gonna flatten him, pop?" demanded Tommy.

"Hmhf!" sniffed Jack. "The champ's gonna grind him down and outpoint him. It says so in the papers."

Barry grinned at that. He did not grin when little Sue asked in her wide-eyed way, "Daddy, when are we going to move to our new house?"

Barry looked sharply at Mary and she appeared flustered. "She must have heard me chatting to one of the neighbors," she explained.

Barry let them stay an hour, then shooed them back in the car. He watched them drive away and wheeled on Grogan. "What's the idea?" he rasped.

Grogan looked startled. "Why, I thought seeing them would take your mind off the grind."

"Well, don't do it again, understand? I don't want them around here while I'm in training." Barry stalked back to the punching bag.

GROGAN nodded grimly. He understood. Barry had never been like that before. Now he was afraid Mary might find out what was eating Barry and did not want her around until after the fight.

Barry stood in the ring, nervously adjusting his protective headgear and waiting for Smoky Joe Doaks to climb in for his first sparring session. It was the beginning of the third week of training. Cold sweat stood out on his forehead, his heart pumped fast and unevenly. This was it, this was the showdown. Could he get away with his act now? Would they find out what he was hiding? He had to be careful, very careful with his sparring partners. Or he might not live to enter the ring against Spike Naylor. Just one hard punch in the right spot. The sweat sprang out on his upper lip and under his lower lip. He tried to put one arm over the ropes and felt cold moisture trickle down his side.

Grogan said, "Lay off the head punches, Joe. We don't want to get the champ punchy before the fight, see?"

Smoky Joe nodded. Grogan eyed his

watch and banged the ring apron. Barry moved towards Doaks on jittery legs. Smoky Joe was heavier, slower than Barry. Barry kept his guard high and had no trouble blocking his body attack. He pummeled Smoky Joe around the ring and breathed a deep sigh of relief when Grogan banged the apron for the end of the round.

He got careless in the second and a partially blocked roundhouse right broke through and slithered off Barry's ribs. Barry jumped back, biting his lips. Smoky Joe blinked, puzzled. Barry came back fast and drove him across the ring with a two-fisted attack. Grogan banged the ring apron.

"What's the matter, Biff?" he asked. "That punch to the ribs hurt?" His eyes held Barry's.

Barry snapped, "Lay off, Broadway. That punch didn't hurt any more than any other punch!"

Grogan shrugged and eyed his watch. Barry went three rounds with Smoky Joe, then stepped three more with the lighter, faster "Candy" Kidd. He climbed out of the ring after six rounds, sweating like a horse. Grogan eyed the heavy perspiration and followed Barry into the house, worried. Six rounds never made Biff Barry sweat like that before. It was something else besides the sparring which caused that sweat. That was the cold, clammy sweat of fear!

Barry took his warm shower, tapered off with cold and dried himself with trembling fingers. It was a reaction to the strain he had gone through in the ring, but he was relieved. He had come through his first test unscathed with his sparring partners. He knew now that he could handle them if he remained careful. Smoky Joe was a hard puncher, but slow. Candy Kidd was fast, but a light puncher. It would be different when he climbed into the ring with Spike Naylor. Naylor was fast and a savage puncher. But at least he did not have to worry about that for a while. The date

of execution had been postponed a few weeks!

He jumped into his training next morning with the first light heart since he had come out of Doc Adams' office. It did not last long. Barry was skipping rope when Grogan called to him. Barry turned and saw a big, battered man standing beside Grogan.

Grogan said, "This here is 'Heavy' Wade. Thought you might want to improve your punching and hire him."

Wade grinned. His face was knotted with scar tissue which lumped mostly over the eyes. One ear was battered, the other was cauliflowered. "Hi, Biff," he said.

"What you doing here?" scowled Barry, ignoring the extended paw.

"Broadway sent for me," shrugged Wade.

Barry wheeled on Grogan. "I don't want any part of that punk!"

Grogan motioned Wade into the house to change and said softly, "Easy, Biff. I know he's a stinker. And I know he works for Murdock. That's why I sent for him."

"I don't get it."

Grogan chuckled. "You will, Biff. Just wait and watch."

Wade came out dressed in ring togs and Grogan said, "Go three with Biff. And take it easy on the head."

Wade's eyes clouded. "What's the matter?"

"You obey orders or get out of this camp!" snapped Grogan.

"Okay, okay," said Wade. "You don't hafta get hot about it. I was only asking a question."

**W**ADE climbed into the ring and Barry proceeded to give him a boxing lesson. Wade was bigger and heavier, but had his best days far behind him. Like every one of Murdock's fighters, he knew every dirty trick in the book and had added a few of his own to the appendix. He backhanded, elbowed,

butted and used the laces. Grogan said nothing and Barry said nothing. Spike Naylor fought the same way and it was good practice for the champ. He pounded Wade around the ring and evaded his clumsy body attack until the three rounds were over. There wasn't a mark on Barry's body and Wade had followed orders and laid off Barry's head. Barry got out of the ring breathing easy. Wade came out puffing and with a dangerous glint in his eyes.

Barry did not like the bigger man's actions. Murdock had something up his sleeve with Wade. Grogan had nothing to explain. It worried Barry. The camp routine jerked into the last week before the fight. Barry stepped up his training to a climax. He went three rounds with Smoky Joe, three with Candy Kidd, and wound up using Wade for the final three rounds. His wind was good, but he appeared thin and overdrawn. Grogan studied him with worried eyes. Barry's face was haggard, his eyes harassed. So far he had managed to avoid any damaging blows and there was only one more sparring session left.

Heavy Wade forgot to follow his orders during the last sparring session. He quit trying to break through Barry's guard to the body and without warning switched to a head attack. A murderous right to the head caught Barry off guard and sent him reeling across the ring. Wade lumbered in with a left and right to the jaw and Barry staggered back. Wade jumped in with a looping right to the jaw and Barry hit the canvas on his pants and skidded several feet. He sat there with mingled bewilderment and rage in his eyes. Barry started to rise and Grogan shouted, "Take nine, champ! Take nine!" Barry looked at him, relaxed, and waited for the count to reach nine.

Wade smirked from a neutral corner and the light of discovery glinted in his eyes. He had finally found out the champ's

weakness. There were certain people who would pay plenty for that discovery.

Barry got up at the nine count and rushed across the ring. Wade backed and tried to cover up. Barry smashed a short, savage right to the jaw. Wade staggered back with both hands pawing in futile defense. Barry tailed him with short lefts and rights to the body and pounded him into a corner. He had Wade set up for the clincher when Grogan banged the ring apron and shouted, "That's all for today!"

Barry reluctantly lowered his gloves and walked away. Wade climbed out of the ring, smirking.

Wade did not show up the next day. Barry was worried about his failure to put in an appearance. Grogan shrugged and said, "Five gets you ten that Matt Murdock will be around before long."

"What for?"

"For the same reason rats always show up," Grogan said. "But don't worry about it. I'll handle him. What I want to know is, how do you feel?" His keen eyes stabbed at Barry.

Barry licked his lips. "Okay."

"Yeah? Then what's eating you?"

Barry's eyes flashed. "I told you before, lay off! A man's got a right to his own problems, hasn't he?"

"Yes and no. Sometimes another man can help him out. Especially when that man has a contract to do just that for him." He turned and walked away.

Matt Murdock showed up at camp that night. He went into the house alone after Grogan had cleared the card room of everyone except Barry. Murdock looked from one to the other, then said to Grogan, "Well?"

Grogan looked at Barry with raised brows. "How do I know what a man worries about? The decision is up to you, Biff, not me."

Murdock snapped, "It's your last chance to get under the wire, punk. You got no choice, Barry. You won the title

on a fluke and you know it. Spike will get you this time and we all know it."

Barry's face tightened. "If you know all that, how come you're here?"

"You're punchy, Barry. We got the dope from Wade. And we saw the doc's report, too. There's ways of doing those things without a doc's permission. Okay, Naylor will knock your brains loose if I say so. But there's always a chance something might go wrong, so I'm offering ten grand for insurance that nothing does go wrong. That way you take it easy and he takes it easy and no one gets hurt."

Grogan looked at Barry and Barry looked at Grogan. Grogan read the storm signals in Barry's bunched jaw muscles and his blazing eyes. He looked at Murdock and said, "Get out. Get out before Barry gets up and unscrambles those corkscrews you call your brain!"

"All right! But you'll be sorry!" He slammed the door behind him.

Barry and Grogan sat silent a long time. The hall clock was ticking loudly and Barry kept counting the beats. *One, two, three.* Three seconds of life he would never see again.

"I wonder how much he knows?" mumbled Barry.

"Aw, how does he know what doc you went to?" scoffed Grogan.

"How did you know?"

"I—" Grogan's eyes widened. "I don't believe him!" he snapped in an effort to cover his worried concern.

**B**UT it did not take. Barry sat there and stared at the floor until it was time for bed. He did not sleep much that night.

They rode into town for the weighing-in ceremony the day of the fight. Barry sat in the back of the car without saying anything until the car came to a stop at the Commission's offices.

"You think maybe the docs found out something, Broadway?"

"What could they find out? Murdock won't tip what he knows because he'll lose a nice purse if the fight is stopped. The Commish docs won't find out anything in their routine exam unless they're looking for something definite."

"I wonder how much Murdock knows," Barry mumbled. "I wonder how much he knows."

He had no trouble being examined and weighing in. Murdock was there with Naylor and flash bulbs popped and the usual press questions were asked and they went out with wishes of luck in their ears. Barry shuffled along beside Grogan and anybody who saw him put down his close-mouthed actions to the usual surliness of a fighter trained fine for a title fight. Barry tried to catch a nap at the hotel, but he had only his eyes closed while his mind raced. This was his last chance now. He could tell the docs what Doc Adams told him and call the fight off. The fans would be furious until they got the full explanation next day in the papers and then everything would be okay. But how about that drug store and little cottage in the quiet neighborhood which he wanted for Mary and the kids?

He had to get in that ring and face Spike Naylor's murderous punches and hope against hope that some miracle might happen so that at the end of the fight he'd still be alive.

Those thoughts and many others raced through his head and he was hardly conscious of the light lunch he had and then before he knew it he was pacing the floor of the dressing room under the ball park stands and it was a few minutes before the big fight.

Barry suddenly stopped before Grogan and said, "I might fight a bit different out there tonight."

He watched for Grogan's reaction.

"Yeah?"

Barry showed him. He switched from his orthodox right-handed stance to a

southpaw stance with his right hand forward. Then he went into an open stance and faced Grogan squarely.

"What's the idea?" scowled Grogan. "I saw you pull that in camp and thought you were just clowning."

"It might throw Naylor off balance. Shifting around like that might slow him up. Like Walcott did to Louis. Naylor thinks slow and won't know what to do until Murdock tells him."

Grogan shook his head. "All Spike Naylor knows is to get in there and slug. The only defense against that is better boxing or better slugging. All this fancy stuff won't help you any."

Barry slumped down in a chair and stared at the floor. The ball park was jammed and he could hear the roar of the action-hungry crowd outside as the prelims were run off. Then there was a knock on the door and it was their turn. Barry shuffled out of the room with Grogan, Doaks and Kidd. He walked up the aisle toward the brightly lighted ring. He ignored the crowd roar and climbed into the ring and went to his corner.

It was a beautiful night in June. The soft blue sky was filled with warm stars and the air was cool and fresh with the promise of love and laughter and life. The announcer introduced various ring celebs and the crowd kept up a constant clamor for the main go. Spike Naylor smirked from his corner at Barry. The challenger looked hard and strong and in perfect condition. Murdock threw a couple leers in Barry's direction, then leaned over Naylor and talked to him. Barry looked past them and saw Wade sitting directly behind them and a sudden chill enveloped his heart.

"Okay, Biff," Grogan said. He always kept talking before a fight. Not anything special, just a bunch of nonsense to keep his fighter's mind off the fight. It was too late for any of that last-minute stuff now, and a good manager did not wait until the

last minutes to tell his fighter something he should have told him weeks or months ago. "Okay, Biff, this is the last one. You won't have to go on again after this one. You took him once, you can take him again. Mary wanted to see the fight from ringside, but I told her you'd want her to get it over the radio."

Grogan's voice droned on, but Barry wasn't listening. He was looking up at the stars and listening to the words Doctor Adams had told him one month ago. It had been just thirty days ago, but it seemed like thirty ages ago!

**S**UDDENLY, the stars were cold and the breeze was chilly across his sweating back. He saw a falling star shoot across the sky. Lighted cigarettes winked and blinked in the crowd like fireflies. It was all there, the life and the laughter. But for him there was no laughter and after tonight there would be no life.

He choked up inside and tried to swallow the lump in his throat, but it was wrapped tight in cotton and would not go down. Unconsciously he tried to draw a forearm across his brow to wipe off the cold sweat. The announcer finally introduced them to the center of the ring for instructions and then sent them back to their corners to await the opening bell.

The warning buzzer rasped and Barry shot a last look at Broadway Jim Grogan. Grogan wet his lips with his tongue, looked at Barry and could say nothing. The opening bell rang and Barry shuffled out of his corner in an orthodox stance with his left hand out and his right protecting his chin. Naylor bounced toward him, hesitated, then shot a left for the body in an attempt to lower Barry's guard.

Barry stepped back, but kept his guard high. Naylor faked a left to the body, then swung a long right for the jaw. Barry blocked it and came in fast with a

short right to the chin. The blow exploded on Naylor's whiskers and staggered him. Barry pumped lefts and rights to the body, but Naylor was strong and shot a long right to the side of Barry's head. Barry covered and went back with the crowd cheering. Naylor stalked him, but could not break through Barry's guard for the head.

Barry went to his corner on trembling legs. It had worked for one round. How much longer could he keep it up before they got wise? Smoky Joe and Candy Kidd flapped the towel over him and poured water over his head and down his trunks.

Grogan said, "How long you think you're going to fool them with that high guard?"

A dagger of fear stabbed at Barry's heart. He looked at Grogan and said, "What do you mean, Broadway?"

"Nothing. Only you better get your licks in before they find out how you've tricked them."

Barry shuffled out confused. Grogan had found out. Who had told him? If Grogan knew, others must know. Not Murdock yet. Murdock had been bluffing. Naylor was gunning for Barry's head and chin. Barry was too preoccupied with his thoughts to see the looping left headed for his jaw. It exploded against his chin and Barry hit the floor. He could have got up at one, but he took nine. Naylor watched him, smirking. Murdock leered his triumph. They had Barry's weak spot. A couple more punches like that and he would be through even if he was on his feet!

Barry was up at nine and Naylor bounded across the canvas toward him. Barry shifted quickly into a southpaw stance and Naylor missed with a wild punch, then pulled up short, puzzled. Barry pushed a right against his nose and Naylor went back. Barry jabbed two more quick rights to the nose. Naylor bellowed

and tried to tear in. Barry jerked his left up from the knee and drove a hard one to the body. Naylor grunted and Barry clubbed a short right to the jaw. Naylor's youth and strength enabled him to come back strong and drive Barry across the ring with rights and lefts to the head. The crowd screamed. Naylor eyed him, puzzled, then stalked to his corner and exchanged heated words with Murdock. Murdock scowled at Wade. Wade blinked.

Barry sagged into his stool gasping air. "That's two," said Grogan. "But they're getting wise about those punches to the jaw and head."

Barry gritted his teeth. "How much do you know, Broadway?"

Grogan's face was impassive. "Not enough to get me disbarred from the ring for life for letting a fighter enter the ring with a blood clot in his spleen."

Barry stared at him and the bell rang for the third round. The crowd clamored for the kill. Naylor came tearing out with his instructions for the southpaw stance. Barry met him with an open stance. Naylor threw a left and right and missed badly as Barry weaved aside and plastered him with a left to the jaw and a right to the body and drove him off balance. Barry saw a quick opening and smashed a right to the jaw and Naylor went back. Barry jumped in eagerly and pounded him across the ring and the crowd shrieked, sensing the kill. Barry connected with a hard left, cut loose with a terrific right and Naylor stumbled. Barry missed and went off balance from the momentum of his terrific right. Naylor quickly took his opening and smashed a short right to the jaw. Barry's mouthpiece squirted out like a seed from a watermelon and slithered across the canvas. Naylor kept on top of him with clubbed lefts and rights and Barry staggered back with blood flowing from both corners of his mouth. Naylor pounded Barry all over the ring and each blow to

the head and jaw was like a sledge hammer. The champ swayed and staggered and tried to hang on. Naylor slugged a left and right to the head and Barry fell against the ring ropes. Naylor cocked his arm, measured him and the bell rang.

**T**HE crowd booed Naylor and gave Barry a terrific hand as he staggered to his corner with bleeding mouth and bruised face. Barry leaned back on the stool with his back against the ring post and his arms draped over the ropes and gasped for air. Grogan took care of his cut mouth, then jabbed a finger at Naylor's corner.

"They're wise now, Biff. That round convinced them. Spike hit you on the jaw and head with everything but the water bucket and now they realize how they've been tricked."

The bell clanged for the fourth and Naylor tore across the ring with his eyes on Barry's body and his gloves held low. Barry waited for him to get close. The enraged challenger had forgotten everything in his blind fury to get even with the man who had taken his title from him in a previous fight and tricked him three rounds of this match. There would be one small, brief opening and it would be the last chance Barry got to knock out the man he could not knock out before in fifteen rounds.

Only this time he had to do it, because if one of Naylor's savage smashes landed just right over that blood clot in the spleen, it would finish him forever! It was a torturous thought, especially when he knew that as long as he stayed out of the ring, he could live on indefinitely.

Naylor smashed in and threw a murderous punch at Barry. Barry saw it coming, a smashing right straight for his heart. He twisted aside, felt the punch graze his ribs and chopped a short right to the jaw. Naylor lunged by off balance and Barry wheeled and was on top of his

man. Naylor turned around just in time to take a left hook to the body and a smashing right to the jaw. Naylor staggered back and Barry moved in swiftly with a long right to the jaw which slammed Naylor against the ropes. Naylor tried to lunge out to his left and Barry smashed a left to the jaw, then sank his right in Naylor's gut. Naylor doubled over and Barry straightened him with a smashing right uppercut, then blasted a terrific right to the side of Naylor's jaw.

It landed squarely on the button and the challenger staggered. This time Barry did not try to straighten him out. He stepped back with the roar of the crowd in his ears and let Naylor fall. Naylor hit the canvas on his right shoulder, rolled over and lay motionless on his back with his arms outstretched. The crowd roar drowned out the referee's count, but Barry picked it up and his lips moved with the count. Naylor rolled over again and Barry's heart stopped beating. The referee's arm rose for the final count.

The police clambered into the ring and flash bulbs exploded and the ring was instantly jammed. Someone thrust a mike before Barry and he said, "I'll be home right away, Mary!"

They moved down the aisle with the crowd yelling and Barry turned to Grogan and said, "How did you know?"

"Murdock gave me the idea in camp when he bluffed doing the same thing. I was worried about your worrying and knew the doc wouldn't mind. So I paid him a visit. When he was out, of course."

Barry tapped him on the jaw and laughed and Grogan grinned. They kept moving down the aisle behind Smoky Joe and Candy Kidd and just before they came to the dugout, Barry turned around and took one last look at the sky. The stars up there were warm and shining, and the air was fragrant and sweet with the promise of life and happiness.

It was great to be alive.

## HIT-AND RUN!



## GAMESTERS

**T**WO of the hardest-hitting outfielders baseball ever saw were Lefty O'Doul and Bob Meusel. Lefty patrolled the asparagus patch for the Philies and Giants; Meusel for the Yankees, in the high old days of Babe Ruth.

While Lefty could smash a ball tremendous distances, he was a pretty poor judge of fly balls.

One day years ago a tavern owner sent the ball player a letter, saying a \$20 check he had cashed for Mr. O'Doul had bounced. In a rage, Lefty hied himself to the saloon.

"Did you ever see me before?" he demanded.

The owner said he had not.

"Well, I'm Lefty O'Doul," said the outfielder. "Here's twenty dollars. The next time anybody comes in here, and says he's me, I'll tell you what to do. Take him out in the back lot and hit him a few fly balls. If he catches them, he's a phoney!"

Not so long ago a couple of strangers met in an all-night coffee spot in Nashville, Tenn. The talk turned to baseball. One of the men was Lew Sherwood, a band leader, and he insisted Bob Meusel had the greatest throwing arm the game had ever seen. The other fellow declared that Joe DiMaggio had a much better whip.

Finally, when Sherwood had finished his java, and was ready to go, he asked his fellow arguer if he had ever seen Bob Meusel play.

"Ever see him play!" shouted the stranger. "I'm Meusel!"

**T**HE Olympics were revived in 1896. A Princeton boy, Bob Garrett, decided he'd like to compete, and nine other Princeton and Harvard boys agreed to go along with him. There was no organization; no funds. They'd have to get to Athens as cheaply as possible.

The athletes shipped on a tramp steamer to Naples, and from there to Patras on an even more miserable ship. Stiff and tired, and with no practice, they arrived in time for trial heats in the 100-meter race.

What happened thereafter is one of the real sagas of American sports. They competed in ten events, and won nine.

The big story, though, centered around Bob Garrett, whose feat has been graphically recorded in Frank Menke's *Encyclopedia of Sports*. Garrett won the shot put, and was asked if he wanted to compete in the discus throw. Until that time Bob had never even seen a discus. A Greek explained the technique in broken English, and the young American made a couple of practice tosses.

Garrett had no idea of winning. As a matter of fact, he expected to finish last, since Europeans, particularly the Greeks, were familiar with this form of competition, and he wasn't. But, he threw the discus 95 feet 7½ inches, which was better than anyone else could do.

High school athletes can do that well now, and the current Olympic record is 70 feet longer than Bob's throw.

Never again will ten young, untrained college boys go into the Olympics, and win most of the honors for their country.

By **JACK KOFOED**



By **DAVID CREWE**

*Some guys shine  
unseen — until  
they borrow a  
spark from a  
star!*



## SCHOOL FOR ACES

THE case of Ralph Kiner and Hank Greenberg brings into sharp focus the realization that the old, cut-throat days in baseball are gone for good. When Greenberg was sold to the Pirates in 1947, casual observers predicted that there would be trouble between him and young Ralph Kiner. It would be the old story of the aging prima donna and the young, up-and-coming star, they said. Greenberg was bound to resent Ralph's publicity and the fact that Kiner's golden years were ahead of him while Greenberg's were virtually finished.

What actually happened was this: During the first week of spring training Hank stood by the batting cage and watched Kiner hit. Greenberg walked over to Billy Herman and asked to have Kiner assigned to him as a roommate. In a few days they were inseparable pals and Greenberg set out to make Kiner a better hitter.

It wasn't part of Greenberg's duties to coach Kiner. He was merely answering the instinct, as old as the human race, which requires the older generation to pass on what it knows to the younger.

Ralph batted fourth in the line-up and Hank hit fifth. It was a common sight at Forbes Field when Kiner was at bat to see Greenberg, crouched in the "on deck" circle, anxiously studying his protege. When Kiner sent one into the stands no one was happier than Greenberg. Not only was he happy for Ralph's sake but he knew that some of his knowledge had been used in propelling that ball.

Not only did Greenberg coach Kiner on the field, but he spent many hours talking to the youngster, persuading him that he had a chance to break Babe Ruth's record of 60 four-baggers in one season. Before meeting Greenberg, Kiner, who has a tendency towards taking life easy, never thought of himself in those terms. Hank awoke in him the realization that he might someday achieve greatness.

Their friendship did not end when Greenberg left the Pirates to become vice president of the Cleveland Indians. When Kiner leaves his native California to come east he is Hank's house guest. During the spring exhibition series, the paths of the Indians and Pirates once crossed. Hank

— By **SKIPPY ADELMAN** —

had heard that his protege was having difficulty in fielding grounders and whipping the ball back into the infield with proper dispatch. He showed up unexpectedly on the field after the game and put Kiner through a long drill. Hank stood on third and for two hours batted hot grounders into left field. He didn't let up until convinced that Kiner was getting the hang of making the play properly.

The case of Kiner and Greenberg is not at all unusual. Practically the same story can be told about Hank Sauer and Augie Galan. Galan was Cincinnati's regular fielder in 1947. He led the club in hitting with .314 and this in spite of the fact that injuries, old and new, were plaguing him all season. While this was going on in the National League, Hank Sauer was earning the title of "Most Valuable Player" in the International circuit. Both men were left-fielders.

Sauer's club, Syracuse, has a working agreement with Cincinnati, so no one was surprised when Sauer showed up at the Reds' training camp the following spring. Sauer and Galan treated each other politely and coolly, as is customary with men fighting for the same job. Manager Johnny Neun didn't know which to put in his opening day line-up, but finally decided on Sauer.

Sauer might have been a rookie, but he was no downy-cheeked youngster. He admitted to being 29 years old and this was his fourth try at the big time. He was desperate to make good because if he failed this year it didn't figure that there would be any fifth chance. The pitchers were all strange to him and he turned to the man next to him, in one game, and asked his advice. That man happened to be Galan, whose job he was trying to take away. To his pleasant surprise Augie cheerfully gave him the right dope. Hank soon fell into the habit of consulting Galan each time before he went up to hit.

Galan's advice was so good that Hank clinched the left-field job. "Not only does Augie help me with the pitchers," said Sauer, "but what's more, he tells me all the things I have to know about left field. Augie is just a swell guy."

Pitchers are notoriously jealous of each other's success and the late Ring Lardner wrote many funny stories based on this theme. Therefore, it was something of a surprise to see Hugh Casey, who isn't required to show up at the ball park until the third or fourth inning, come out in full uniform during pre-game batting practice. Hugh would station himself behind Rex Barney, critically watching the youngster's every move. Occasionally, Casey would halt the proceedings to demonstrate what Red had done wrong.

If Barney ever realizes his tremendous potentialities, and becomes a winning pitcher, a good deal of the credit belongs to Casey. Hugh is a stern teacher. "I told him I don't have to keep this job of coaching him," he said. "I can walk out any time I want and let somebody else take the responsibility, if he doesn't pay attention." Needless to say, Barney is the picture of concentration.

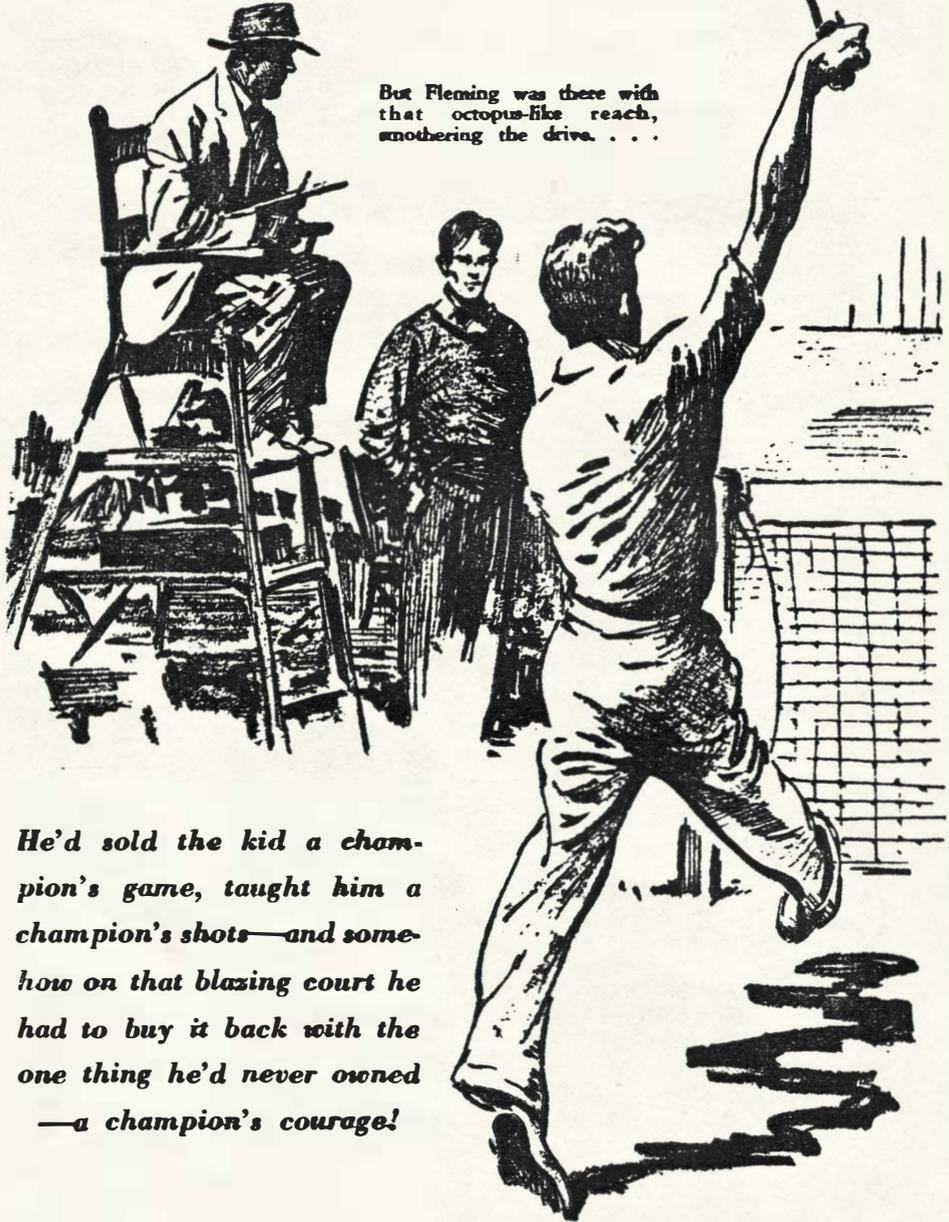
It is interesting to note that Greenberg, Galan and Casey, like Cobb, were men who had to fight bitterly for a place among the veterans. Some idea of their present attitude might be gained from the story told by Freddie Fitzsimmons.

"When I began in pro ball, in 1920, I happened to be warming up alongside of one of our regular pitchers. I could throw a fine knuckler, but had no curve. This other pitcher had a wonderful curve. He asked me how I held the ball to throw a knuckler and I gladly showed him. Then I asked him how he threw his curve. He didn't answer so I asked again. When he still acted dumb I suddenly realized that I was on my own. I swore then never to hurt any kid, like I'd been hurt, by refusing him help."

# — WHITE LINE

A  
NOVEL

But Fleming was there with  
that octopus-like reach,  
smothering the drive. . . .

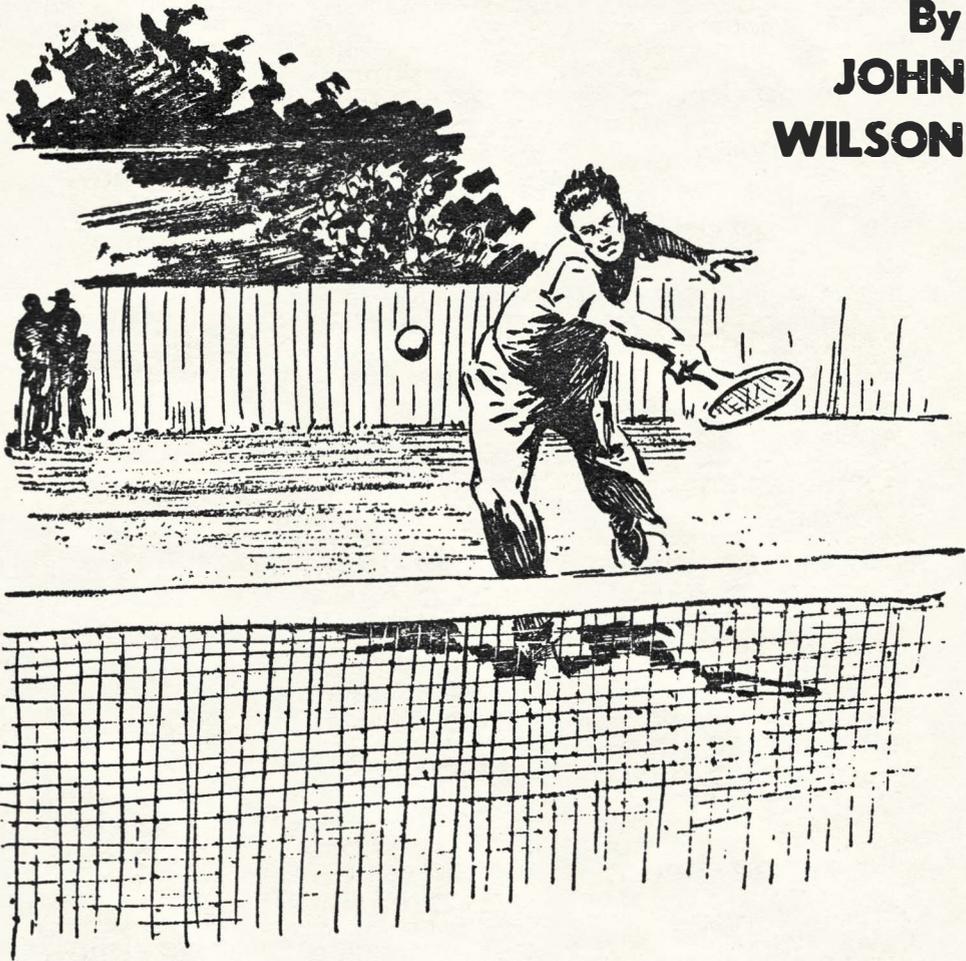


*He'd sold the kid a cham-  
pion's game, taught him a  
champion's shots—and some-  
how on that blazing court he  
had to buy it back with the  
one thing he'd never owned  
—a champion's courage!*

# LIGHTNING

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By  
**JOHN  
WILSON**



**K**EN BAXTER didn't kid himself that he'd ever been a shotmaker much better than the run-of-the-mine. He'd been able to give the big-timers a pretty good scrap, but that was his limit. He'd won no really important tourneys and been somewhat surprised when a pro bid was offered him. Not as a first stringer, of course, but as a prelim guy in there to hold down the promotional budget. So there again, he'd been no

whiz. He owned the knack, however, of getting away his stroking with a soundness of execution. Like many club pros, Ken found himself to be a more capable instructor than player. He knew the book, and his faculty for putting across his lessons was nothing short of amazing.

Ken smiled slightly, sensing the same grim and hungry ambition locked in the lanky, loose-hipped kid across the net, once a part of his own make-up. Well,

Eddie Robbins was a fine prospect and in a couple of seasons would be making quite a dent in the amateur ranks. Eddie was his star protege and Ken took pride in the lad's rapid progress. But Eddie, feeling his oats, was becoming rather difficult to handle. Eddie was easily the best player at the Fox Hill Club and seemed to be under the impression that he could step out and rip the tennis world apart. He was a powerhouse guy, his forehand a lashing weapon, though still somewhat erratic. A bit more work on that forehand and it'd soon measure up to the hair-line backhand. The kid's overhead game was a detonating thing and he could generally hit from any level with a judgment and fine accuracy.

**K**EN went into a smooth, stylish delivery. He had a good hard serve, reliable though not overpowering. It clipped the forehand corner and Eddie Robbins did nice things with his feet and a streak of white flew off his bat. There was good top-spin on that one, and Ken took it on the rise, feeding to the forehand. Eddie Robbins pounced on the pellet, unloading a low, sizzling drive down the middle. Ken hit again and again to the forehand, probing and searching its strength and weakness. He wished Eddie would stop trying to murder everything that came across.

He deliberately left himself open to a drop-shot or soft pitch of any sort, hoping Eddie would spot the empty forecourt. But Eddie preferred to hit away, and Ken stayed deep, accepting the blows. Ken belted down the line, and stepped toward the net. He wanted now to force Eddie to cut loose with an attempted passing shot off the forehand. He wanted to build Eddie's confidence in that forehand. Eddie obliged, hammering the pill off the forehand and shaving the line.

"That was nice." Ken told him. "You caught me off balance and poured it

through. But you've got to keep an eye peeled on the forecourt, Eddie. I gave you plenty of target, hanging back, but you went right on trying to blast me off the court."

Eddie Robbins, a dark-browed, lean-faced kid, said, "You don't have to make alibis for yourself, coach. I just slapped one where you weren't and got myself a placement." He was grinning slightly and his voice held a casual ring.

The thought occurred to Ken that Eddie was making a lot of these smart-alecky remarks these days. Ken asked himself if Eddie wasn't possibly taking these practice sessions as personal triumphs over the coach.

"You're kidding, of course," Ken said, giving Eddie a direct look.

Eddie laughed. "Yep, just kidding, coach. Lou don't really think that I could whip the club pro, do you?" His eyes held a touch of defiance. "That'd be kind of embarrassing—pupil beating coach."

"There'd be nothing embarrassing about it," Ken said quietly. "In fact, I'll be very happy when you can take me over, Eddie. But I don't think you can do it yet. You or anybody else here." He paused, aware that he'd spoken more sharply than he'd intended. Then, "Look, Eddie, there are a lot of topnotch players who take lessons from coaches who couldn't beat them in a hundred years. But they can still learn something from those men. We'll talk about it more later."

Eddie said, "I know about that angle, but it was only a couple of seasons ago that you were with the pros. You traveled around and gave exhibitions. You had to be pretty good to fill that kind of spot."

"I was an average guy," Ken said. "Just good enough to make a buck."

Eddie said, "It couldn't have been much fun being a—well—"

"A second-rater that I am, it's going to be a while till you show me the losing end of things."

"I'd like to try sometime," Eddie said. "I sorta think I could do that right now."

Ken was silent a moment. Maybe he should take Eddie on in a regular set and put him in his place. The kid was getting entirely too cocky for his own good. Ken brushed away the idea, aware that such a showdown would be the best example. He was employed as a coach and it was to be expected that he'd have to take a bit of guff now and then.

"Let's get back to the lesson," Ken said abruptly. "Watch your forecourt, Eddie."

Eddie stood at the net a moment, eyeing him through a thin grin. Then he shrugged and strode to the receiving court.

They went at it again, Ken bearing down a little harder on his serve and engaging Eddie in a swift, hard exchange. He shortened his shots, angling now and forcing Eddie to play the forecourt. Then, when he'd pulled him in, he fired a volley into the vacuum that landed a couple of yards inside the baseline. He didn't want Eddie plugging one gap and leaving a bigger one in his defense.

There was some applause from the sidelines where a flock of Ken's pupils were watching the session. Ken noticed Eddie's jawline tighten. It bothered Ken, that shade of bitterness Eddie wore for the moment. After all, he'd worked mighty hard developing Eddie's game and he expected some old-fashioned loyalty in return.

Ken picked up a chalk-duster that came off Eddie's bat and belted into the far corner. He danced in at close range. Eddie passed him, smiting with that backhand, which was a piece of poetry.

THE set rode to a finish and Eddie put together enough games to take it, 6-4. But it was hardly an achievement under the circumstances, as Ken had allowed himself to be a guinea pig.

"That's all for now," Ken said, walking toward the sidelines. "Tomorrow is

another day and we'll try some more." He made it a rule to quit while the other man still wanted to go on. He wanted the player to come back the next day eager to absorb instruction.

Eddie had that dark, grim look on his jaw. "Hey, what's the matter, coach? You tired of getting beat?"

Ken said, "Just relax and don't push things too fast, Eddie. I made that mistake once, believing I was a world beater until I got out there with rough company. So save yourself that heartbreak by not getting too big an opinion of your game."

Ken could sense something electric in the air, looking into the faces of the other pupils on the sidelines. There were a couple of dozen of them holding membership to the Fox Hills Club and new youngsters were steadily picking up cards. It was a really nice organization, with the development of new tennis talent the sole aim of the club.

It meant quite a tab, supplying equipment and the general upkeep of the club. But the men behind the idea were wealthy and had genuine interest in the development of the youngsters. What the backers had done was to mark off a section of the Fox Hills Club and give a good hunk of the grounds to the experiment. They'd built twelve new courts, and even a small modest clubhouse.

The thing about the whole set-up that pleased Ken most was the fact that any deserving youngster could find his way into the membership ranks. All that mattered was a show promise of turning out to be a pretty good tennis player. And those who did were assured of a real crack at the game. So it was quite a responsibility that Ken shouldered, and he fully lived up to it. He coached and organized tourneys and seeded them like big shots. He sent them out on occasion to play in regular tourneys. He didn't miss an angle in helping them in every way possible.

"I'd sure like to play you a set with the wraps off," Eddie was saying. "Maybe you wouldn't think I've got such a big opinion of myself. Maybe you'll find that I can do everything you can do out there and a little better, too. It just isn't fun taking lessons from a coach a guy can beat."

"I see," Ken said. "You're all ready to go out and wallop the best in the game, huh, Eddie?"

"No," Eddie said, putting out his jaw a little. "I don't feel that way at all. Just that I can beat you and that's hardly the whole world."

So there it was—Eddie Robbins, aching to take him on a set, and making it difficult for him to back out. Eddie was not content with being the number one guy among the club members. Now he wanted to show the others that he could handle the coach, too.

A big blond kid, Floyd Banta, an oft-time victim of Eddie's play, said, "Go ahead, take him up, coach. Robbins is always hollering that he can knock you off."

**"S**URE, show him how it's done," another said. "It's time somebody took the wind outa that guy's sails."

They stood around, the excitement in their faces, shouting for Ken to pick up the challenge. Ken hesitated, still not convinced that this was the best course of action. A moment later he didn't have much choice about it. The jibes of the others had angered Eddie into making a really nasty observation.

"Baxter was never even a good second-rater. Ask him yourselves. He didn't get this coaching job without having plenty of pull. Otherwise, there'd be a big-timer in the spot."

That was a real haymaker, and plenty foul, too. The anger surged through Ken.

"Where'd you pick up that wild story?" he asked, holding his voice even.

Eddie said tensely, "Fleming told me and he ought to know."

Ken was silent, the mention of Dick Fleming's name stirring old memories. He'd been low man in pro tours featuring Fleming and some other new big star from the amateur ranks. He'd never been friendly with Fleming. There'd been an incident when Dick Fleming had put up a beef that the prelim guys were getting too heavy a slice. He'd take it upon himself to tell Fleming what he thought of the complaint. That finished his touring with Fleming. He didn't make the list again. Still, it seemed a rather shoddy trick, Fleming making such a remark to Eddie, and Ken found it hard to believe that he'd done so.

Ken looked at Eddie. "Okay, you're asking for it. Grab your bat. One of the guys can climb in the ump's chair."

"I'll volunteer as the official," a voice deep in the pack said, "unless there's some objection."

It was then that Ken saw the heavy-set, beetle-browed Henry Cosgrove coming forward. He didn't know how much of the talk Cosgrove had heard but apparently plenty from the owlish glint in his eyes. Ken felt a bit awkward about the situation that had overtaken him. Henry Cosgrove, a nice guy, and a very wealthy one, was prexy of the executive board.

Ken said, "I hardly think there'll be an objection."

Cosgrove shook his shaggy head. "I suppose you intend to give the lad quite a trimming."

"He has it coming to him," Ken said. "Somebody is going to let the air out of his balloon head sooner or later. I might as well do it right now."

"Well, perhaps that will do this Robbins fellow some good," Cosgrove said. "But I kinda hope he beats you, Ken."

"That isn't likely," Ken said, surprised. "At least, not for a while."

Ken gave Cosgrove a curious glance. There wasn't much doubt that Cosgrove was tickled about Eddie's progress, especially after he'd bagged a couple of minor tourneys.

They spun for serve and Eddie won it and led off. He could really smoke the thing across, and Ken blocked the first one deep. Eddie stepped back and blasted, gauging the shot perfectly. It skidded on a nice angle, skirting the sideline. He pounded a delivery across that Ken was forced into netting. He ran up the score, forty-love, laying that marvelous backhand through the slot as Ken came in.

It was some time, Ken realized, since he'd really played tennis to win, and not with a coaching angle in mind. It felt somewhat odd now, this switch to a real competitive game, and he could not quite arouse the old fighting instinct. He got just one point that game, and there was a big confident grin on Eddie Robbins' face. There was some cheering from the on-lookers, for Eddie had really flashed some super-duper hitting.

It took Ken nearly two games to get under way. Eddie carried him to deuce four times in the second. Then Ken began to go to work on Eddie's forehand, slicing low, and to all sectors of the turf. He drew an error. He pounded the forehand some more, mixing the attack with slices and floaters. This time, Eddie's return was wild and Ken picked up the game.

**A**FTER Ken pulled his own delivery out of the fire, he really got a grip on himself. There wasn't any part of Eddie's game that he didn't have an intimate line on. Ken struck at the sensitive forehand, tearing it apart. He laid trap shots and soft lobs into the forecourt and when Eddie moved up, unlimbered the long-range shelling. Ken called on all the court savvy his seasons

on the big-time circuit had given him. He tricked Eddie into openings, and raked those chinks with a ruthless barrage. He smothered Eddie's best returns and replied with killing crosscourt volleys. Ken was forever piling on more pressure, forcing Eddie to hurry his hitting.

It wasn't a job that Ken enjoyed doing. He somehow couldn't help but feel that he was taking an unfair advantage of the youngster. He simply owned too much craft, and was so familiar with Eddie's weakness that he had an easy time of it. But the moment had come. Ken told himself, to hand Eddie the walloping he'd practically begged for. There seemed no other choice under the circumstances. He could not afford to allow himself to be taken over, and still hold the respect of the others on the sidelines.

Eddie's forehand buckled completely, and before the match was finished, he was socking far beyond the lines. His whole game, in fact, went wobbly, and he didn't faintly resemble the player he'd been these past months. He was a baffled, wide-eyed guy as Ken closed out the set, 6-1.

Ken walked to the net, putting out his hand to Eddie. "All right, it's finished and forgotten, Eddie. You keep plugging and after a while, I won't be able to touch you."

Eddie's face was pale and tense. "It's my own fault," he said bitterly. "I wanted to find out just how good I was and now I know. Those other guys I beat in the tourneys must have been awful chumps. I'm the biggest chump of 'em all."

"One whipping isn't much," Ken said. "It hurts to learn that you're not the red-hot guy you've figured yourself to be. So settle down and you'll make out fine, Eddie."

"Yeah, you're just the guy to talk about beatings," Eddie said grimly. His voice surged and his words spilled in a rush of angry breath. "You should know all right because you took it on the chin plenty.

Defeats never bothered you much because you were never nothing more than a punk. But I don't want to be a punk, see? I want to be big time or nothing."

He turned abruptly then, walking through the gathering, and toward the clubhouse. Ken stood there a moment, his throat suddenly hot and lumpy. He'd been hurt plenty in the past, for heartbreak is always part of a loser's trade. But standing there now, the eyes of all those kids on him, eyes that seemed to accuse him of some terrible sin, he felt a frustration he'd never before known.

"All right," he said, waving toward the courts. "Let's fill 'em up and get under way."

Henry Cosgrove, who'd taken in the episode from the ump's chair, now put his feet on the ground. He walked over to Ken, an odd little grin playing around on his lips.

"I'll be in the club bar, if you care to have a drink with me, Ken," he said. "Gol darndest thing, my blood pressure. The only way I can seem to keep it up where it belongs is to have some whisky flowing through my veins."

"Okay, I'll see you there," Ken said casually.

Ken spent the brief remainder of the session on the courts, instructing a couple of new candidates. But his thoughts kept pulling away from his work. He went to the locker room and got under the showers.

A short while later, Ken walked into the club bar. He spotted Henry Cosgrove sitting at the end of the bar, working on a highball.

"I've been sitting here drinking this awful whiskey, and mulling over this tennis situation," Cosgrove said, looking up. He mentioned toward a booth. "Suppose we go over there and talk. Don't want anybody interrupting till I've gotten a couple of things off my mind."

Ken followed him.

THE waiter brought Ken his drink, a beer. He sipped it, glancing at Cosgrove over the glass. The man's beetle brows were knitted.

"You were pretty rough on the youngster, Robbins," Cosgrove said. "In fact, downright ruthless in your play."

Ken said, "Robbins simply got to thinking that he was a better player than his coach. I didn't want a situation like that to come up. Since it did, I decided on beating him as badly as possible."

"You certainly accomplished your purpose," Cosgrove said, "but that beating probably ruined a fine player."

Ken said, "I was hoping the licking would help Robbins, and not ruin him. Besides, if a beating now is going to discourage him that much, he might as well give up the game."

"That would appear to be the case," Cosgrove said, regarding Ken closely. "But there's many an exception to the rule, as you well know. If you were a big star I don't think the beating would have mattered much to Robbins. He'd have accepted the defeat with even some pride—and sportsmanship."

Ken said, "I don't quite see what you're trying to put across."

Cosgrove said, "Look, this kid Robbins is at the crossroads. He can go on to be a really fine player or just another guy out there for the exercise. He knows you've never set fires on tennis courts, and figures he should be able to take you. But you beat him badly, and it rocks his confidence plenty. If you, whom he looks upon as a—well, a punk—can rip him, then what chance has he against the really big-time boys? See his logic?"

Ken was silent. He got the picture now, and it hurt. Eddie Robbins didn't put much stock in him as a player. So it was a bludgeoning blow to Eddie's confidence, losing so badly to a guy who wasn't really in the class of the big-timers. More than the beating itself, Ken realized, the ease

with which he'd humbled Robbins had shocked the youngster.

"Apparently, I should have simply let Robbins win himself a set of tennis," Ken said. "That would have made everyone feel good—except me. I'd have to put up with a lot of loud talk."

Cosgrove shook his head. "I'm sorry you couldn't have found another way to knock down the swelling around the youngster's ears. But like you say, the thing was forced upon you. But I'm wondering if you won't have a difficult time putting the parts together again." Cosgrove stopped, and leaned forward a little. "Here's the way I see it. All these weeks you've been sweating to build up the kid's forehand, strengthening his whole game. But mostly the forehand. Then in one slashing bitter attack, you kick the thing full of holes, and tear it to pieces. Now what, Ken?"

"I don't know," Ken said slowly. "That remains to be seen. But if Robbins is half the player I believe him to be, he'll come back strong." But even as the words spilled across his lips, he wasn't all sure but that he hadn't destroyed everything he'd built in Eddie Robbins' game.

Cosgrove said suddenly, "Well, perhaps you'll be able to find the weakness in Dick Fleming's game." He smiled oddly, and for the moment Ken found a dislike rising in him for Henry Cosgrove.

"I didn't know I was scheduled to play Fleming," Ken said evenly.

"It's not really definite," Cosgrove said, ignoring Ken's tightened jawline. "We're trying to get several of the headline pros to play here. We've contacted Fleming. In fact, I've talked to him myself. He's going to try and work the trip in his schedule."

Ken said, "You put up enough dough and Fleming will be here. Believe me."

"I suppose so," Cosgrove said, shrugging.

Ken said abruptly, "Did you by any

chance take Eddie Robbins along when you saw Dick Fleming?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact, I did." Cosgrove said, surprised at the question. "I'm very interested in the boy's career as you no doubt know by now. Wanted him to see Dick Fleming play. But why do you ask?"

Ken smiled faintly. "Just wondering about things. That's all." Apparently Eddie's remark that Fleming had accused him of bagging the Fox Hills job on pull was the McCoy.

**D**URING the next couple of weeks, Ken saw the fears that Henry Cosgrove had expressed about Eddie Robbins confirmed. Eddie didn't show the same enthusiasm for the game. But the saddest feature was that Eddie's forehand had lost the edge Ken's coaching had given it. Eddie was falling back into the old and vulnerable habits that Ken had so painstakingly ironed out of his play. In addition, new flaws were appearing, and Ken knew that it would take quite a while for Eddie to find himself again. Ken thought that entering him in an outside tourney might be the tonic Eddie needed. But Eddie was eliminated in the second round by a player he'd beaten handily in previous encounters. The old zing and confidence just wasn't there, though Eddie seemed to be fighting to overcome the shackles.

"Look, Eddie," Ken said on one occasion. "It wasn't that I was so much a better player than you that allowed me to lick you. You see, I'm so thoroughly acquainted with your game that it was easy for me to pick it apart. Heck, if we'd have met under ordinary circumstances, the chances are you'd have taken me."

Eddie's eyes snapped. "I'm not asking you to make any alibis for me. You're third string in my book and you tore me apart. Okay, so I'm a bigger chump than

you are. And that's all there is to it."

The news that Ken had been expecting was delivered to him as he was finishing a practice session with one of the players. Henry Cosgrove, walking to the edge of the court, beckoned to Ken.

"Sorry to interrupt," Cosgrove said, beaming. "But there's good news for you and the gang. We've just received a wire from Dick Fleming, accepting our offer to bring his troupe here."

Ken said, "Well, I'm glad he can make it. The gang will see some good tennis." He paused, giving Cosgrove a thoughtful glance. "I suppose I'm nominated to play Fleming."

"Well, that was the original idea," Cosgrove said, "But Fleming says the boys will be rewarded with a better brand of tennis if he takes on his regular sparring mate, Phil Whitmore." The impact struck like a quick, jolting backhand. "I see," Ken said. "Fleming wants some stiffer opposition than I'd be able to give him, huh?"

"I don't think there's much doubt that Whitmore will put up a better game than you."

Ken took a slow breath. He'd been thinking about this visit of Fleming since Cosgrove had first mentioned it. He figured he'd be guinea pig for Fleming's line-splitting stroking. Maybe he should be relieved that Fleming was playing a member of his own troupe. But somehow Ken could not feel a bit glad over the change. He'd been wondering if making a decent showing against Dick Fleming might not be the answer he'd been scouting. Certainly if he could extend Dick Fleming, then Eddie Robbins would not feel the shock of his own defeat so keenly. Eddie would see for himself that he'd been whipped by a guy not the punk he believed him to be. He'd find a real lift in seeing with his own eyes a really great player like Dick Fleming being forced the limit to win. It was a kind of psychological

thing, and possibly the medicine Eddie needed to restore his confidence.

Ken said, "I hope you'll insist on Fleming playing me. I want that match." The words had no sooner slid across his lips than he realized the futility of his hopes. It was almost fantastic, the thought that he could offer Dick Fleming any real competition. Fleming would run through the match in easy fashion and Eddie Robbins would be more aware than ever that he'd been whipped by a punk.

"Well, that's quite a surprise," Cosgrove was saying. "But you're in charge of tennis here and certainly should be given consideration." A grin crept across his lips, as though he were really glad about Ken's decision. "You've got a couple of weeks to get yourself in trim, Ken. Good luck."

It was two weeks to the day that Dick Fleming's pro troupe arrived at the Fox Hills Club. Ken had made the most of the interval. He was in good physical condition. His stroking equipment suffered only in its lack of real competitive tennis. So he got Tom Carter, his assistant, to push the pace. He drove himself hard, trying to arouse the old fighting instincts.

Ken was closing out his training on the day Dick Fleming arrived. He had gone three sets with Tom Carter, and felt pretty good as he picked up his bats and started across the court. It was then that he saw the tall, lithe guy standing on the sidelines and signing autographs. There was a flock of youngsters surrounding Dick Fleming.

Kent went over to where Dick Fleming stood, putting out his hand.

"Hello, Dick," he said. "It's been quite a while."

"IT'S quite a set-up you've got here," Fleming said, brushing his hand against Ken's palm. He grinned slightly. "I suppose you've been telling your pupils how you won glory—"

"I'm afraid it's been nothing like that," Ken cut in. "In fact, I've never made any bones about being anything better than an ordinary player on the circuit."

Fleming laughed. "Of course, you'd tell 'em the truth." He was talking in a light, casual voice, but the burn was in it just the same. "You always were a rather forthright person, as I seem to recall."

It was clear enough to Ken that Fleming was harking back to that mossy squabble over the slice of the gate allowed to prelim guys.

Ken said, "Well, I'm glad you and the others got here a couple of days in advance, Dick. It'll give the gang a chance to see more of you and pick up some pointers."

Dick Fleming cast a wink in the direction of his youthful admirers. "I'm the one who figures on picking up a few pointers, Baxter. From what I understand, you've insisted on being my opponent. You really intend to show me a thing or two, huh?"

The remark drew the laughter that Dick Fleming desired. Ken felt the jibe right down to his heels. It wasn't enough, he thought bitterly, that Fleming could beat him pretty much as he wanted. But he also had to humiliate him in front of all these kids who at least respected him as a coach.

"I'll play the best game I possibly can," Ken said evenly. "There's nothing more I can promise."

Fleming let his eyes drift to Eddie Robbins, who was standing beside him. Then he swung his glance back to Ken, eyeing him coolly.

"Perhaps you'll be just as brilliant with me across the net as you were beating this kid Robbins. Great job you did on him, I'm told."

Just like that, real nasty. Seeing the uneasy, pained look on Eddie's face, Ken got the impression that it wasn't he who'd

run to Fleming. Probably one of the club members.

Ken met Fleming's gaze but said nothing. Suddenly Ken was aware of Floyd Banta stepping out of the crowd. Floyd's face was grim and white.

"Listen, mister," Floyd blurted at Fleming, "Maybe you're hot stuff, but there's a few of us who happen to think Ken Baxter is a pretty regular guy, see? You can also take it from me that Eddie Robbins got exactly what he deserved."

Fleming stared hard at Banta. "That's the trouble with not having proper restrictions on a program of this sort. It allows for your sort of smart aleck to get in." He turned then, staring toward the clubhouse. Whatever hopes had risen in Ken that the club members were in his corner faded just as quickly. Only Floyd Banta and a few others remained, the crowd trailing Fleming in hero-worship style.

A moment later Floyd Banta pulled alongside of Ken as he headed toward the locker room.

"Don't let that big bag of wind scare you, coach," Banta murmured. "You'll give him a rougher time than he ever expected."

"He's quite a tennis player, Floyd. Just about the best, I guess."

Floyd looked at him. "You mean that you don't think you even have a chance against him?"

"Not much of a chance, Floyd. I was never in the same league with Fleming." He stopped, and grinned at Floyd Banta. "But the way you went to bat for me was just about the nicest thing that could ever happen."

"Didn't do much good, I guess," Banta murmured. "The guys went with Fleming."

"The crowd generally follows the champ," Ken said quietly. "That's the way it is, Floyd."

Banta was silent a moment. "They'd

have stuck with you. Maybe they believe that story about you getting your job here on pull. That's not true is it, coach?"

Ken laughed. "No, it isn't true, Floyd."

"That's what I've tried to tell 'em. But they kinda laughed at me. They say that's the only way you could have hooked on. They squawk that you never beat any of the really top players."

Ken swallowed hard.

That evening Ken saw Henry Cosgrove at a reception given for the visiting pros. Cosgrove called him aside.

"How do you think you're going to make out against Fleming?" Cosgrove asked, his brow clouded.

**K**EN said, "I wish I could say I expected to beat him. But you know the sort of player Fleming is, and I've just never been that good."

"Well, I hope for your sake that you at least give him a run for his money, Ken. The guy has been here less than twenty-four hours and he has some of the members believing they should hire a big-timer in your spot. He says that would really inspire the kids and you know we're all for taking any steps that might help our guys."

"Who does Fleming recommend for the job?" Ken said, half suspecting what the answer to that one would be.

"Himself," Cosgrove grunted. "If the salary can be fixed, Fleming wouldn't mind sticking around here for a fixed number of months. Then, when he went on tour, he'd send in another pro to take over till he returned. Oh, it's quite an idea the guy has."

Ken knew then what was behind Dick Fleming's strategy to turn his pupils against him. Apparently, he'd had his eye on the job as a sideline for quite a while. That's why he'd pedaled that false steer to Eddie Robbins about him getting the Fox Hills job on less than merit. Fleming knew Robbins would mouth the

lie to the others and there'd be a loss of respect. In fact, the chances were that Eddie never would have gotten so cocky if Dick Fleming hadn't done such a good job of tearing his coach's tennis rep apart.

Ken went out there on the main grandstand court the next day. He tried to appear calm and give the impression that this match was simply a routine thing. But he could feel his heart pounding and a terrible desperateness spreading through him. He glanced up into the jam-packed stands, where all the youngsters he'd instructed were anxiously waiting for the match to get under way. *I've never been a great player*, he thought, *but I'd give anything to be one just for today.*

He was shaky during the warm-up, the racket feeling strangely cold in his hand. He couldn't seem to make the ball behave the way he wanted, though the crowd wasn't likely to yet be aware of that failing.

"Are you sure you've had enough warm-up?" Fleming asked as they came in to spin their racket. He had that nasty little grin on his lips.

"Quite sure," Ken said.

Fleming won the flip. "Go ahead, you serve, fella. Let's see what you got—"

Ken stepped to the chalk mark, feeling like there was more of the stuff in his legs than on the court. He swept into the delivery, and the contact was clean and hard. It surprised him a little, the looseness he'd gotten into the swing. But the pleasantness of the moment ended almost right then. Dick Fleming took the delivery off his forehand, and lashed deep and close to the sideline. Ken scurried over there, stabbing and hoisting the retrieve. He saw Fleming grin just a little as he gauged a mid-court smash. Ken started running with the flash of the bat, but he couldn't have gotten that one back in play unless he'd been sitting in the stands.

He fed the serve in there again, and

Fleming pounded explosively down the middle. Ken tried to block to the baseline as he spotted Fleming closing in on the net. But the shot didn't come off as he planned and again he couldn't touch the overhead smash that found the opening. He dropped his own service without so much as scoring a point. That first game was enough to convince Ken that Fleming meant to make a clean sweep of the match. Fleming would like nothing better than to pour the humiliation of a pair of love-sets to him. He had the game to do it, too, Ken knew. The pro champ was a powerhouse guy, uncanny in his anticipation of the other man's stroking, and forever cutting off the rallies with swift, finishing thrusts from all levels.

Ken punched into Fleming's delivery, driving for the deep angle as the latter followed in. The opening was there for that shaving of a second but Ken couldn't poke the shot into it. He stood flat-footed

while a crossing volley cut the sideline chalk. He netted the next delivery and the gallery was beginning to murmur. An ace slipped past Ken and the buzzing comment rifling the afternoon grew to a groan of disappointment. It wasn't much of a tennis match, one player completely dominating the play and the other hardly able to find two successive returns in his bat.

**I**T WAS forty-love and it didn't seem that Ken was ever going to snap the rush of point-getters that flew across the net. He dug in hard, grimly determined to put an end to Dick Fleming's whirlwind tactics. The delivery chipped the backhand corner and Ken reached and shoved it into the deep court. The return apparently surprised Fleming, who figured on an ace or forcing an error. He'd come in at close range but whirled now, making his shot with his back to the net. Ken angled it short and beyond retrieve.

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## WHITE LINE LIGHTNING

realize that he'd been whipped by a coach who was something of a big shot himself. The sting would cool on that bitter defeat he'd taken. Eddie would find his confidence then and go on to be the fine player that he'd promised to be. Ken felt a physical pain in the thought, for he was letting Eddie down, making himself appear an even bigger punk than Eddie believed him to be.

The delivery roared across, dabbing the center chalkline and twisting toward the outside. Ken satisfied himself with simply making the return. A bullet whistled down the line and Ken sprinted across the turf, racket thrusting and making contact. He'd gone down on one knee, and now he surged to his feet and ran desperately into the far corner. He swung on the ball again and fought to ease Fleming's control of the attack.

He could do nothing about stopping the flow of sledge-hammer drives that came off the champ's bat—nothing but run endlessly and prolong the rally. Once he ran far beyond the sidelines to retrieve an overhead smash. He drew another forcing volley and this time scampered behind the baseline to send up a lob. Time and again during that tremendous rally, Fleming's racket blasted and somehow the ball always came back to him. It was miraculous—almost—until Fleming whacked a savage smash that Ken knew he could not reach.

A grim laugh rose in his throat, then gave way to cool relief with the ump's call, "Out!" He saw Dick Fleming shrug deprecatingly, but there was a touch of anger beneath the poised grin on his lips. The guy was just a bit sore about losing so hotly a contested point. And it occurred to Ken then that it'd been ridiculous, his tactics of trying to pit his own game against the brand of shot-making murder that Fleming owned. He just didn't own that kind of stuff. But maybe,



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## FIFTEEN SPORTS STORIES

because of Fleming's haste to roll through the games, he could throw a bit of sand in the machinery.

**D**ICK FLEMING faulted, then ripped in the next offering. Ken drove deep and the rally got under way again. He ran hard and desperately, vaguely aware that he was making retrieves that he'd never made before in his career. Somewhere buried in his mind, he knew, was the thought of Eddie Robbins, a kid whose game he'd wrecked. From somewhere the words kept coming. *You were never more than a punk. De-feats never bothered you. You were a punk. A punk. . . .*

Suddenly Ken was standing still, watching the other man's forehand sail over the baseline. He threw himself into the play, conceding nothing and sometimes wondering if it were not a machine that was pumping the white bullets across. He concentrated on making the retrieves and got most of them. It was almost a surprise, when the ump's voice said, "Game to Mister Baxter."

The games were five-one against him. Ken shook his head a little, realizing that the sensible thing might have been to concede the set to Dick Fleming. But he knew he would not concede even a lone point. He could feel the tingle of the crowd noise rising in the afternoon, and it seemed incredible that the cheers should be for him. There was Dick Fleming across the net, face dark, angered that this sudden break-through should happen with a love-set practically wrapped up.

Ken toed the service chalk, a grim and pounding fever spilling into his arms and the racket. He'd come up from a love-thirty deficit to cop the game, and the taste of victory was in his mouth. He'd make Fleming scrap for the set.

Ken laid a deftly sliced delivery into the forehand corner. Then he was pouncing

## WHITE LINE LIGHTNING

on the angled return, shooting into the vacuum that Fleming allowed as he surged in. That was fine—Dick Fleming taking chances with him that he'd ordinarily shun if he had a big-time rival across the net. Ken rammed another passing shot through the gap, and Fleming began to be a little wary about moving in. Ken held, taking his second straight game.

The gallery awoke to the fact that Ken was outmaneuvering the champ, and letting him toss away the points. But Fleming had the delivery now, and it was hardly to be expected that Ken would find another break-through in his bat. But he won the first point, Fleming netting after trying vainly to finish off a long rally with a blistering flat drive. The tape got in the way of that one. The game went to deuce, swayed three times to the champ's advantage and back to deuce again. It was a bitterly waged thing.

Then for the first time, Ken got his crack at the advantage. Fleming double-faulted, his second ball barely missing the chalk. He gave the ump a dark look on the call, and grimaced his disgust. Ken picked up the next serve, swinging for the money. He drove it straight at Fleming's feet. The latter tried a half-volley and Ken was waiting for it at the net, putting it away.

The noise was suddenly throbbing, ripping in tense waves from the throats of the fans. Ken was coming on, twice cracking Dick Fleming's delivery and turning a rout into a savagely fought battle. The noise was even louder when Ken held service, and crept to four-five in games.

But he could not go on springing miracles across the turf. Dick Fleming scorched the lines, and threw back Ken's bid. He took the opener of the three-set match, 6-4.

They went at it again, the second set

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## FIFTEEN SPORTS STORIES

picking up the same furious pace. Ken did not think of the score, or of the man on the other side of the net. He plunged, sometimes sliding headlong to make seemingly impossible retrieves. He forced Fleming to flail and hammer and work.

The games slipped away, and an aching weariness slipped up Ken's legs. But he kept running, chasing down the lightning Fleming poured across the net. They were rooting for him now, he knew, the kids in the stands, the regular members of the club. He was their guy, their pro, and their pride at the fight he was putting up was in their cheers. There was Dick Fleming, angered and more bitter than Ken had ever seen him. He could not seem to understand what magic power was holding Ken's game together, what magic allowed him to make those miraculous retrieves. *A lot of things, Dick. A kid like Eddie Robbins, needing this performance to bring back his own confidence. Another guy, Floyd Banta, who knew a thing about loyalty and told you off in forceful language. And you yourself, Dick, wanting the Fox Hills job and using the hero-worship of Eddie Robbins to help you land it. . . .*

**O**NCE during the second set, Dick Fleming cracked Ken's serve. Ken came right back to give the champ a taste of the same treatment. Then, in the sixteenth game, Ken came into the forecourt, pulling a half-volley that clicked for a placement. Fleming wasn't smashing with the same devastating impact. He'd blasted himself dizzy and it had been much like whaling the ball against a stone wall. Now some of the edge was wearing away. It was a little different, the way Ken was walking into the onslaught and punching it full of holes.

Ken ended the set, half-pivoting and cutting off a low, net-skimming drive. He angled it away, winning, 8-6.

## WHITE LINE LIGHTNING

Ken looked at Dick Fleming, wanting to say, "Does it still look to you like this job of mine was a gift?" That second set was the answer to the remark Fleming had made to Eddie Robbins. The kind of answer Eddie and all the others would understand, Ken knew. They were young and impulsive kids, and they judged strictly on performance. That was their language.

It did not really occur to Ken that he might even go on and win the match until the third set. It came to him then just why Dick Fleming had been so anxious to grab the Fox Hills job. Dick had been around and he still had his big, slashing game. But it cooled off sooner than when he was a few seasons younger. He could no longer sustain its power. But more important than even that factor, Fleming's reflexes had slowed just a bit. That was always the tag on a champ's wash-up. Ken could see these things because he'd watched Dick Fleming in hundreds of matches as their pro troupe struck across the country. He could see the difference now. Sure, Fleming wouldn't have minded a bit, taking over the Fox Hills job as a hunk of security. He'd go on a while, draining the remaining gold from his racket, and when that source dried out, he'd have the Fox Hills job.

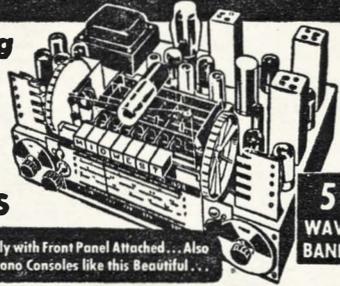
The third set was even, two games each. Ken won on his own delivery, and Dick Fleming took over. They divided the first two points. Ken blocked deep and Fleming slashed down the line. They swapped drives, and then Ken edged in and Fleming swung for the opening. Ken lunged, and the ball flicked off the gut at a sharp angle. He leaned into Fleming's next delivery, slamming a low, lashing drive into a bared corner. Fleming netted.

One point away from the breakthrough. They fought at long range, exploding continuous bursts of brilliant shot-making. Ken tried to move in, and a fore-

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## FIFTEEN SPORTS STORIES

hand passed him. Fleming tried for an ace, missed. The second ball was good. They exchanged a brisk series of drives. Fleming spiked a backhand into the far corner and Ken, racing across the baseline, got his bat on it. He hit away, a prayer and a hope on the shot. It was a magnificent retrieve, splitting the sideline, while Dick Fleming stood hopelessly at the net.

Ken had broken through.

Ken was thinking of how all these seasons he'd never really won an important match, a big tourney. He'd missed that thrill, but this day he somehow felt like a champion. This day, he knew he owned the champion's touch and it had been worth the wait.

He ran out the set, 6-4.

For a moment he stood looking up into the stands, hearing the acclaim that had been so tardy in coming to him. It was a wonderful feeling and he brushed a hand across his eyes, and wished the sweat would stay out of his eyes. But he knew it wasn't sweat. He walked forward then, for the handshake ritual. But Dick Fleming wasn't waiting for him. Fleming was stalking off the court, thrusting aside one of the club members who got in his way.

There was a clamor of voices, and Ken, looking up, saw the youngsters spilling out of the stands, running across the grass. They ran right past and around Dick Fleming, not giving him a chance. There was Eddie Robbins leading them, grinning and calling Ken's name.

"Hey, coach, wait for us."

They were all there, Eddie and Floyd and there was Henry Cosgrove's big grin in the picture. And seeing them come toward him was the real victory, Ken knew. He wouldn't trade it for all the other victories he'd missed along the tennis trail.

He grinned and waved his racket and started toward them.

## GOAL OR BUST GUY

(Continued from page 23)

and in bad need of first aid from the sidelines.

From the top of the stands William Carey Willis spoke to his father. "Worth still doesn't believe it," he said. "He'll try once more. But I think he'll pass on fourth down. It may not be too good a pass, because he's a little flustered."

William Carey Willis was right. Worth didn't believe it. Third down with fourteen to go, he sent Polaski hurtling into the line again, and once more Polaski was met by a raging Pond who hurled him to the earth like a sack of potatoes. In three plays State had lost sixteen yards. They came out of that, shaken, unaware that they had been suckered by their belief in their own power and an underestimate of Marquand's strategic approach. On that fourth down Worth faded back for a pass, but his mind had been read. Instead of charging in this time, Pond and Wedge faded back with the other secondaries. Worth had all day to throw his pass as he wasn't hurried. He might have run with the ball. But Worth was flustered. He aimed his pass at his surest receiver, who was covered by three men. It was Trigger Lamar who leaped high, snared the ball, and was a sudden scarlet streak headed down the field for the second Marquand score. He weaved his way through like a master.

After that, a demoralized State team never could get rolling. They had the power, they had the men, but somehow nothing clicked. With only a minute to play and the score 14-0 in favor of Marquand, William Carey Willis picked up the phone and spoke to the Marquand head coach on the bench.

"You pulled another one out of the hat, dad," he said. "They should have murdered us."

Jake Willis's voice was strangely shaken. "We pulled it out son. *We* pulled it out."

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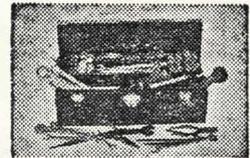
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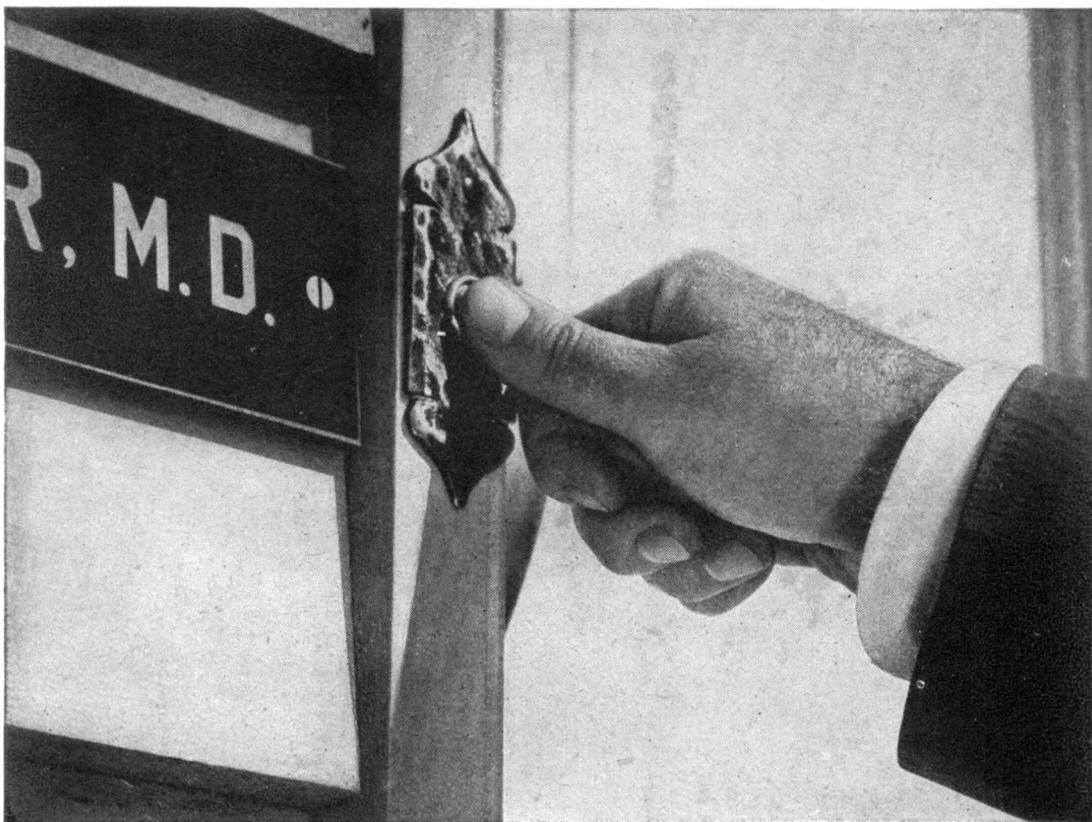
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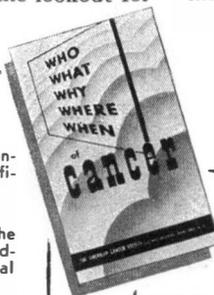
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