

FOOTBALL

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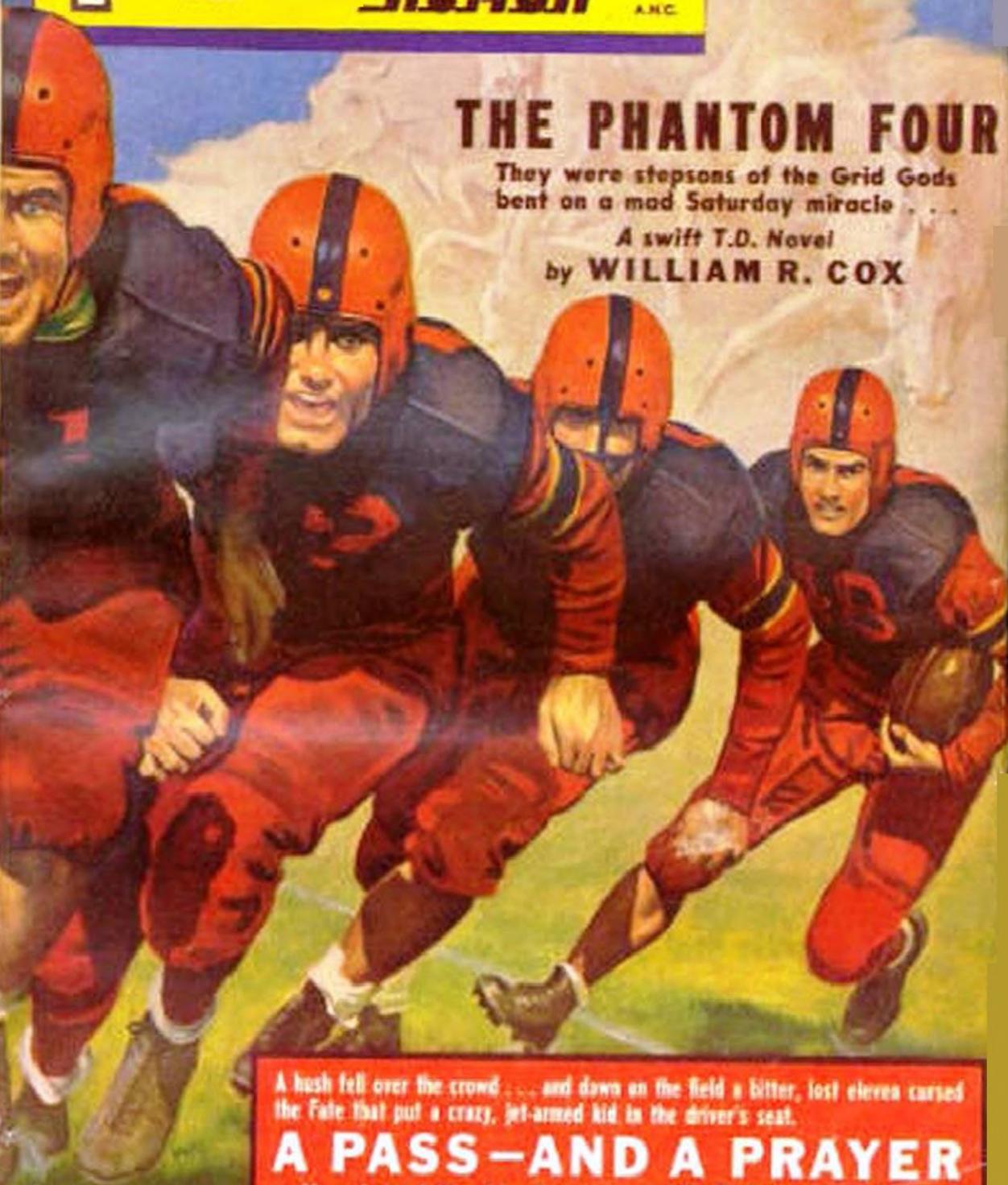


THE PHANTOM FOUR

They were stepsons of the Grid Gods bent on a mad Saturday miracle . . .

A swift T.D. Novel

by **WILLIAM R. COX**



A hush fell over the crowd . . . and down on the field a bitter, lost eleven cursed the Fate that put a crazy, jet-armed kid in the driver's seat.

A PASS—AND A PRAYER

Novel of Pigskin Giants by **JOE BRENNAN**

1951 Football ACTION

T. T. SCOTT, *President*

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A Thrilling Booklength Grid Novel

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THE PHANTOM FOUR!

By WILLIAM R. COX

Out of the storm of rebellion against the new coach's iron-fisted rule emerged a roaring, cleat-crazy quartet . . . four stepsons of the Grid Gods bent on a mad Saturday miracle for the fame and glory of old Austin U.

BILLY HEATH walked across the practice field toward the girl with the green spring suit and the long auburn hair. He was wearing a T-shirt, shorts and football shoes. His cropped head was bare. He had wide shoulders and his body was well-padded with corded muscles and the round calves of his legs showed plainly that he was built for the



pigskin trail.

He had deep-set eyes and his mouth was firm and about him was an air of competence and thoughtfulness. Yet restlessness and possibly doubtfulness rode him, casting a pall over his customary brightness.

Polly Ordway said, "You'll show them, Billy."

She had greenish eyes, slanted upward at the corners, and her smile was flashing in the spring sunlight. She had a figure amazingly bountiful in the proper places and correspondingly slim where the eye sought slenderness. Of all the co-eds at Austin University, Polly was the most desirable in the eyes of the majority of the opposite sex.

"Show *them*?" Billy Heath said bitterly. "Show *him*, you mean."

"Come on, now," she said gaily. "If you're a champ T-formation quarterback you're a top-flight single wing man."

He said gloomily, "I haven't blocked or tackled except in practice for years." He was a junior at Austin. He had quarterbacked the frosh and then the Varsity as a sophomore star. That was under Galligan.

But Galligan was gone and from where he stood Billy Heath could discern the hard, handsome features of the new head coach, now becoming acquainted with his charges. This was the great Asa Calvey. This was the former coach of the professional Red Stars, the exponent of the single wing, double wing, rock 'em and sock 'em game.

Polly was saying, "You'll be in there. You're the brains. Asa knows you're the strategist of this bunch."

It was a big bunch. The freshman eligi-



bility rule was suspended at Austin during the emergency and the alumni had been busy, promising great things now that Galligan had been bought off and the new pro coach installed. Of course Galligan would have had the experienced men such as Billy and Kicks McGraw and Ranger Ronson and Lew Levinsky and Port Damson and the others.

But Galligan had lost four games the previous year. Never a slave driver, always the good fellow, he had brought his boys slowly along the trail, hoping to come out this season with a winner. Billy Heath had figured largely in Galligan's blithe plans—and they had fired Galligan forthwith.

Billy said, "Asa knows only that he has to make a Bowl game right smack off with material like this, or the same wolves will make him walk the plank." He added gloomily, "Asa! You and him are altogether too Asa-Polly for me."

"It will do you good to be jealous." She was laughing at him. "You'll play harder for old alma mammy."

He said, "Go kid the coach." But he had to smile at her. He always did—she was for laughs and fun, she was great. He felt a little better, trotting to where the backs began to assemble around the head coach.

Hype Sligo was taking care of the line. As Billy passed the sweating pachyderms he winked at Kicks McGraw. His roommate, stocky, neckless, oak-legged, was the best running guard in the country, Billy thought. Kicks also booted off and converted the extra points with clocklike regularity. He was a round-headed young man with a cocky grin and a swagger which caught everyone's attention.

Kicks said, "G'wan, get smartened up. Already this joker is telling us how the Red Stars did it."

Sligo, a blond man with a broken nose and a slightly prognathous jaw, called, "McGraw! Attention!"

Kicks looked innocent. "Attention to what, sir?"

Sligo roared, "I want every man on the ball every minute, unnastand? Now . . . one! Two! Bend DEEP! One! Two!"

Billy moved on. Galligan had never driven them like this in spring training, as if a game impended the next week.

The new boys didn't know any different, but he thought he sensed rebellion stirring among veterans. He pulled up on the outside of the ring of backfield candidates around Asa Calvey and listened.

Calvey had a clear, low voice. He spoke unlike his assistant from the pro ranks, in unaccented syllables, slowly, plainly.

"I must tell you that you are all even with me, all you backs. In shifting to the single wing formation you will learn certain assignments. The ones who execute them best will play." He paused, then went on in the same even voice, "Furthermore I expect every one of you to block and tackle. Everyone can't punt or throw a long pass. But no man plays football for me who does not carry out assignments. And when you hit an opponent, I want him hit all out, solid."

No one moved nor even coughed. Asa Calvey said, "Go and put on your pads, fellows. We start sweating this afternoon."

They broke for the clubhouse. The linesmen also were dismissed by Sligo. A stream of husky youths made for the nearby field house where the equipment was stored.

Asa Calvey said, "Heath! Just a moment."

Billy waited, drawing a deep breath. The coach was taller than he, a man about thirty-two. Calvey had been a great single wing tailback, one of the best. In pro ball he had been one of the few, because pro ball is mostly all T-formation. He stood a moment and the two men surveyed each other.

Calvey said, "I want you to call signals if possible. But it will have to be from the number three spot."

Billy nodded. "I understand."

"You do," said Calvey. "You know you're not a ball carrying back. It will be blocking that you never had to do from the T. It won't be easy, Heath. Take your time, try to get in shape."

Billy's mouth tightened. "I'm always in shape."

Calvey reached out a brown hand. He picked up two fingers of beef at Billy's waistline. "Solid, sure. But it slows you down. I want fast men, rocky men. I'm looking for a big season."

"I'll be in there," said Billy coldly. "If

I don't perform you can bench me."

Calvey's expression did not alter. "Why, Heath, you're already benched—until you make good."

Billy went into the locker room. He dragged out the stiff new pads and jersey and pants. Kicks was adjusting laces. Billy said, "Two years thrown away. Six, counting four years at prep in the T."

"Sure," said Kicks cheerfully. "It's a new game. So what? Don't let these play-for-pay type boys get you down, pal."

"I'm not down, I'm sore," said Billy.

"Just rock and sock 'em," said Kicks. "No more brush blocks. Now you stay with the boys. I loves it!"

Billy was silent. Kicks was right in a way. Football was a contact game. As T formation quarterback he had scarcely been touched during the time he was in there. He was a ball handler, a good one. Under Galligan he had run the team and he had loved it. Now all was different. It was, as Kicks said, a new game. And it was a new start for Billy Heath.

He went back out for the contact work. Calvey and Sligo and the other coaches were spread all over the field. They took the squad in bunches. They set them against each other and slowly worked them into a sweat. Then the linesmen went at the bucking machines.

The backs took first turn at the tackling dummies. Billy got into line and waited. Ahead of him Ranger Ronson, the lithe running back who had not played on defense in years ran down the lane, took off and dove. He rocked the dummy, but lost his grip and rolled away.

Calvey's voice, still cool and even, said, "That won't do. Take an extra hour on tackling, Ronson."

The Ranger got up. He stared at Calvey a moment, started to speak. He was a quick-tempered lad and Billy held his breath. Ranger checked himself, returned to the end of the line.

Lew Levinsky, another offense player, but a blocking back, sailed at the dummy. He hit it solidly, but did not hang on. Calvey's voice bit him, too. Port Damson, the big fullback, just blasted away and the force of his charge got better results. Then Johnny Rapp, line-backer, solid man, took the dummy clean and Calvey rapped out a "Good man."

Then it was Billy Heath. A hundred thoughts went through his mind as he took off for the run. He was intensely aware of the eyes of the men behind him. It occurred to him as he made his dive that Ranger had not spoken his resentment because they were all waiting for him to start it. He had been the leader, the quarterback, the boss on the field.

He made the remembered take-off from his right foot. He hit the slick-canvas dummy with his shoulder. He grabbed and jerked as he went into it.

He slid off. He tumbled and rolled and the dummy swung mockingly above him. The silence was profound as the line of men gravely awaited.

He got up. Calvey was looking at him with those dark eyes, no hint of humor behind them. Calvey said quietly, "You'll join Ronson for some extra work."

For a moment Billy hesitated. There was a lot he could say. He was not a pop-off, like Ranger. He was not a wisecracker like Kicks. Whatever he chose to say would be heard by the others and remembered by them.

He held Calvey's gaze. He said coolly, "That's right, Coach. I'll take extra work on the tackling."

He trotted back to the end of the line. No matter how he felt about it personally, he could not bring it into the open. It would start trouble within the ranks. It would mean that Austin football would start the new regime under a handicap. He thought too highly of Austin football to inaugurate anything like that. He did not like Asa Calvey nor Hype Sligo. He resented the professional approach to the game. But he had something to prove to himself.

Out of the corner of his eye he caught a glimpse of the green scarf on the girl in the wooden stands which flanked the practice field. To the right loomed the concrete pile which was Austin Stadium, where tall trees towered, their top branches nodding over the arena where the traditional games would be played next Autumn.

All around were the scattered old buildings of the ancient and honorable college. Billy Heath's father and his grandfather had come to school here. This was his place, his home. He did not intend being

displaced in any way by hired professionals.

He spent an extra hour on the tackling dummy with the other former offense-platoon men without comment.

II

THEY were in the campus hangout, a self-service hamburger and sandwich and coffee house run by a man named Oswald. Polly Ordway said, "Must you work for your father? Can't you come up to Michigan and have fun this summer?"

The June sun came in and touched her hair. Billy said, "Do you think I don't want to?"

She sighed. "Asa is going to come up in August. I thought maybe you and Kicks might make it. You three could talk football and shoot with Dad and canoe like crazy."

"No thanks," said Billy drily.

"You'd like Asa if you didn't have that chip on your shoulder," she said defensively.

"I wouldn't like Asa if he was gold-plated," said Billy flatly. "Nor his pal, Sligo, nor the freshman goons he pets like they were his children."

They had been over that several times before and he was in a bad position, he realized. Two of the frosh came in, their dinky caps looking silly on their square heads. They were scholarship boys from Pennsylvania, Speck Cuzzo and Jay Broome. They were nice enough boys, rugged and tough-looking. Cuzzo was a line-backer. Broome was an amazingly clever quarterback, with blocking and tackling qualities far beyond the usual frosh. Billy wondered for the fiftieth time how these boys got so good so young.

Polly said, "Then I won't see you until fall."

"Grateful?" he asked sullenly.

"No. But I'm not going to cry about it," she snapped. Her cheeks were suddenly pink. "Go and play at learning your father's business. Be a big, serious Babbitt."

"Who. . . me?" He was genuinely surprised. She arose and walked swiftly out of the place. Billy stared after her. He could not conceive of himself as a serious character, a square.

On the sidewalk he saw her pause. She was all smiles now. Asa Calvey appeared

and took her arm. They strolled away, laughing and talking with great animation.

Kicks McGraw came in. He squatted opposite Billy and said, "I just got the news—we're supposed to take jobs Calvey selects for us. I'm to go on construction in Maine. Road job. Big muscle builder."

"That's nice," said Billy. "You don't want to work for the Heath Corporation?"

"Not tough enough," said Kicks. "Pencils you make. Who can get rugged carrying pencils around?"

"Mechanical pencils, made of metal," said Billy. "Very heavy, a trayful of these."

Kicks said, "You're supposed to cut down trees in Oregon. I saw it on the list. That gal who works for Asa, Dulcey, she's cute. Told me all about it. We stay in shape all year around, get very rugged, beat Western, Cornwall, Midstate even."

"Midstate we shouldn't even play," shrugged Billy. "This Calvey is nuts if he thinks I'm going to Oregon. Heath Corporation is going to be my life. Father isn't too well and summertime he's got to take a rest."

"Sure. I know." Kicks was silent. Then he said, "I don't guess I'll go to Maine, either. You've been damned good to me, working me into your business."

Kicks was an orphan, earning his way through Austin on a football scholarship plus a job selling advertising for the Austin Bulldog, the football program-magazine.

Billy said, "You do what you think is best. You've always got a job with us, you ought to know that. Father thinks you're a damned good man. Don't louse up with Calvey on our account."

The blocky linesmen thought it over. Then he said, "Maybe I better not make up my mind right away. Let's have a coke."

Billy turned to get off his chair and fetch the drinks. He was aware then that the freshmen footballers had been within earshot while he was talking to Kicks. He spoke to them shortly as he ordered from Oswald. They were equally brief in their responses. Oswald filled two tumblers with ice and mixed the drinks.

The owner of the place was a lantern-jawed man whose white jackets were always immaculate. He was a fixture at Austin. He had come in from nowhere five

years before, opened the place, with living quarters in the rear and had immediately won favor for his excellent sandwiches and assiduous attention to campus trade. He held the drinks a moment on the surface of the single counter and asked, "We gonna have a great team this year, Billy? We gonna beat Midstate?"

"Sure," said Billy. He put down the coin for the drinks.

Oswald persisted, "I hear it's gonna be tough. Changin' systems and all."

"It's all in the game," said Billy uncomfortably, aware of the listening freshmen.

Oswald said, "Well, he better use you plenty, that's all I got to tell him. He better use the old Austin men."

BILLY took the drinks away. Oswald was a jackass. He had become so absorbed with the Austin students that he considered himself a part of the school. No one was more audibly loyal than Oswald. The lanky man had bought a second hand convertible and its windshield was plastered with stickers proclaiming him an Austin man. He drove around in sweater and slacks, aping the campus slickers . . . he was a real collegiate type kid, Austin brand.

Kicks sipped at his straw, took it out of the glass, frowned at it. "I dunno. I like this single wing business. But I'm not too sure about other things."

Billy said in a low voice, "Shut up, dopey."

Kicks glanced at the two husky boys at the counter. He shrugged. "That's what I ain't so sure about," he murmured.

"It'll all come out in the wash." Billy essayed a cheerfulness which he did not feel. "We'll be out of this slave ship next week and on our way home. You can at least stay a week with me. We'll have some fun."

"Sure," said Kicks. "Wouldn't miss it."

But the old spirit wasn't there, Billy knew. Calvey wanted Kicks to toughen up on a construction job and Kicks wanted to work for Heath Corporation. Which-ever choice Kicks made he would not be entirely happy.

When he left Kicks he walked down to the old gym and into the offices of the athletic department. Asa Calvey came in behind him, still smiling a little, quite blithe. Billy waited and Calvey motioned

him into the coach's private cubicle.

Calvey said, "The only way we can hope to go through next season without getting our cans beat off is to be in better shape than our opponents. Therefore I've figured out. . . ."

"I've heard," interrupted Billy. "I wanted to tell you that my father needs me in his business during the hot months."

Calvey's eyes were suddenly hooded behind drooping lids. He said coolly, "Ah yes. The pencil business. Important, of course. You're an only son."

It sounded like an accusation to Billy, but he let it pass. He said, "I haven't any choice about it."

"Yes . . . well, I'll send Broome to Oregon. Jim Massey is going to be up there and there'll be a football forum. Massey's the greatest single wing man in the world."

Massey was the pro coach of the Red Stars.

Billy said, "You're going to Oregon, then?"

"I'll be there. I'll be all over the country, on the business of coaching Austin."

"Stop off in California," said Billy. "Be glad to see you. Father stands in well with a lot of people."

"Thanks," said Calvey perfunctorily. He seemed to have lost all interest in Billy. "I'm afraid I won't get down there. Have to get to Michigan in August."

"Uh-huh," said Billy. He walked out, doubting that Calvey even was aware that he had left. He had a sinking feeling within him. It was plain as the nose on his face that the men who took the jobs Calvey found for them would be the favored candidates for the team.

There was a certain justice in this, he admitted. Calvey was jumping the gun on other coaches, extending spring training through the summer. He was a fiend on physical condition. He kept himself trimmed down to two hundred, healthy and fit, and he wanted every man on his squad equally tough. He had a right to expect it.

Working in the office of Heath Corporation, no matter how much golf and tennis went with it, would not toughen a man like lumber camp labor, he knew. He was well aware of the advantages of bone labor. He went to his room, his brow furrowed.

He was a B-plus student without too

much effort; he had no worriment there. He had been a very happy young man before Asa Calvey had been brought to Austin. True, he had army service ahead—he held a commission in the reserve—but this was the common lot and he had long accepted it.

Now things were beginning to crumble. He sat in a deep chair and wondered if he should speak with his father and attempt to take the job in Oregon. Football was important to him. He had always been a footballer, since he had been able to toddle about with a junior sized football under his arm. And at Austin there was a tradition of Heaths in football—his father, his uncles, his cousins.

He shook his head. His father's health was more important than football.

He got up, restless, and looked out of the window. The campus grass was green and lush. A convertible with the top down wound its way over a gravel path. There were three men in it.

The driver was Oswald, never happier than when he was transporting students about the premises. The other two were Jay Broome and Speck Cuozzo, the freshman football flashes.

Billy stood staring down at them. They typified the change in Austin football, he thought. Next season it would be fish or cut bait. The new order was going to be rough on T formation quarterbacks with responsibilities at home.

III

IT WAS Harwell for the opener, a tough little crowd from the Alleghanies. The Austin team looked mighty big and powerful as it warmed up before the game.

It was astounding how they had taken to the single wing formations after the spring training and the summer work laid out by Asa Calvey. They were all bronzed and healthy and hard as kegs of nails, and they moved with precision in the power set-ups Calvey had given them. Billy Heath squired the second string down at the end of the field and once in awhile he caught sight of Jay Broome as he sparkled the loosening up of the Varsity.

It had all gone according to his conjecture. Kicks had spent the summer in Maine, where Sligo and some other lines-

men had shown up for informal talks. The rest had gone to Oregon and profited by the wisdom of Jim Massey. Then Calvey had begun to weld them into a smooth-working machine, and he had done a very good job.

He had Broome, Ollie Hare, Tim Cain and Liz Lizansky on his first offensive unit. He had Cuozzo, Johnny Rapp, Port Damson and Lew Levinsky in the defensive Varsity slots backing up, with alternating men in the other backfield slots.

On the line he had Larry Cortese and Tom Oligard for pass-catching and blocking ends. Sime Beale and Andy Wiskoski from the freshmen seemed bulwarks at tackle. Behind them there were plenty of others. Kicks, calloused and trimmed down, was safe at guard, maybe for fifty minutes each game, as was Gig Older, a senior giant who was pivot man. At center there were Farmer Hale and Joe Wolf.

Ranger Ronson, Billy and a couple of others who didn't count made up the second team backfield for practice purposes. They saw little action in scrimmage. Ronson was light and rebellious against strict training. The others were new kids, green and also too small, named Parsons and Fischel. It seemed very strange to Billy—and to Ranger—to be running with this crowd.

They went to the bench at a signal and Calvey stood before them and said, "As you know, I'm appointing the captains for each game. It's more efficient. Today it will be Older and Levinsky."

Nobody spoke. They all waited instructions. Calvey dominated them with ease, Billy admitted. He was smooth, calm, with underlying strength.

The Coach went on, "You know what to do. Rock 'em and sock 'em and let's see some scores."

That was all. He never made orations. He sent them out. Gig lost the toss. The defensive men went in and Kicks lined the ball up to kick it off.

Billy Heath sat on the bench. He turned and craned and picked out Polly Ordway by her inevitable green scarf, halfway up the tiers of students at midfield of the stands. He had seen little enough of her since the opening of school.

There was the customary silence before the kick-off as a new season loomed. The

Austin squad moved up to line the white chalk and cheer on their comrades. A striped shirt whistled. Kicks took his steps, swung his leg.

The thump of toe on ball resounded in Billy's middle. He squirmed on the bench. As the others turned, retreating with chins on shoulders to join him, he felt Calvey staring at him. He had not felt like joining them in the line-up that Calvey had prescribed. It had never been an Austin custom to do so, and he saw no reason to comply.

Calvey had been cool to him, of course. He had kept fit as best he could, but he certainly could not match the callouses and lean trimness of the boys who had slaved in hot sun throughout vacation...He felt fine, but he was not razor-sharp. Calvey sent him to the scrubs and there he stayed.

He watched the action. Kicks roared down after his long boot and a Harwell man took the ball on the goal line and started hiking up the middle. Harwell showed good blocking and it was Kicks himself who made the tackle on the twenty-five yard enemy marker. Kicks was faster, all right, Billy conceded.

Harwell went into the T formation and a slippery little halfback named Keeler wound up and skidded off tackle for six yards. Calvey, standing alone on the sideline, jerked his right fist. Sligo was on the phone, jabbering at the spotter high above the press box.

Harwell came again. This time the nervy little back skirted end. Cuzzo got him after a first down, knocking him out of bounds with a resounding thump.

Calvey took short, jerky steps, clenching and unclenching his hands. The man seemed calm on the surface, but he must be nervous inside, Billy thought. Harwell sent the little back into the line—but without the ball. A tall back threw a long pass.

Broome was playing safety at the moment. He should never have let the end get behind him. He ran very hard, but a red-shirted athlete leaped, took the ball. Broome chased him to the goal line. The Harwell end scored.

Calvey's lips were white. Harwell converted. The proper offense men went in, Broome remaining to call signals. Hare was the tailback, a brawny junior Billy had never known very well. In Billy's ear Ran-

ger Ronson said, "Single wing, huh? Now how do they get that score back quickly?"

Billy shook his head. Harwell kicked off. Hare got the ball on the five and ran it back to the twenty-five. Harwell's gang was hot as a firecracker, leading the favored bigger men so early in the game.

BROOME set his men unbalanced right and gave it to Lizansky. The big fullback hurled himself at the line. He got four yards.

Broome handed off a reverse to Hare. He got five as rough, tough Austin linemen blasted a hole. Broome sneaked for the first down from the number three spot.

Billy said, "That's how you get it."

On the thirty-two, Broome elected to send Hare outside. The fast running back eased off the Harwell secondary and ran to midfield as Kicks blocked two men. Lizansky went back at the line. He hacked and slashed. The Austin line was putting two on one and opening jagged holes.

They went down to the nine of Harwell, first and goal. Broome was using nothing but straight football. Lizansky charged.

The red line rose up. Fighting like wild men, they stopped Austin for no gain.

Billy moved uneasily on the bench. Broome tried the tackle. He got one yard.

Calvey was stepping off the needed yards with those short nervous strides. Ranger Ronson said, "Oh, yeah? We get it just like eatin' pie, huh?"

Calvey sensed the comment, it seemed. He whirled and glared at the bench.

Ranger said, "The silly jerk thinks he's Joe Stalin."

On the field Broome sent all the power of the single wing inside the guard. Men piled up. Red jerseys squirmed. The referee dove into the heap. He put the ball down on the five yard line. It was fourth and goal to go.

Calvey signalled and Older called for time out. Calvey snapped, "Heath!"

Billy went forward, headgear in hand. Calvey's eyes were burning. "Can you take orders, Heath?"

He did not answer, looking curiously at the coach.

Calvey grated, "Use 65—OUTSIDE. And block the end!"

Heath ran onto the field. Broome looked worried going off, almost frightened. The

Austins huddled. Billy said, "Outside with sixty-five and I block the end."

Older grunted, "I told that frosh to go outside but he said he had orders to wear 'em down."

A whistle blew. Billy said, "All right, hike." He went into the three-back slot. He called numbers and Older snapped the ball. It went direct to Hare.

Billy timed it, swinging out. They were supposed to let the end in if he slashed. They did. He was a big fellow. He spread his wings and drove at the blocking. Hare lit a shuck for the sideline.

Billy hit the end. He felt the man give, but himself went down. He lay there, watching Hare. It was a question of getting outside, then turning the corner. The blocking looked good.

Then a single red jersey flashed, some high-as-a-kite Harwell breaking through on sheer spirit. Billy could applaud the man silently even as he hoped Hare would make it.

Hare spun, cutting at the last moment. The red arm struck his knee. The referee was crouching, watching Hare's feet. Hare did not go down. But the referee dropped his red handkerchief. It was on the two yard line.

Austin had failed to power over from the nine yard line with four downs to accomplish this feat. Harwell, taking over, was a joyous outfit. Men ran on and off the field. Billy looked for his relief—and found none. Calvey was leaving him in.

Harwell lined up. They came quick from the T, breaking the line open for four. Billy, playing safety, moved back. He was watching the line very closely now. The Austins seemed very strong, but not very quick. Galligan had decried the beef on his line last year—Galligan preferred speed.

Harwell tried it again. Kicks McGraw suddenly took charge in the middle. He rode out the blockers. He got one hand on the ball carrier. Johnny Rapp, backing up, sailed in. He hit the Harwell amidships.

The ball spurted loose. McGraw landed on it.

Broome did not come on the field. Billy shrugged. He said in the huddle, "How about it, Larry?"

Cortese nodded. Billy gave the signal.

The ball went straight to Billy. He faked running to the left. He got outside, saw

a man coming in, ducked away. His right arm shot back, then forward.

Cortese hit the spot on a dead run, right on the goal line. He trapped the ball and stepped over for the score.

The Austin stands were up now, cheering like mad. The band was blaring. Kicks made the conversion. Billy trotted back up the field. He felt good again. The warm glow was all through him. This was football, this was what he loved.

Broome ran out. Billy's pulse diminished, he walked to the sideline. Calvey looked at him, beckoned. He went close to the coach and Calvey said, "I would have thrown it on second down. But it was good thinking. We hadn't thrown a pass."

"Thanks, coach," said Billy. He went to the bench.

Harwell couldn't gain and punted. Broome went back to knocking on them with the power.

Little by little Harwell folded. They didn't have the man power and the fumble resulting in Austin's quick score had dimmed their flaming spirit. The rugged condition of Austin began to tell. Hare scored.

Then Lizansky scored. Then Broome scored. It became a track meet. It became no fun. Everyone on the Austin bench got into it, lustily banging the heads of beaten Harwells.

Billy didn't feel good any more. The final score was 72 to 7, and he supposed Calvey poured it on because Harwell had frightened him by scoring first!

IV

KICKS was restless. He moved about the room overlooking the campus and said, "We win, all right. We murder them."

"High-scoring machine," Billy nodded. "72 points against Harwell. 60 against Conover. 50 against Western. 30 over Porterville. 28 over Valley . . . and Valley was the weakest team on the schedule. Mean anything to you, pal?"

Kicks said, "Let's take a walk." He had lost a lot of weight. Sometimes he was irritable.

"Then we beat Eastern and we score 35 points. But Eastern gets 28. Coach didn't like that!" Billy reached for his topcoat.

November had been warm in the East but the nights were chilly. He followed the quick-moving Kicks down the stairs and onto the campus. They walked toward Oswald's place.

Kicks said, "Eastern was up for that one. We couldn't get in the holes fast enough."

It was almost as if Kicks was on the team and Billy was not. They had fallen into the habit of talking like that since Kicks had proven to be a full-time member of Calvey's rock 'em and sock 'em club—and Billy had been relegated to spot duty.

Kicks went on fretfully, "He don't let you throw enough passes. Broome can't chuck 'em like you."

"Broome's doing a good job."

Kicks snorted. "He never calls a key signal on his own, and you know it. Calvey calls 'em from the bench."

"That's Calvey's system," shrugged Billy. They came to the hamburger haven and entered. He saw Calvey at once.

The coach was in a corner with Polly Ordway. Broome and Cuozzo sat with them, but Polly was in the corner of the booth and Calvey was pressed close to her. Polly was smiling.

Then she looked up and saw Billy. The smile faded. To his puzzlement there was reproach in her eyes. He turned away and went to the counter.

Oswald said, "Milk and a hamburger, right? The team sure is going' great, ain't it, Billy?"

They all talked like that, as if he were not a member of it, but should be delighted that all went well.

Oswald rattled on, "I been bettin' my shirt every week. There's some wise gamblers around this town. I got 'em hooked. Think they're so smart, always lookin' for points. I only give 'em six against Eastern! How many you reckon I can give 'em against Cornwall, huh kids?"

"Big gambler," grinned Kicks. "Two bucks per week."

"Two bucks?" Oswald snorted. "Say, lemme tell you. . . ." He stopped, buttoning up his flap of a mouth. "You gonna beat Cornwall by ten, Kicks?"

"Twenty," said Kicks carelessly.

"We'll be lucky to edge by them," corrected Billy. "Cornwall is loaded and hot

for this one."

Oswald looked worriedly from one to the other. "I got a lot of dough to ride on this one. Onna level, it's gonna be close?"

Kicks said, "We'll murder them."

"Like we'll murder Midstate?" murmured Billy.

Kicks did not answer. The Midstate bugaboo had begun to ride them all, Billy ruminated. Calvey had lifted them to a point where they had their sights set on the Cotton Bowl, Midstate, under Dan Hopper, another ex-professional coach, was leading the nation's weekly poll week after week. Calvey was making a crusade of winning over the powerful corn-fed boys. Kicks was as affected by it as anyone.

Behind him Polly said, "Hello, stranger."

He got down off the stool. Calvey had gone to the door where several students had stopped him to ask questions. Polly looked up at Billy and asked, "Have you forgotten me?"

"I'm a busy man, but not that busy."

She said, "I never told you about Michigan and what you missed last summer."

"I never wanted to hear," said Billy. "You look wonderful." As always she wore green. She bit her lip, looked toward the door, then back at Billy.

She said, "You could find time to call me."

"I didn't think you cared." He also threw a glance at where the Coach towered over the group at the door.

Polly flushed. "All right. Have it your way." She turned away from him and walked quickly, taking Calvey's arm, going out into the frosty November night. A harvest moon shone out there and Billy felt a twinge.

He was surprised that it went so deep. He had tried to put her out of his mind. She had been a big thing to him the previous year and during spring, but Calvey was really rushing her and she had seemed happy thereat.

It was two restless, nervous young men who returned to the dorm overlooking the campus that night.

It was a high-strung Austin football team which went out against Cornwall that Saturday. They met a bunch as big and fast and determined as they. Cornwall,

operating from the T, began throwing passes almost at once.

IN the second quarter Cornwall scored first to make it 7 to 0. Then the Big Blue held on, repulsing the rushes of Lizansky and the runs of Hare. The half ended with Austin, for the first time that season, on the small end of the score.

Billy had not seen action. He sat quietly in the locker room. Calvey talked. He had a pointer and a blackboard and he talked fast, showing errors. But there were not any glaring miscues for him to elaborate upon.

He looked at his men. He said, "It's a question of spirit. I'm no rabble rouser. But those fellows have got it. They're up. If you don't climb up, they'll beat you."

That was all he said. The teams took the field. Cornwall, well-manned and determined, played it safe. They seemed to have the pattern of defense to stop the signal wing. The third quarter ended. The fourth wore on.

There was something wrong, Billy Kicks rushed the Cornwall punter and Austin came up with the ball on their own forty. Calvey turned from his solitary post on the sideline and said, "Heath, come here."

Billy went over. He was cold from sitting on the bench, and somehow he wasn't there in his soul. He looked at Calvey.

The Coach said, "We've got to pass." His face was bitter and withdrawn. "They've quit on me We've got to pass to get even. Use everything you can. Take over tailback and call them from there."

Tail-back or number three, it meant little to Billy. He had filled in at all the single wing backfield posts in practice. He trotted on the field, swinging his arms to warm up. Hare looked pooped and relieved at going out. Broome was sullen, but when Billy gave the signal he did not change expression.

They lined up right, Billy in the slot. Older snapped the ball. Billy faked to Broome. He spun and ran left. He aimed the ball, cocking his arm for a long one. Cornwall, expecting this maneuver, spread out.

Billy shortened up and slapped a screen pass to Lizansky. The fullback had Kicks

and Beale and Larry Cortese for blocking. Lizansky ran hard with the interferers ahead of him, then cut. Billy was up there by then. They hit the Cornwall forty.

Lizansky seemed full of beans. Billy saw a Cornwall coming and headed him off. He almost brush-blocked, remembered in time. He hit the man solidly and dropped him, going down himself, maintaining contact.

Lizansky romped over a would-be tackler and charged for the goal line. Three of them got him on the ten as the stands went limp and the clock ticked toward game's end.

Billy lined them up. He stood straight in the tailback spot without taking a step. His arm whipped up. The ball went like a bullet across the line of scrimmage directly through center. Larry Cortese hooked in there. The ball was head high when Larry took it and whirled and charged over two Cornwalls.

Kicks made the conversion which tied the score.

The gun went off and the game was over and Austin was still unbeaten. Tied, Billy thought, was not so bad considering. No football team could be high every Saturday, not with a schedule like Austin's. He followed the others to the dressing room feeling some satisfaction that his passing could be a help, even if he could not be trusted to run the team Calvey's way.

In the field house it was like a funeral. Calvey was pale and angry. Sligo was roaring at his linesmen.

Calvey said bitingly, "It was spirit, I tell you. No team is in better condition than this one. You're all hard and fit. You're all sharp. We've coached you on every assignment. I've kept them simple. I don't accuse you of missing them. But you came close to quitting today!"

No one answered. No one except Ranger Ronson seemed to want to answer and Ranger had played so seldom possibly he too felt that he was not quite a part of this team.

There was something wrong, Billy agreed. These lithe, trim, hard-muscled athletes were certainly not playing the way they should. Calvey was right.

But he had an idea Calvey was wrong, too. He began to think very hard about this.

V

BILLY finally called the sorority house and made a date. He called for Polly and she came out wrapped in a fur coat and they walked through crusty snow on the edge of town. She held his arm and talked.

"Asa is heart and soul for Austin. He's a man who picks up loyalties, then conceals them. And Billy, he's worried to death. Sometimes I think he's daffy about winning and going to a bowl game. I don't quite understand it."

Billy said, "He's a great competitor, he always was. He played like that in school and later as a pro."

"He feels the team is letting him down."

It was the eve of the Tech game. Practice had not been too good that week, Billy knew. There was a lassitude among certain players comprising the element which had played under Galligan. Gig Older, Larry Cortese, Johnny Rapp had seen much service in the tough season and Midstate was coming up next, the final game. He could understand Calvey's feeling about it, but he had arrived at a conclusion which he did not care to express to Polly.

He said, "Did we come out to talk about Calvey?"

"Even up in Michigan he was all football," she said. "I think the man is made of pigskin."

"Footballs are manufactured from calfskin," he told her, grinning. "Calvey is certainly not to be associated with veal. Too colorless for Calvey!"

"You don't hate him," she said. "You're too big for that."

"He's in love with you," said Billy.

"He asked me to marry him."

Billy was silent. The branches of the trees wore coronets of icy snow. The air was thin and bright in moonlight. He drew a deep breath.

"I can't let him get ahead of me there."

"Billy Heath, is that a proposal?" she demanded.

"No." He set his jaw. "I take that back, I'm not vying with Calvey. If you love him, marry him."

They said nothing for awhile, just walking. Then she said in a subdued voice, "Let's go back. You have to be to bed

early."

"In case I play two minutes tomorrow?"

They turned and walked back. They passed Oswald's, but somehow neither wanted any part of that festive atmosphere. At her door, she turned and said, "Billy, I'm a little mixed up. Asa is a very fine, attractive man. He's ten years older than I am, of course. That helps to make him— attractive. But I've missed you and I wouldn't be honest if I didn't admit it."

Billy was conscious that his heart was pounding. He touched the green scarf about her neck. He said, "You've been going down that pigskin trail. Asa even got you on it. You're all tied in with football. I didn't make the grade with Calvey. That means something to you."

"Doesn't it mean anything to you, Billy?"

"I can't talk about that right now," said Billy. "Good night, Polly dear."

She swayed a little and he should have kissed her. He did not, but he had to walk it off. He plunged away, striding across the campus into town.

He passed Oswald's again. He was aware of three figures in the alley alongside the place. He peered and recognized Cuzzo and Broome and Oswald himself, overcoated and huddled together. He went on and saw two men approaching. He recognized them also. A couple of flashy characters. They were from the local pool hall which was off bounds to Austin students.

He remembered Oswald's talk of betting. He almost turned and went back to break this up. He watched the pool room boys enter the alley alongside Oswald's.

There was nothing he could do about it. Betting was against the rule, but the rule was ever being broken. He had occasionally wagered five or ten himself when challenged. He walked on, trying to think it out with himself about Polly and Calvey and football and love in bloom. He even tried to tell himself it was pretty silly, but he kept thinking of a green scarf and green eyes and the straightforward way Polly had of looking at him and talking to him.

He went back to his room. Kicks was sitting in a chair, his hands holding a book, staring at the wall. Billy hung up his coat and said, "Dreaming of victory over Midstate, pal?"

Kicks muttered, "I'm tired. All the

time tired. But I can't sleep good."

Billy nodded. "You and a lot of other boys."

He went to his own room and slept like a top.

The next day it was Tech. The boys from the South were nonchalant, slippery, elusive and tricky. The tie with Cornwall had depreciated Austin stock and Tech was relaxed. Austin should be two-touchdown favorites, Billy thought, against this lighter crew but it didn't work out that way.

Not that the boys didn't go through the motions. They laid the blocks on, they executed assignments. But there was something wrong with the timing.

Calvey, walking the sidelines with short steps, flexing his hands, was using his proven favorites. Tech came up with a single wing shift of its own.

It caught Austin flat-footed. Accustomed to the prevalent T formations of former opponents, they began missing their men. Tech roared downfield.

"Heath!"

IT was Tech's ball on the Austin ten-yard line. Calvey did not look at Billy. His eyes were on the field. There were crow's feet at their corners, he seemed to burn with fever. He said in a low voice, "Can you get in there and stop them?"

Billy said, "Anything you say, Coach."

Tech gained three yards off tackle. Calvey said, "Go in."

Billy went on the field. Johnny Rapp looked beaten, but Speck Cuzzo looked desperate. Gig Older had blood on his chin. Matty Raye was playing Cortese's end on defense and he looked confused. They all stared at Billy.

He said, "Keep 'em inside. Watch for our own plays. Come on, it's only a game!"

They looked a bit shamefaced at this. They lined up. Tech unbalanced to the right. Billy shouted and Austin shifted with the power. Tech went into action.

The tailback had the ball. Billy poised in the tertiary. The Techs came pouring to the right.

Then Billy was howling, running left. He had recognized old KF79 in the making. The tailback was racing like a madman, going left to the weak side.

Austin kept going right, or was knocked down. Billy headed over with all possible

speed. He lit out full length. He rammed a shoulder into the Tech back. They rolled over and Billy saw the striped arms of the official going up.

Tech had scored. They converted, too.

Ranger Ronson came on. He looked wryly at Billy and said, "You and me, huh? Calvey's quitting on his boys."

Billy did not answer. Tech kicked off. Ranger caught the ball behind the goal and with Billy blocking came raging out. The slim back could run like a frightened mouse sometimes and now he scudded past Billy as a Tech tackle went down, then cut across field and picked his way to the forty.

Billy set the team up close and used Lizansky. They chewed off four yards. Billy went into the slot and took it himself on a hand-off from Ranger and dug for five. He gave it to Ranger and they ran past midfield.

It was first down and Billy went deep. He took Older's perfect pass and reached out. Ranger ran, faking. Billy wheeled and there was Larry Cortese and Billy hit him in the head.

Larry dropped the ball.

Billy tried it again. He threw to Ranger. A Tech man came from a spot he wasn't supposed to be and knocked it down.

Third and ten and now the fat was in the fire, Billy knew. He dropped back. There was supposed to be a cup of defenders. He stepped into it.

Kicks McGraw had pulled back into the rim of the cup. He was on Billy's right arm. Suddenly a big Tech man rode straight over Kicks, shoving him aside. He pounced on Billy as he threw to Larry, who was free.

It was too late to hold the ball. The Tech man's hands closed on it as it left Billy's fingertips. He made a futile dive.

The Tech man ran all the way to score. It became 14 to 0.

Broome ran on the field. He glared at Billy and jerked his thumb as though Billy had committed a horrible crime and was being banished to the guillotine.

Calvey was a graven image. He said, "Not your fault, Heath."

Billy said, "The boys are tired, Coach."

Ranger Ronson took the ball and made eight yards.

Calvey said, "They'll win. They got to

win."

Billy sat on the bench. Kicks came out of the game and dropped alongside him. Kicks said, "I muffed him. It was my fault."

"So what?"

Kicks said, "If we lose, it's my fault."

"This is not my old pal," said Billy. "Anyone can miss a block. You'll live just as long, maybe longer. Snap out of it."

"Yeah," muttered Kicks. He looked terrible. There were circles under his eyes, the skin was too tight on his face.

"What price Maine?" Billy murmured but Kicks did not reply. He seemed a bit dazed.

The half ended with the score 14 to 0 for Tech.

In the dressing room Calvey was precise, correct and forceful without dramatics. Billy found himself watching Cuozzo and Broome, the freshmen stars. They were white-faced. They looked frightened, sitting together, whispering.

The team went back out there. The third quarter was half over when Calvey called for Billy.

He went in with the ball on the Austin thirty, first and ten. Broome looked haggard going off. Kicks was playing, still without his old class. Billy shifted them left and tried a power play and it failed to gain.

He went back to the tailback spot and began passing. He hit Cortese for a first down. He hit Hare for another. At mid-field he quick-kicked on third down.

The ball went out on the two. Tech tried to run it out. Beale and Matty Raye trapped the runner twice and Kicks got the third man after four yards. Tech kicked.

Billy, playing safety, caught the ball. He started to run, the first time that season in an open field. He had never been a ball carrier. He looked for blockers and found few. He bulled over a tackler. He got past the Tech thirty and to his amazement he was running strong and fast, and felt fine.

He cut back, reversing the field with a quick surge. He saw Ranger throw a beautiful block and cut again. He was already planning the next sequence of plays in Tech territory, shifting the ball to his right arm, reversing again, playing for time. Larry Cortese slammed into a Tech

man. Billy ran.

Then he was down behind the goal line, untouched. He tossed the ball to the referee, saw the defensive unit coming on and trotted to the sideline.

Calvey's eyes were shooting sparks. "That was the best open field run we made this year. I thought you couldn't run the ball?"

"Coach, it was you said that," Billy explained. "I was a T formation quarterback, remember? It's different in the T."

"I know," said Calvey tightly. "I know."

His attention was back on the field. Billy sat down. He watched carefully, scanning the lines of each team as play went on.

Ranger Ronson sat beside him and said, "The only good blockin' of the day was on your run. Not that you weren't great in there."

"Tech's out-charging us."

Ranger said, "Get with it, Billy. The boys are muscle bound."

The game ended unbelievably, with Billy on the field throwing those desperate long passes. The scoreboard told the stunning truth. Tech had upset Austin, 14 to 7.

VI

THE CAMPUS gloom was thicker than melted plastic. A section of the student body was up in arms. The *Bulldog* came out with an editorial asking, IS THIS PRO FOOTBALL?

Polly Ordway called. Billy met her in Oswald's place. She was not wearing green, which seemed fateful, somehow. Oswald was shaky of hand. They drank coffee. The weather was bitter and next week-end they had to go to Midstate to meet the colossus of the football world.

Oswald barely spoke to them. His eyes were glazed, he seemed near the grave. There were mutterings about the room as the undergraduates vented their spleen on Asa Calvey and Sligo.

Polly said, "Asa's coming down. He wants to see you in the back room."

Billy's eyebrows popped toward his cropped scalp. "You MUST be kidding."

"He wants me to be there. You were right, Billy. I've somehow got on that pigskin trail." She looked subdued, possibly frightened. "How did it get to be so

important?"

Billy considered. "Well—it is important. If you play the game, if you're on the trail. It's GOT to be important. It's something you are doing to win, something rough and difficult. It's not like any other game, Polly."

"I know. I can feel it." She looked at her wrist watch. She motioned to Oswald.

The owner of the place, Billy now realized, was scared to death. He nodded, motioning toward the door leading to his living quarters.

Polly said, "You'll talk to him, Billy?"

"But—why not in his office? Or on the field?"

"Please," said Polly.

Billy got up. He followed her through the door. There was a small hall, then a room with a few chairs, a table, rugs, sports prints on the wall—Oswald's tiny living room. Calvey stood leaning against the wall.

Cuozzo and Broome sat on straight chairs, their faces mottled and frightened.

Calvey said in his even voice, "Little trouble here, Heath. These boys have been betting more than they could afford. Oswald got them involved in it. They got hooked on the Cornwall tie, then the Tech game ruined them."

Billy looked at the boys. They were just kids, he realized. They were terrific football players, but they were babies. He said, "What's the score?"

Calvey said, "They owe more than they can pay. Word has reached me that the creditors want these boys expelled or they'll make trouble."

"Because they want to clean up on the Midstate game," nodded Billy. "With Speck and Jay out they figure it'll be a cinch. They've already made their bets and the odds won't affect their take."

Calvey said, "You catch on quickly, Heath. But then, you're a quarterback type." He sighed. "I keep forgetting what I know—that you never call the wrong play."

Billy shrugged his shoulders. "I can get the money to pay them out. I won't tell anyone, of course. Is that what you want?" He was looking not at the coach, but at Polly.

For a moment there was silence. Then Calvey said, still without altering his tone,

"They can't play, of course. I just didn't want them to be thrown out. I feel sort of responsible for them. I thought maybe you could help."

Polly said sharply, "Asa's already paid off the gamblers."

Warmth coursed through Billy's veins. He took a step forward. He said, "That was a good thing to do, Coach. I hope you'll let me take half of it. I can afford it."

"That's not the point. . . ."

"I know. I think you'd be justified in letting Speck and Jay get injuries this week. Muscle strains that don't show. These kids are all right. Even Oswald—he thinks he is playing loyal son of Austin with that betting."

"Oswald had to mortgage the joint," said Calvey grimly. "I'm not worrying about him. He's cured."

Jay Broome burst out, "The worst of it is not playing. We want to play against Midstate."

Billy said, "If the coach did what he should by the rules, you'd be fired. If he plays you, he is taking advantage of his own generosity in not having you fired. Get that through your thick skulls." He turned to Calvey. "I'll be in there, Coach. Don't worry about me."

Calvey put a hand on the shoulder of each of the errant freshmen. He said, "Go and think about it. You'll never make that mistake again. Run along, now."

The two boys stumbled out. Polly sat on one of the chairs. Calvey paused beside her, smiled briefly through the trouble written on his handsome face. Then he looked at Billy.

The coach said, "Heath, I thought I could toughen them and beat the world. I want you to know I thought further. Men in good condition are seldom injured and we've had few injuries this season. But I over-reached myself."

Billy answered for him, "They got tired. Mostly they're just kids and they went stale on you, Coach."

"I thought they were quitting. Polly straightened me out." Even then, confessing that a girl had influenced his opinion about football players, Calvey's voice did not quaver. "Then I realized you had not slaved all summer to get in shape. Neither had Ronson. Yet you seem all right."

Billy said, "Let Saturday tell that story."

"Let Saturday tell it," nodded Calvey. "No one can play a full game under the two-platoon system. Midstate has three teams, not two. But you'll be in there a lot. With Cuozzo out on defense I'll have to make a shift. You'll do it, of course. You're an old Austin man. I've been unfair to you . . ."

"No." Billy shook his head. "A coach has got a right to pick the men for his system."

Calvey's eyes gleamed a little. "Okay, Heath. And thanks. Polly said you'd help me decide about the kids. I guess you wonder why I wanted help?"

"No," said Billy again. "I get it."

"Okay," said Calvey. Some of the strain had left him. He looked taller than when they had come in. His smile was easy now.

Polly touched Billy's hand and they left. Oswald's eyes rolled at them, but they ignored him, going out through the disgruntled students, into the night.

At the sorority entrance Polly said, "I'm going to Midstate with you. Dulcey's going and some other girls. I have to go to the end of the trail, don't I?"

He said, "Polly, I'm not going to ask you to marry me tonight. And I do want to say you can pick a good man, because Calvey's a guy with heart. But after the game . . ."

"Okay," she said. She sounded like Calvey. "Okay. After the game."

IT WAS the second quarter. Billy Heath looked up at the towering pile of concrete which was Midstate Stadium. He had never been in it before. Last year Midstate had journeyed to Austin to wallop the locals by three touchdowns.

He knew Midstate players, though. Especially he knew Hagen, the superb T formation quarterback. He had hoped last year that some day he might be another Hagen, now a senior and everyone's All America.

He was playing deep now, trying to out-guess Hagen. The ball was Midstate's, on the Austin ten-yard line. It was second down and seven to go. Dorner, Anselm and Slattery were the other backs for Midstate with Bragan and Fremont on the ends ready and eager to catch passes from

Hagen's accurate arm.

There was still no score in the ball game. Midstate had threatened twice, but the Austins had fought like wildmen. Kicks McGraw, sleeves rolled to the elbows, stood in the middle of the line. Older and Rapp were backing up.

Hagen had them balanced, each Midstate man with eyes straight ahead. There was no bulling around, no wise-cracking when you played Midstate. The ball snapped back.

Hagen was fading. Dorner was wide, but Anselm was the flanker. It looked like a pitch-out to Dorner. Then Hagen wheeled and did a beautiful ballet step and pitched it sharp and fast to Slattery, the bull-like fullback.

The screen formed ahead of Slattery. Raye and Beale charged them. Billy started over.

Then the genius of Dan Hopper, great ex-pro coach, showed like a shining beacon. Slattery jumped and threw the ball on a line.

Billy whirled and ran. He grabbed for a lithe figure in the purple and gold of Midstate. It was Bergan, taking the pass over his shoulder. Billy dropped him in his tracks—but he had made tracks to the one yard line.

Slattery held onto it next time. Billy rushed in to back up the play and Slattery landed at his feet, grinning, the ball nestling under him. Midstate had scored.

The half ended.

Calvey had the blackboard set up, the pointer in his hand. He said calmly, "Seven to nothing is not bad. You did very well out there. Let me show you something I think we learned." He went on to point out a pattern of play. It was completely absorbing. Calvey had played against Dan Hooper teams in the pro game. What he had to say was fully illuminating.

"This doesn't mean you can stop them," ended Calvey. "It is just meant to help you." He hesitated, dusting chalk from his strong hands. Then he said, "You're a hell of a football team. Go on out there and do your best."

What price a Bowl game now, wondered Billy. He saw Kicks McGraw again rolling up his sleeves. He saw Gig Older's big jaw set. He saw Ranger Ronson with a slightly surprised look in his eye, he saw

the others girding themselves for battle.

When he came out he caught a flash of green scarf. Polly was there, waiting, shivering in the cold air. He stopped and looked at her and she waved the scarf.

Her eyes were shining like stars. He waved a clenched fist at her and inside him something began to churn. It had a rhythm, a solid beat, so that he ran a little steadier and stronger, going on field.

It stood him through the tough period which came when Midstate, unleashing all its skill and vicious strength, came down and stood again inside the ten yard line. Billy had played without relief so far and maybe he should have begun to feel the strain, but he did not. He got up and backed the line. Kicks McGraw had gone berserk. Slattery went for no gain. Hagen tried a pass which went incomplete. Austin took a deep breath—and Hagen calmly booted a field goal to make it 10 to 0.

Billy waited for the kick-off. Ranger Ronson loped onto the field and Hare went off. Lew Levinsky came in with Port Damson. It was last year's backfield, re-assembled here for a try at Midstate's night. The churning mounted in tempo and the ball came borne on the wind.

It could have been left for a touchback, but Ranger grabbed it behind the goal and Billy was ahead. There was an end down, and Billy whacked him. He got up and kept going. Ranger was behind Kicks, running hard. Billy followed. A Midstate man tried to cut the angle and Billy hit him, too. Again he was up, running.

Ranger was downed on the twenty-five. Billy snapped signals in the huddle. The sweat-stained faces went away from him, lined up unbalanced to the left. Billy gave the snap-sigh, wheeled and as the tackle came in, helped with the mouse-trap. The ball went to Ranger, with Levinsky blocking.

They got five yards off tackle. Billy was on them, his voice deep in his chest. This time it was Port Damson, for three. The Midstates began to close in, big men, wary.

Billy shifted to tailback. He faked, then went into the cup. They all ran right. Midstate covered the receivers like a blanket. Billy said, "Scat!" and the blockers began to block.

He ran straight over tackle. There were

Kicks and Levinsky and Damson ahead of him. He barged past a lunging hand-tackle. He hit against another, spun away. At mid-field they sat on him.

He came up, a little dazed now, but sharp-eyed. He threw his strength left. He used Port, blocking a tackle himself. Port got four yards.

VII

MIDSTATE subs came in. Old Dan Hopper sensed trouble. Billy poured it onto a fresh tackle, sending the whole force of the single wing at him and got a first down on the thirty-two.

More Midstate men came in, fresh and eager. Kicks looked pretty beat up but he was grinning. Billy risked another run by Ranger and got seven yards. Midstate took time out.

Kicks drawled, "I dunno what got into Calvey, but the week's rest did me wonders. I'm a sixty minute man today."

"You and me," said Older. "Let's crack 'em good, Billy."

"They're not ripe," Billy said. He could sense those things. "First we'll fool 'em. Number 94 with the trimmings."

Ranger was in the tailback slot for this one. Midstate, freshened by the time out and instructions from the bench, was dug in to grab legs, Billy figured. He set off the play.

Ranger ran right. Billy ran left. Kicks pulled out and was ahead of Billy, bent low. Ranger suddenly wheeled and lateralled left to Billy.

Larry Cortese had rimmed the secondary from his left end position and was in the flat to the right. Billy feinted a throw deep to downfield, then shot it across to Larry.

Cortese had plenty of help. He battled past the secondary and into the clear. He was tackled and thrown out of bounds on the Midstate twenty yard line.

They were aroused now. They stood like giants, daring the Austin team to come. Billy shifted to the short punt and went into the slot. He threw to Cortese on a screen for five.

He tried it again. Midstate scattered to cover the eligible Austins. Billy ran up the middle behind Kicks. He got three.

It was the twelve-yard line, third and two. The Midstate stands were screaming.

Billy gave his signal. He looked for a receiver, found none. Kicks said, "C'mon, you fool, you!"

He ran with a deceptive, wide stance. Kicks swaggered ahead, shouldering men aside. Something rose up like a stone wall. Billy hit it with all he had.

"First down," someone said.

They were on the ten, inside the ten, and there was a play for this spot. Billy called it. Ronson darted to the left with the ball under his arm. Billy set his sights on a Midstate end and took off. He crashed the end into a line-backer. He rolled over, entangling them.

Ranger turned the corner. Billy had never seen a more beautiful sight, with Kicks racing ahead. Men came together, fell apart. Ranger ran on.

Ranger scored. Kicks booted the conversion.

They kicked off and now Midstate generated its power and started ramming back. Dan Hopper never taught conservative football and they had no idea of clinging to a three point lead. Billy kept moving back. The quarter ended.

Young Parsons ran on and motioned Billy off. It was his first time out of the game and he hated worse than poison to go. He stopped beside Calvey and said, "I'm all right."

"You better be," said Calvey. He was smiling and his fists were no longer clenched. He said, "Was I right?"

"You were right, but those jokers are good," said Billy.

"All Hopper teams are good," nodded Calvey. "Hagen's a great man. But watch his elbow."

Billy asked, "His pitching arm?"

"It's a tiny thing," said Calvey apologetically. "I just happened to notice it."

Billy said, "You know what? You're a hell of a guy."

Without instructions he turned and went back on the field. The ball changed hands twice. Midstate kept coming but Kicks and the others kept stopping them.

Calvey was great, all right, thought Billy. He had refused to let his weary men do more than calisthenics all week prior to this game. He had, once convinced, done nothing but nurture them and lecture them in his gentle, clever way. Kicks was showing the results, as were they all.

Now Midstate had it and time was running out and Hagen was still coming along, trying to get another score, taking no chances on a long run-back of a kick or a recovered fumble by Austin. Slattery was charging into the line. Kicks got him.

The ball was on the forty of Austin, second and nine. Hagen shoved his split-opener at them. Slattery got into it and there was a brief pile-up. But Hagen was in his cup, looking for Bergan or Fremont or any other loose and eligible gent.

Billy waited. Playing deep he watched. He saw that Fremont was the most likely receiver.



Then he saw Hagen cock his elbow. Hagen was looking at Fremont, but he was getting ready to throw to Bergan.

BILLY located Bergan with ease. The big end was drifting under the eye of Lizansky. There was a spot occupied by no one about five yards inside those two players.

Billy started to run. Bergan broke and started to run. Lizansky was a moment late, but he too picked them up and laid them down. Bergan and Lizansky each knew the other's position.

Neither knew about Billy. He was racing right along. Hagen threw the ball.

Billy came in ahead of Bergan and yelled, "Get him, Liz!"

Lizansky lit into Bergan and knocked him flat the moment Billy had the ball. Billy lifted his knees to blow Fremont away.

The field was broken to bits. Billy ran along, looking for blockers. He found Kicks pretty soon and they went to the Midstate forty-yard line, step for step. Kicks hit a snag there, eliminating two Midstate worthies.

Hagen was coming over. Billy let him come. When Hagen cut him off from the sideline he chuckled because that threw other Midstate defenders into a secondary spot. He started right straight for Hagen.

At the last minute he shifted the ball, changed direction. It was not Grange, nor Thorpe nor Glenn Davis, it was just Billy Heath who had once been a T formation quarterback, now running into a present ditto. They came together.

Billy's straight-arm rode Hagen down. His knee knocked Hagen sideways. More blockers appeared.

Billy kept running. Kicks was there again, having recovered and run straight downfield. Two Midstate men came in.

Kicks drove between them.

Billy ran around them. He ran ten steps more. He looked at the goal posts ahead, blew them a kiss, stopped short of them—but well over the goal line.

That was the ball game. It ended soon after. The score board read Midstate 10, Visitors 14, and it could have been written in letters of fire. Billy felt the churning subsidence. It had almost beat him to pieces with its rhythm but he sort of hated for it to stop at that!

In the dressing room it was mad, like New Year's Eve. Kicks kept yelling, "Maybe Tech can beat us but Midstate can't!"

Calvey said, "It means we can have the Sugar Bowl, you know that, Heath?"

Billy said, "Fine, Coach." Then he said, "You know, when it was Hagen to stop me, I remembered that last year I was a sloppy tackler, too. So you're right about that."

Calvey said, "They didn't have the ground attack in the end, did they? And we did."

Billy said slowly, "Coach, I'll buy this single wing. I'll be proud to play next year when Broome is back with us. Austin football is due to hit the top and stay there. That's good enough for me."

Calvey's big hand gripped his. The coach said, "Anyone who can't learn things is dead and oughta be buried." He seemed a different guy altogether and maybe he was. He said, "Hustle outside, Heath. Your girl is waiting."

"My girl?"

"Unfortunately, yes. I had to learn that too—the hard way. And congratulations."

Billy mumbled, "Well . . . thanks." Then he had to hustle for the showers.

That churning inside him had begun again, only at a different tempo. He kept seeing green. It was time for a by-pass on the pigskin trail.



SCOOTER!

By WILTON HAZZARD

The Scooter was slow-and-heavy Hawthorne's solitary ghoster—a hundred and twenty pounds of dazzling high-test speed. But what good is a mole-skin mercury who'll crack at the seams against the might of raw beef.

THE Athletic Council was very snooty about the whole thing. The Athletic Council was very polite, and very regretful, and "a pigheaded bunch of jack-asses!" as Coach Bob Chase pointed out with short and characteristic bluntness.

"Furthermore," Coach Bob continued, "rules don't mean a damn thing to me. If

that kid doesn't get his letter, I'm telling you that you can take this lousy coaching job of mine and—"

He told them what they could do with it. Forcibly. It was all very shocking to the staid members of the Athletic Council. Some of them said, behind their hands, that it was a little bit disgusting. But Coach

Bob got what he wanted. Which was as it should be. . . .

It all started in mid-season. Hawthorne had already met and decisively defeated three opponents. The Braithwaite Buffaloes, the Farmers from State A. & M., and the Cadets of tiny Walsh Military Academy.

"So what?" Coach Bob complained to assistant coach Tink Lafferty as they stood on the sidelines watching green varsity jerseys clash with scrub whites in practice gridiron warfare. "So we've still got all the really important games ahead of us. All the big teams to meet—and nothing to toss agin 'em but a ton or so of raw beef!"

Tink Lafferty nodded disconsolately. He knew Chase was right. Bob Chase was not given to idle chatter. His description of the Hawthorne team was more than accurate. "A ton or so of raw beef!" A line that averaged 200 pounds per man, and a backfield averaging only fractionally less.

"If we *needed* manpower" Coach Bob grumbled "we'd find nothing in school but a crew of lightweights. So now we need speed. And what've we got? A collection of freight trains!"

Tink Lafferty gnawed a blade of faded grass ruminatively.

"We got" he offered, "lots of stayin' power."

"Sure!" agreed Coach Bob caustically. "Only we're supposed to be training football men. Not sit-down strikes. I'm going nuts! Sometimes I wish I had a job on—"

He stopped suddenly, his mouth remaining open. His assistant gaped at him curiously. Then Tink's gaze followed that of his superior down to the other end of the gridiron.

There, dwarfed into insignificance by the size and bulk of the bodies that towered about him, was the strangest looking football aspirant Tink Lafferty had ever laid eyes on. A youngster too small for his uniform; too skinny for his pads. He seemed encased—no, more than that!—swaddled in his scrub moleskins. It was an amazing sight for a football field.

Tink gaped and said in an awed tone, "Hey—lookit. Somebody forgot to take in the wash!"

He began to guffaw at his own wit. But Coach Chase stopped him abruptly with a jab in the ribs.

"Look again," ordered Coach Bob hoarsely. "Maybe I'm seeing things."

A LONG, lazy boot from the talented toe of Varsity fullback Hal Brophy had spiraled half the length of the field. Even as Tink looked, the diminutive stranger was circling under it; eyeing it, timing it perfectly. As the pigskin bloomed earthwards, the little fellow's hands shot up, gathered it in. His feet twinkled into motion.

Twinkled is the only word to describe the way the unknown kid ran. White chalk lines slipped beneath his feet smoothly, liquidly, as he cut and swerved his way up through the host of practice players toward the Varsity end of the field.

A group of the Varsity backfield men, seeing his approach, fell into the spirit of the thing. Goldy Finch, the burly right guard, lurched at the flying newcomer. He might have been clutching at a will-o'-the-wisp, so deftly did the ball-toter evade him.

Buster Dykes, captain and quarterback of the Hawks, shouted a laughing command to halfback Harp Fitzpatrick. As the runner weaved his way toward them, both men started edging in cannily, boxing him for a tackle. Tink closed his eyes.

"It's gonna be a slaughter, Bob. Tell me when—"

Coach Bob hissed, "Watch, you darn' fool!"

Even as Dykes left his feet in a diving tackle and Fitzpatrick reared his blocky frame before the runner, the new candidate shifted. He squirmed. He wriggled. And the squirm shook off Dykes' groping paw a split second before the wriggle carried him out from under Fitzpatrick's guard, into the backfield beyond.

There was only Brophy, now, between the ball-toter and the Varsity goal. Brophy looked puzzled. He looked a little angry, too. After all, this was only practice, and the kid shouldn't even be running the ball that way. But since he was, somebody should have nailed him before this. Brophy planted himself sturdily.

Too sturdily. For as the youngster approached, he seemed to be measuring Brophy. At what appeared the last possible

moment, he shifted, veered sharply to his right.

A look of triumph on his broad, fat face, Brophy lunged to his own left, his arms leaping for that shifting body. They encountered—empty air! For in an instant, the runner's hips waggled sideways. He spun around the fullback like a whirling dervish. Brophy's fingers never even scraped the kid's moleskins. And the kid crossed the goal-line standing up!

Tink Lafferty looked dazed. His mind was functioning, but his limbs were not. Which was one reason why Tink was only assistant to Coach Bob Chase. For Chase had taken three swift strides forward, was bawling to the youngster:

"Hey—you! Come over here!"

The newcomer approached. Seen close by, he looked even smaller than he had appeared at a distance. Not more than a featherweight. A hundred and twenty-five pounds or so. About five foot six; maybe seven. His scrub uniform hung from his meager frame like the drapes of an opulent scarecrow. But his smallness, his leanness, were not sign of poor physical condition. Despite his long run, he was breathing easily. His hands, thin as they were, looked to be muscular.

Coach Bob said, "You—what's your name?"

The youngster smiled. He said, "Malone, sir. Tim Malone."

"Well, Malone," demanded Coach Bob, "what the blue blazes is the idea of coming out here and running circles around my team?"

Malone shrugged. He said, "I just got tired of being a spectator. I've been watching football games for two years. I thought I'd like to play in one."

Tink chuckled.

"Listen, kid, football's a *man's* game. You—"

"Shut up, Tink!" snapped Chase. Then, "Are you eligible, Malone?"

"Yes, sir."

"Okay. That's all I wanted to know." Chase stared at the youngster thoughtfully. "You've done enough for this afternoon. Go get a rubdown and shower. And when you come out to practice tomorrow tell O'Shea to give you a green jersey. Now, beat it!"

Malone's eyes widened. He stammered,

"Y-yes, sir!" and disappeared toward the clubhouse.

Tink Lafferty's eyes were wide, too. He gulped:

"Hey, Bob—what's the ideer? You putting *him* on the Varsity? That—that little skeeter?"

Coach Bob smiled. One of his rare, grim smiles.

"Not 'skeeter,' Tink," he said. "Scooter! I have a hunch that kid is just what this team needs. A shot of highest speed in a power-house machine!"

IT was Hawthorne's ball; first and ten on Unity's 38-yard line. Consecutive power plunges by the Hawks' hard-charging backfield had put the ball there. Now, the third quarter of the game just beginning to get under way, Coach Bob Chase's boys were once again threatening to add a tally to their score.

Coach Bob glanced at the scoreboard as Unity called a time out. The score barrels read, Hawthorne 20; Unity 0. The big red hand of the time clock stood at the figure nine. A long time to go yet. But with the Hawks far enough ahead so that their mentor might do a little experimenting.

Coach Bob looked down the bench. The object of his search was not hard to find. All Coach Bob had to do was look for the slightest figure amongst those burly bruisers wearing the green of Hawthorne. He called:

"Malone!"

The diminutive speed merchant leaped up hopefully.

"Yes, sir?"

"In for Fitzpatrick!"

A wave of laughter swept over the complacent home-team stands as Coach Bob's "scooter" picked up a helmet and dashed across the gridiron to report. It was picked up by the opposing stands. Even the dejected warriors of Unity, in their huddle, looked up. Smiles cracked their faces as they saw the scrawniness of the Hawthorne replacement.

Fitzpatrick, coming out, passed the incoming Malone. For an instant their two bodies stood in direct, deliberate contrast. The laughter from the stands redoubled. Somebody jeered, with startling original-

ity, "Lookit Mutt 'n' Jeff!"

Assistant Coach Tink Lafferty said reproachfully:

"Gee, Bob, whadaya tryin' to do? Make our boys look funny?"

"Wait," said Coach Bob doggedly, "and see!"

Play was resumed. The Hawk's eleven spread; came together again in the compact 7-2-2 favored by Coach Bob for attack play. The gold-clad Unity Panthers tightened grimly. The signals of quarterback Buster Dykes clipped the October air precisely.

"15 . . . 14 . . . Shift! . . . 3 . . . 99 . . ."

The ball leaped back from center Johnny Cardolla's hands to those of Dykes. The big green line surged forward, overwhelming the lighter line of goldclads by sheer weight. Dykes spun. His movements, rehearsed a dozen times in the preceding week, were smooth and unhurried.

Malone had swung into motion with the pass. Now he took the ball from Dykes, kept on moving past the spinning quarterback, and fell in behind Doc Entwhistle who, lunging straight forward on the pass, had charged into the gap torn open by Wensler and Mitchel at left tackle.

Someone screamed hysterically, "Hey, Entwhistle—you got something in tow!" and the mob howled. But not for long. Within a matter of seconds it became apparent that, funny or not in appearance, this play was poison to Unity.

Entwhistle ceased being interference two yards beyond the scrimmage line when he rolled in front of Unity's right halfback. Len Castner, of the Hawks, had already taken the quarterback out of the play.

And now "Scooter" Malone was on his own—with two gold-clad defensemen between him and touchdown land. Now it was that the crowd swallowed its laughter to see the reason Coach Bob Chase had added the breakaway specialist to his squad.

LIKE a tiny bolt of greased lightning, Malone cut into the Unity secondary. His legs were churning, "Like a hummingbird's wings!" as the excited radio announcer yelped over the ether to a host of listeners. White stripes fled beneath him.

The Unity left half charged in, red-

faced with dismay, striving to drive the Scooter to the sidelines. Young Malone gave ground—a little. But his forward race never stopped. Ten yards from the sideline, as the Unity defenseman left his feet in the tackle that was supposed to carry the ball-toter out of bounds, Malone veered sharply.

The halfback's hands barely scraped the Scooter's moleskins. And without slackening stride, the Scooter was on his way to the last man who stood between him and a Hawthorne score. Fullback Frankie Mosch.

Mosch was no "waiter-outer." He was a good safety man, and a smart one. Already he was advancing on Scooter, measuring him for distance. Like two specks of matter, oppositely charged and mutually attractive, the two men moved toward each other. The crowd tensed, awaiting the inevitable crash. . . .

There was no clash. For on the fourteen-yard line it was that Frankie Mosch decided he had measured his opponent; made his tackle. Not more than a yard and a half separated the two, as Mosch made his decision and threw himself heavily at the Scooter's hips. His body left the ground in a vicious tackle.

And the Scooter stood still. Just like that! As if it were humanly possible for a man, running at full tilt, to stop dead in his tracks.

It was impossible—but it was true. As though he were part of a motion picture film, halted suddenly at one dramatic moment, the Scooter halted his stride; held it motionlessly, while the suddenly blank-faced Mosch lunged awkwardly forward, sprawled flat on his face, his fingertips just reaching the toes of the diminutive speedster's cleated boots.

So incredible, so unreal, was the whole thing that afterwards there were some who declared that in that split second, time itself must have stood still. That they had seen, with their own eyes, the puff of scuffed dirt rise and hang motionless a foot above Mosch's groping hands.

But the Scooter's next move was sure enough. Feet moving smoothly, gingerly, like a cat picking its way across a freshly washed floor, he stepped carefully around the supine safety man—and over the goal-line.

It was then that the stands really went mad.

COACH BOB CHASE stopped by the rub-down table. He looked down at the slight figure lying there, eyes closed, drinking in the grateful relaxation of alcohol deftly administered by the talented Hawthorne trainer's fingers. He said, gently: "Tired, Scooter?"

The Scooter opened his eyes.

"Who—me? Gee, no, Coach! I feel fine!"

Coach Bob said softly, "You're a liar, son. Cheer up, though. There's just one more game ahead of us. Fix him up good, Billy." And he walked on through the dressing-room to his office beyond; feeling a warm glow of pride in his "boys" who were whooping it up with jubilant glee.

Three weeks had passed since Coach Bob's 1938 squad had been augmented by the diminutive little halfback who was now known, not only to his teammates, but to all of Hawthorne campus and a great portion of the football-loving world outside, as "Scooter" Malone.

Three weeks. After Unity had gone home, a dejected Panther with tail between its legs, the Bluejays of Paxton had come to town. The Bluejay had departed a little bluer than usual. Reason—a 7 to 0 defeat, the clincher being a 42-yard break-away by Scooter Malone that had broken a scoreless tie and clipped the Jays' wings.

The Bulldogs of Rensler had been the next visitor. The Bulldogs had seized a six-point lead early in the first quarter, and with typical bulldog courage had clung tenaciously to this margin until—in the third quarter—the Hawks rocketed Scooter into the clear.

Scooter's sixty-yard "bust-loose" had muzzled the Bulldogs. Hal Brophy's perfect kick after touchdown had given the Hawks a 7-6 advantage. And when, in the last few minutes of play, the Bulldogs had desperately gone into the air, Harp Fitzpatrick had clamped onto a wobbly forward to lumber half the length of the field for the score that ended the game with Hawthorne leading, 14 to 6.

Today's game with the Musketeers of Middletown U. had been another personal triumph for Scooter Malone. Bob Chase had been forced to call upon his "ace in the

hole" twice in this fray; once in the first quarter when a quick kick had been blocked to throw the Hawks back into the very shadow of their own goal-posts; and again in the final stanza when dire measures were called upon to break a 7-7 tie.

Both times the breakaway artist had come through in typical Scooter style. Thus it was that with only one game remaining in its nine-game schedule, Hawthorne's stunned football fans found themselves in the astonishing position of needing only one more victory for an undefeated season!

But that victory was going to be tough—and plenty tough. For Hawthorne's final game was the traditional one with State University which this year had come up with its strongest football team in a decade.

Ordinarily, State and Hawthorne did not travel in the same class. Only long habit kept them scheduling this final game as the season-closer. For where Hawthorne drew upon a student body of only two thousand for its football strength, State had grown to a mighty university of ten thousand—ranking with the top-notchers. To make matters worse, State was in a position to get a Bowl bid this year. Only a scoreless tie with a fighting Iowa eleven marred its otherwise perfect record.

IN the privacy of their office, Tink Laferty gave voice to gloomy misgivings. "You seen him, Bob?" he asked.

Coach Bob Chase nodded.

"Yes, I saw him." He shook his head. "Poor little son-of-a-gun! I wonder why some fellows have to be born with such puny bodies? If he only had the bulk and weight of Hal Brophy. Or Harp Fitzpatrick."

Tink vouchsafed, "These games took a lot outa him, Bob. He ain't a sixty-minute gridder. Just a 'gimme the ball an' let's go' guy. A one-shot. One good tackle by one of them husky State backfield men, an'—" Tink shuddered.

Coach Bob said:

"But they can't lay their hands on him, Tink. He's too smooth for them. Too fast. That's our salvation."

"Yeah," Tink agreed moodily, "but you're forgettin' one thing. We sprung him on Unity and Paxton as a surprise. Rensler didn't have no time to scout him.

Middletown almost nicked him—but he got clear.

"We been usin' him for the tough spots for a month, now. An' State's scouts ain't nobody's fools. When he comes on the field next week, they're gonna be all over him like a blanket."

Coach Bob nodded gravely.

"I know. It's going to be the test of his greatness—and his success or failure is going to mean the difference between an undefeated season and an 'almost.'

"Just let him score once, Tink! Just *once!* We've got a line built like Fordham's famous 'Seven Blocks of Granite.' If the kid can give them a touchdown to work on, it's all over but the shouting."

The Hawthorne mentor forced a grin.

"I've been at this school a good many years, Tink. I've never given the school a real winner. Now we've got it in the palm of our hands—but it all depends on one little guy. A hundred and twenty-five pounds of speed!"

THE Crimson Tornado of State rolled into town with banners flying. The upstate rooters, wild-eyed with visions of a Bowl bid, came to Hawthorne fifteen thousand strong in a special train draped with the crimson bunting of State U.; with an engine brilliantly dabbled with the Tornado's color.

The Hawthorne business manager rubbed his palms together gleefully as he counted the ticket sales, wondered dimly if it was too late to build a few more temporary seats into the end zone of Hawthorne's big U-shaped stadium. The townsfolk opened their doors to State's admirers when every hotel in town declared its facilities exhausted. The President of Hawthorne called upon the fraternity and sorority houses to supply sleeping quarters for their foes from the upstate school.

And the day of the game dawned clear and cold. A sharp, biting wind blew across the stadium from the north to south, but there was no hint of snow in the air. By game time every seat was jammed. Spectators were standing five and six deep in the aisles, behind the stands, anywhere a human body could find standing room. Yet for every one in the stands, there were four more seated at a radio waiting eagerly for the play-by-play account of the game

they had not been able to buy a ticket for.

State took the field first. A great cheer rose to welcome the crimson-clad warriors as they jogged out onto the gridiron. They fell into formation and began to run through warm-up plays. But an even greater cheer rose from the Hawthorne cheering section when, from the opposite end of the field, a horde of green-clad Hawks came charging out from their dressing-room.

And in that mighty roar of approval there was welcome for all the Hawks—but most of all for a flimsy little figure scarce high enough to reach big Pep Larkin's shoulder. The kid who had made this game the season climax that it was destined to be. The scrawny speedster whom the whole football world knew as Scooter Malone!

The din died down, and tense expectancy seized the spectators as three officials came onto the gridiron, conferred in the center with Hawthorne's captain, Buster Dykes, and Captain Emmet O'Brien of the Crimson Tornado.

O'Brien won the toss and decided to receive. Buster selected the North goal, giving his team first and fourth quarter advantage of the wind. The field cleared save for twenty-two players in uniform and three white-clad officials. A drum boomed hollowly in the stands. A whistle shrilled a message across the gridiron. And Hal Brophy charged down behind a line of 200-pound stalwarts to lift the leather with a mighty boot. The game was on!

COACH BOB'S starting line-up was the same as usual. His heavyweight linesmen: Murphy, Wensler, Mitchell, Cardolla, Finch, Larkin and Banter. Dykes guiding the destiny of the team. Fitzpatrick and Entwhistle at the halfback posts. Dependable Hal Brophy at full.

"A ton of raw beef," Coach Bob had once called them. But a determined ton. A ton sparked to new heights, because of a wee "ace in the hole" who now sat watching them from the sideline bench.

The first quarter was not spectacular. It was good football, excellently played by both sides, but there was no single event of sufficient drama to drag the spectators from their seats; no play thrilling enough to draw more than encouraging cheers from the opposing cheering-sections.

It was a case of that problem which delights professors of physics. An "irresistible force meeting an immovable object." Both teams were strong and powerful; neither gave an inch before the onslaught of their opponents.

The teams changed positions for the second quarter. For an instant, at the beginning of the quarter, Coach Bob Chase dallied with the thought of sending in his famed young scooter—then decided against it. "No sixty-minute griddy," Tink Lafferty had called Malone. And he was right. The spot for which to save Scooter was the tough spot. The spot in which the quickly tiring kid could do his stuff; then get to the showers for a rest.

He was glad he had not done so. For, like the first period, the second was mechanical football. Gain a little, then lose a little. But no devastating forays into enemy territory by either team.

In the dressing-room between the halves, Coach Bob primed his boys with points of strategy learned from observation of the State team.

"This 'Tornado,' " he told them, "is beginning to look like a gentle breeze. Buster, you watch O'Brien when he tries that reverse around left end. Murphy, go in faster on those kicks. Harp—"

Doc Entwistle interrupted, "Hey, Coach, suppose we bust loose the Scooter for a score? The way this game's going, it might be the only score of the afternoon."

And Coach Bob said firmly, "Don't under-rate State, Doc. We're saving Scooter. For we might need him—badly!"

But as the waning moments of the third period went into history, Coach Bob began to wonder if perhaps Doc's idea had not been a sound one. For during the third fifteen minutes, once again the two evenly-matched teams had battled it out in midfield, neither one registering an important advance.

It was not a dull game. Far from it. The very fact that neither of these two powerhouses had so far managed to break free had heightened the tension throughout the stands. The radio announcer told his public, "It's like two powderkegs smoldering here below us. Sooner or later one of them is going to explode. We all wonder which?"

It was State!

The big red hand of the scoreboard clock was hovering over the figure one. Already the referee was fingering his whistle, preparing to make the teams change goals. Time for just one more play in this period. And then—

Half the spectators never knew just what happened. It was Hawthorne's ball, third and six, on their own 32-yard line. Brophy fell back to the 20 as Dykes signaled a kick formation. The ball shot back from Cardolla's hands. Hal received it and started to kick.

Then suddenly there was a flash of crimson filtering through the usually airtight green line. Emmet O'Brien, stellar quarterback of the State Tornado. O'Brien's body loomed before Brophy as the Hawk safety man booted.

Even that would not have been so bad. Kicks have been blocked before, with no evil results. But—fate was playing with lucky Emmet O'Brien. As he rose, the pigskin hit his hands; stuck there! In a flash, the crimson-garbed captain dropped and spun—raced!

It was a mere twenty yards to the Hawks' nest. No greenclad defender was within yards of him when O'Brien put the ball down behind the goal line for the tally that made it State 6—Hawthorne 0!

A bitter, almost tearful, Hawk vanguard rose *en masse* to block fullback Steve Drokas' point-after-touchdown kick. But the damage was done. As the teams changed goals for the last time, and the timekeepers began ticking off the final period of the game, it was State 6, Hawthorne 0.

And Coach Bob waited. Waited for the kick-off.

Drokas kicked it. It was a low, flat bouncer to Dykes. But Dykes was canny. He fell in front of it; let it ride. He knew, and trusted, his teammates. Behind him, Harp Fitzpatrick picked up the bobbling pigskin. Racing as though his 200-odd pounds were nothing, he advanced the ball to his own thirty . . . forty . . . to the centerline stripe. And then, straight-arming an opponent to blast through for just a few more yards, a deluge of crimson bodies submerged him to place the ball, Hawthorne's first and ten, on the State 43 yard line.

It was then that Coach Bob turned and

gave the long-awaited signal. He said quietly, gravely, but with infinite hope.

"Scooter!"

It was all he needed to say.

EVEN the roar that had arisen when State made its touchdown was like nothing compared to that which rose when the Hawk's diminutive breakaway specialist ran onto the gridiron. Stark bedlam seemed to seize the fans. Paper flew, drums boomed, cowbells jangled defiantly. Hawthorne had faith in its tiny speedster. It betrayed that faith now.

First and ten on the State 43. Buster Dykes wasted no time. The very first play was that which the rooters had expected. Scooter Malone—a breakaway effort!

For an instant it seemed he might break free. Then one crimson-clad Jersey loomed before him. Another. And yet another. Huge bodies blocked him; an iron grip fastened about his knees. He was flung backward; down. The referee danced in hastily. He marked the spot of the down. A three-yard loss. Second and thirteen to go!

In the huddle, Buster Dykes said anxiously:

"You all right, kid?"

Scooter shook his head groggily, shaking off the mists. "Yeah. I'm all right. Let's go, gang! Hold them out this time."

They did. But it didn't make any difference. For the State backfield men were on their toes, as well as the linesmen.

Tink Lafferty had guessed that the kid couldn't go more than one good, stiff play. But five minutes passed by, and five more. And yet part of another five. And Scooter Malone was still on the field!

The ball had changed hands many times. No further score had been made. State had shaken off threat after threat by Hawthorne, and with little more than two minutes of play remaining in this bitterly contested game, State still had its six-point advantage.

Now, once again, it was Hawthorne's ball, deep in Hawks' territory. Drokas' kick had forced them back to the 23-yard line. And in the huddle, Buster Dykes put it up to his teammates squarely.

"It's the last ditch, gang. Only about two minutes left to play. We can get Harp back in, and try to blast a way through by

sheer power, or—" He looked dubiously at Scooter, whose skinny frame seemed more frail than ever in the green uniform of the Hawks.

And Scooter pleaded:

"Once more, gang. That half-spinner reverse. I want one more whack at them. . . ."

Buster sighed. He said, "You heard him, gang!"

The ball shot back. Cardolla to Dykes. The half-spinner. The reverse. Dykes to Malone. And Malone, tearing out behind the lumbering bulk of Dykes and Entwhistle, through the State forward wall, into the secondaries. . . .

Then the tackle. And when O'Brien hit the Scooter that time, the crowds rose and groaned, feeling that crushing conflict themselves. And Coach Bob Chase turned and said, hopelessly, "Harp!"

But miraculously, the kid was on his feet again. Stumbling. But on his feet. And he was with his teammates in the huddle.

This time Buster had made up his mind. He called for time out; told Scooter doggedly:

"It's no good, kid. I'm not going to have your life on my hands. You're shot to pieces. They're on you like hounds every time you take it. You've got to get off the field!"

But there was a strange light in the eyes of tiny Scooter Malone. New knowledge.

"I'm not leaving, Bus. And—we've got this gang licked!"

Dykes repeated, dumbly:

"Licked?"

"Yes. Listen—"

LINK LAFFERTY said wildly, "Bob, they've all gone nuts! Look! They've sent Harp back off the field!"

Coach Bob Chase rose from his seat. He, too, had seen Buster Dykes refusing the substitution. Now he meant to do something about it. He wanted to win this game—yes! But not at the expense of seeing that game little youngster slashed into ribbons. He started forward.

But as he did so, the team swung into formation. As in a daze, Coach Bob heard over the frosty air Buster Dykes' voice raised in crazy, insane signals. Signals Coach Bob had never heard before. Deliberate gibberish!

Scooter Malone's face was hidden from the coach. Bob Chase had no way of knowing that there were tense lines in that thin face; that the Scooter's lips were moving in a soundless, heartfelt plea. Muttering, over and over, "If you ever held one, Bus! If you ever held one—"

Then the ball snapped back from Cordolla! Snapped back into the hands of quarterback Buster Dykes: It was a spinner again; Dykes to the Scooter. And the line, rising up like the crest of a vast, green sea to blot out the onplunging State line-men. A great gap opening where burly Pep Larkin and Goldy Finch thrust their mighty sinews against the opposing tackle and guard. Dykes racing through.

The crowd was alive with tumult. Dykes was through; the Scooter was through. The State secondaries were closing. A four-man backfield; coalescing into one solid mass of protection against the one skinny youngster whom they had been taught to fear—and to cover!

They seemed to reach him all at the same time. The Scooter shifted once, with lightning speed. Emmet O'Brien's hands missed him. Now Marcum was coming up . . . and Lipschutz . . . and big Steve Drokas coming in for the kill. They seemed to get there together. . . .

Coach Bob shouted, but the cry was a hoarse croak in his throat. For just as those four thundering defenders swooped down on the tiny threat, Scooter's arm came up . . . back . . . forward! Straight as a die the pigskin spun to Dykes, a half step behind him and ten yards away! Then the Scooter went down, buried in a heap of struggling crimson that had played him once too often!

And the lateral nestled like a feathery bird into the hands of galloping Buster Dykes. With no one within a dozen yards of him, Buster's feet seemed to find unsuspected speed. While a screaming mob went berserk in the stands he sped half the length of the field . . . past the

twenty . . . the ten . . . the five . . . the cross stripes. . . .

Official arms leaped to greet the grim November sky! It was a touchdown! A touchdown for Hawthorne! And the score was tied!

Coach Bob Chase never saw Hal Brophy kick the extra point that, in the closing minute of the game, gave his team a victory and an undefeated season. There was no reason for him to watch. He knew—knew as surely as anything in life—that Brophy could not miss. How could he? Coach Chase was one of those who helped carry the battered but happy kid to the dressing room and the tender mercies of old Billy. The kid who had made the victory possible.

Tink Lafferty was there, too, with unashamed tears flooding down his cheeks. Over and over again he was saying:

"A hundred and twenty-five pounds of pure guts! And pure brains!"

BUT the Athletic Council was very snooty about the whole matter.

"After all," they pointed out, "our organization's rules designate clearly that no player shall receive a letter unless he has played at least sixty full minutes. And Malone did not fill that requirement."

That was when Coach Bob told them off. And how he told them off.

"Sixty minutes!" he roared. "Why, you triple-starred idiots, if that kid doesn't get a letter—" And that was when he told them what they could do with his coaching job. Some of the members got red-faced about it. They had no intention of doing what Coach Bob suggested.

"A rather strong way of putting it," one of them said. "But, since the coach feels *that* way about it—"

That's just the way Coach Bob felt about it. And so Scooter Malone got his letter. It almost covered his skinny little chest. But he had his letter. And that was as it should be. . . .

SPRING at Mawson College was clear and cool. Benjamin J. Franklin stood in the big gymnasium and watched his football candidates for the next fall wrestle each other about the mats. Ben was head coach. It was one of his theories that this man-to-man conflict gave him an insight into the character of his charges which mere calisthenics could never give.

He expounded to Dolf Cavour, his line coach, "Now you take that tall kid over there, wrestlin' with Babe Edgerton. He was a back on the frosh last year. 'Course we don't need backs this season. But that kid's all right. Look at him grin."

The tall youth was red-headed and homely as a side fence. He was clowning with this shorter, sturdier opponent, who was deadly serious, trying for an orthodox wrestling hold to throw the taller man to the mat. Dolf Cavour said:

"He'll never get a laugh out of Babe Edgerton. There's the most serious guy at Mawson. The tall kid is named Jim Dugan. Funny thing, Ben. Those two paired off like that. Dugan's a poor boy, workin' his way. . . ."

"And Babe's old man makes millions out of baby carriages," said Franklin. "Football's a great leveler, Dolf."

Just then Jim Dugan picked Babe Edgerton cleanly off the floor and held him over his red head. He arched and heaved. Edgerton bowled over three adjacent men before he rolled to a stop at the edge of the mats. Dugan put back his head and roared with laughter which echoed through the old gym.

Ben Franklin hastily blew a whistle to stop activities. Babe Edgerton came to

WISE-GUY WINGMAN

By TOM O'NEILL

Jim Dugan — football's fair-haired foundling! Thousands cheered that plunging, pigskin-packing wonder. But to grizzled Coach Franklin the kid was poison — a cock-eyed, signal-crossing fool at end!



his feet with his jaw set and started back toward Dugan. At the shrill note of command he stopped dead and turned respectful attention upon the coach. Ben set them to running about the banked track overhead. He said to Dolf,

"You see that? Babe Edgerton was sore enough to kill the red head. Babe's a good team man. He trains all year around just to be able to play eight or nine football games."

"I heard about it," nodded Dolf. "His idea of a jolly summer day is to run five miles before breakfast, do eighteen to thirty-six holes of golf before lunch and work in a gym all afternoon. After dinner he curls up with a good book on football tactics until ten o'clock. Then he toddles off to his virtuous cot. Babe's a honey."

"He's a good blockin' back," said Ben warmly, "and the hardest worker we ever had in spite of his old man's dough."

"Too serious," said Dolf Cavour. "Too unimaginative. In fact, kinda dumb."

"Blockin' backs need muscle and stamina," said Ben sagaciously. "Babe'll do. I wonder what about the red-head? He oughta do, too. Somewhere."

HE found out about Jim Dugan before spring training was over. The tall red-head came to him and grinned in his face and called him "Chief." He said,

"Chief, you got a lot of sweet backs this year."

"You can believe that," said Ben.

"But you need at least one end."

"That I do," admitted Ben.

"You got him," said the red-head.

"Can you play end?"

"Can a duck swim?"

"Where did you ever play end?"

"Nowhere," said Dugan. "But I will here."

Ben said with heavy sarcasm, "No doubt. On the third team. Okay, report to Hap Foster, the end coach. I'll see you later."

Jim Dugan saluted in mock respect and trotted off to join the end candidates at the back of the field. It was a week before Ben Franklin had time to think of him again. By that time he was running his first team through plays, without pads or contact. He wanted a scrub line to go through the motions and sent for players.

To his amazement Dugan reported with the ends.

Ben sent his team through formations from the single wing. Somehow his eye kept wandering to the scrub left end. The kid, he saw immediately, had color.

He was rangy and he had an uncanny knack of staying on his feet and maintaining balance. He was seemingly careless and he slashed far too often. But he had an air of seeming enjoyment and recklessness which appealed to the imagination.

Ben said to Hap Foster, "What about Dugan?"

The grey-haired end coach said, "I've been meanin' to speak to you about him. I can't teach him much. He just grins at fundamentals and goes ahead his own way."

"But you've got him on the varsity list," said Ben.

The old coach said grimly, "Try and keep him off. If he's half serious he'll be on your first team. That kid's got somethin', Ben. He just knows all the answers without study. He's a pass snatcher an' a natural head-blocker and you know how scarce that combination is. He hasn't got finesse, but man he's got gusto!"

"He sounds good," said Ben.

"He's good. But he's about as serious as a monkey in a zoo," said Foster disgustedly. "You'll have trouble with him. But you'll never keep him off your team."

Dugan sifted through a play and bumped Babe Edgerton so that he piled the play into a tangled mess. Ben Franklin shook his head. There they were, the scion of millions and the boy working his way. The rich boy serious to a fault, the poor boy laughing his way through. It was cock-eyed, he thought, but it was football.

In the fall it was obvious to Ben Franklin that he had a good enough football club. Mawson was a small school playing a small-time schedule interspersed with a couple of big games to build up the gates. Ben built well from the ground up and while Mawson never won national recognition, many a fine little team wore the Black and Gold.

He said to Dolf Cavour, "Danton is a sturdy, experienced end. Two hundred pound tackles with brains like Stew Doyle and Jap Fulvis don't grow on trees. Tim Foley's about the best center we ever had.

You did a mighty good job on the line, kid."

"Wilson and Stevens are right smart guards, too," said Cavour. "They're fast and they come out good. And as long as we're pattin' each other on the back you're backs look sweet. Hob Ackerman is a neat signal caller. That wild southerner, Reb Stuart, can run your climax plays from scratch with any number three back. Beans Bennet can still plug a line and Babe Edgerton is—Babe Edgerton. You can depend on him to be consistent at any rate."

"I notice neither of us mentioned left end," grinned Ben Franklin. "We got Red Jones and Bill Kling from last year."

CAVOUR shook his head. He said, "You got Jim Dugan. I don't know what you're gonna do with him. But you got him."

"Yeah. I got him and I'm startin' him," said Ben Franklin. "Come what may that red-head is playin' end until he clowns himself off the squad. He's a spark-plug. With the babe behind him to steady him he ought to go like a million."

"A million monkeys," sighed Cavour.

But the team was a mighty good one for Mawson. Ben figured to get through the season with a possible loss to one of the big schools. He could afford to lose a couple of games if they could beat Cranston U. in the final. Nobody at Mawson really cared about any but the Cranston game. Cranston was Ben's meal ticket in a way. He had held the edge over the arch rival for the past ten years and as long as he held that margin his job was good. The schools were so evenly matched that no one expected one to draw away from the other in the matter of football victories.

They were to open the season against State University. On the eve of the game Ben sat in his study tinkering on paper with a play someone had suggested he might use. There was a tap at his door and he said, "Come in."

Eve came in. Eve was Ben Franklin's daughter, housekeeper and severest critic. She was nineteen and long-legged and black-haired and her eyes were blue like her father's. She had the good looks of a thoroughbred horse, blended with the

lines of a Warner Brothers chorus sylph. The total was startling to the male eye. She said,

"There's a serious-minded young guy outside who is afraid to interrupt your Napoleonic studies. I told him I would pave his way. He wants words with you."

Ben sighed, "Babe Edgerton again? He haunts this house."

Eve cast down her eyes and said, "Father, I cannot conceal it from you longer. He—he loves me."

"Him and every other dopey cluck in this school," grumbled Ben. "Send him in. Or bring him in. Or somethin'."

She said, "Okay, toots. Don't growl at me."

She went out and came back with Babe Edgerton. The sturdy blocking back was plainly and severely dressed, in clothing which had cost his father two hundred dollars. In his eye was a look of solemn seriousness. He said without preamble,

"Mr. Franklin, we have a splendid team this year."

It occurred to Ben that the other boys called him "Ben" or "Coach" or "Chief" but that Edgerton always said "Mr." He nodded and watched the square-jawed blocking back wrinkle his brow and grow even more serious. Babe said,

"It is my opinion that we should win every game on our schedule. Every game, Mr. Franklin. It would mean national recognition for Mawson."

Eve Franklin said faintly, "Hear! Hear!"

"Well now, that would be just dandy," said Ben. "But Cornwall might have something to say. They have about eighty men on their squad. And even Cranston—you remember Cranston last year? The same boys will be back."

Edgerton frowned and said, "Cranston has never beaten us twice in succession during your regime. I certainly hope you are not underestimating the potentialities of this team, sir. If earnestness and seriousness can be maintained, if the proper spirit is imbued in it, if we can give everything in us from whistle to whistle—"

He broke down uncertainly as Eve hummed under her breath a few bars from "Hearts and Flowers." Ben said hastily,

"Those are fine sentiments, Edgerton. I appreciate your seriousness. Tell me,

have you any concrete suggestion to offer that might help us to go on undefeated?"

BABE pursed his lips. Ben thought that just so must Edgerton, Sr. look when he was laying down the law to the board of directors of the baby carriage factory.

"Well," said he solemnly, and paused for emphasis. Ben was beginning to get nervous at the forensics. "Well, it isn't anything serious. I mean, it's a matter of attitude."

"Whose attitude?" said Ben.

"Why Dugan's. He's a good end, sir. Green, but good. But he is very unorthodox, don't you think? And flippant. He—well he plays as if for fun."

"You don't say?" muttered Ben.

Eve whispered, "Not for fun? Say it ain't so, Joe."

"Football is more than fun," said Babe stiffly. "It is a character building game. As you play football, so shall you be in later years. It is the maker of men!" He added lamely, "You can never tell whether Dugan is going to check or slash. He's not consistent."

Ben put his head on one side and regarded his blocking back gravely. Babe stared back as solemn as an owl. His round face and stubborn jaw and large brown eyes added to the owl-like appearance. Ben said,

"So it gripes you to have Jim Dugan play football with a smile. You'd rather have Jones or Kling in front of you when the backs begin to run."

Edgerton said judiciously, "I wouldn't say that. But I thought you might talk to him, sir. Make him see the seriousness of the game."

"I don't alter my players except in style of play," said Ben shortly. He was suddenly impatient with Babe Edgerton. "Talk to him yourself."

"He has," offered Eve. "With dire results."

Babe flushed. He said with dignity, "Dugan is too flippant for me to be bothered with."

"Tch, tch. Such grammar," said Eve Franklin. "Look, Babe. We'd better run along. Father's getting impatient with us. I'll try your Dugan myself. That'll solve

the whole thing. You can introduce me to him tomorrow."

Babe said gratefully, "That is a splendid idea, Eve. A woman might succeed where men would inevitably fail."

He preceded her to the door and held it open. She winked one gray eye at Ben and sailed out of the room. When the door closed Ben said aloud,

"Well, I'll be a cockeyed jackass. And that's my daughter."

He turned back to his play diagram. His grin spread from ear to ear.

STATE U. always opened against Mawson and State U. was always tough. The idea was to start both schools off with good competition and get them ready for a season at top speed. The weather was too warm for perfect football but all the boys got into the game and the coaches found out about them. Many a late season game has been won on the playing field of Mawson and State.

Eve Franklin lingered at the entrance to the dressing-rooms. The tall red-headed youth in slacks and an old sweater said, "It's been swell meetin' you, Toots. I wish I had time to date you or somthin'."

She said, "You mean to tell me you don't date?"

"I'm a busy guy," said Dugan lightly. "Football is a hard taskmaster. Then I got a job and—er—other things."

"Other things?" she queried.

"Oh, just some things," he said. "Look, you are nice. I'll see you around. At least you don't talk football at me like everyone else in this school."

"No," said she demurely, "I don't talk shop. You see I get some of that at home."

"Oh, sure. That's right. Your pop. He's a grand guy, Eve," said Jim suddenly serious. "I've bumped around a lot tryin' to get ahead. Your dad has been nicer to me than anyone I know. He seems to understand me good."

"Don't go sentimental, clown," warned the girl. "Father's a good coach. He can use you."

"Sure," laughed Jim. "I hope. See you in the movies, beautiful."

He sauntered into the club-house. She watched but he did not turn for another glance. Her gray eyes narrowed and her jaw looked for a second surprisingly like

her father's. Then she tripped away toward the stadium. She chuckled as she thought of Babe Edgerton and the lecture on seriousness which she had not delivered.

State U had a big squad that year. They came down to Mawson loaded for bear with a tricky shift which misled opponents into flying off-side and a couple of swell passers in Orpen and Eagles, both triple threat backs. Mawson had better fundamentals and smoother edges but State had the flash.

From the kick-off Ben Franklin was on the edge of the bench sweating off pound-age. State received and threw a pass into the flat. Orpen caught it and went to mid-field before Hob Ackerman dropped him. They lined up in their fancy formation and made an extra line shift. Jim Dugan, eager on the left end, darted into the State back-field.

The officials measured off five yards into Mawson territory. Babe Edgerton spoke severely to Dugan. The red-head shrugged and laughed. Again State went into the new formation. This time Jim lunged forward, recovered himself and scrambled back. State promptly turned his end.

Babe came up fast but a big State guard blocked him out of the play. Three men interference carried Orpen downfield. Ben bit a finger nail. Dugan, still on his feet, raced behind the flying State man. Orpen had the start. Jim caught him on the goal line, but Orpen skidded over for the score. Eagles kicked the goal.

It went on like that. Orpen was calling signals cannily. Dugan seemed completely licked by the unorthodox shift. They scored again on thrusts at the line and runs around Dugan's end. Babe Edgerton raged up and down the field but the big State guard was taking good care of him. State failed to convert the second goal and the score became State 13, Mawson 0.

BEN gave up. He took Jim Dugan out of the game and sent in Red Jones with instructions to check on every play. He said to Dolf Cavour.

"A standing end is better than an off-side end. What in the world got into Dugan today?"

The red-head was coming off the field, a grin still adorning his freckled features.

He flung his headguard onto the heap in front of the bench and said blithely,

"Chief, they got me buffaloed. I'm in their backfield at the wrong time."

"I suppose you never thought of checking," roared Ben.

"That's no fun," said Jim. "A big lanky guy like me looks silly rollin' in the dirt. If I checked three guys would rub my nose in it."

"This is not fun. This is football," roared Ben.

Jim looked at him curiously. He said, "That's what Baby Carriage Edgerton thinks. But you can't kid me. It's still fun to me."

On the field they were having success with the checking end. Babe Edgerton began coming up faster, charging straight into the interference. Beans Bennet, playing defensive fullback, got the range and made tackles all over the field. Tim Foley took care of the other side of the line and State wound up after an exchange of kicks with the ball on their own twenty-five, third and six.

It was then that Stew Boyle crashed through and blocked a kick with his face and Rink Danton fell on the ball as the whistle blew ending the period.

Jim Dugan got up and started for the pile of headguards. Ben said to him, "Where do you think you're goin'?"

"Back in there," said Jim serenely. "I'm practically never off-side on the offense."

"So you're running my ball club," said Ben fiercely.

"Now, Chief," warned Jim. "You know I'm right. You know how Red is going after passes. We need some points. Besides I got that shift figured. No wonder you coaches know everything. You can see much better from here than you can out there."

Ben sat back helplessly. He said, "All right, funny man. Get in there. And if you do something queer, heaven help you. I'll kill you with my bare hands."

Jim looked at the big, muscled hands of the coach and said, "I believe you would, Chief. Okay. See you later."

He loped out on the field. Babe Edgerton glowered at him and made a face at the bench. But Hob Ackerman welcomed him with a silent gesture. Hob was the kind of a quarterback who never over-

looked a break. He knew that when a kick is blocked the line gets jittery. He knew that a new end in the game would upset a backfield looking for pass plays.

So he threw the big guns at the line. Beans Bennet tunneled his six yards. Reb Stuart, specialist in the cut-back and change of pace running, clicked on a reverse for the necessary four. Mawson had fought to a first down on State's fifteen.

There is no surer way to frighten a football team than to tear through its line. When that first line of defense shows weakness the pressure is really on. State U, weak in fundamentals, reacted as Hob Ackerman had hoped. The backs crept up close to bluster the line. Hob sent Beans into them on a reverse and then suddenly Beans didn't have the ball. Hob was fading with it in his capable hands.

It was a fan pass with every eligible man running for zones. Ben strained on the bench and saw Jim Dugan reverse his man and make for the corner of the end zone on long legs. Other State men made for him as he threw up a black sleeved arm.

HOB ACKERMAN'S quick eye picked him out. He made a perfect peg, leading a trifle to the left out of the reach of the nearest oncoming State back. Dugan stuck out a big paw, leaping. He dragged the ball to him and held on. Ben could see the flashing teeth of the broad grin away over on the bench.

Ackerman carefully kicked the goal and the scoreboard changed to State 13, Mawson 7. Ben bit the last of one fingernail and started on another. State received and held the ball throughout the rest of the half. But Jim Dugan did not go off-side and the State attack petered out. At the gun the score was unchanged and the ball in mid-field.

Ben Franklin did not give between-halves pep talks. He looked over his squad for injuries and pointed out errors to individuals in a quiet voice. He came to Babe Edgerton sitting on a bench with gloom written all over him and said,

"You're going good in there, Edgerton. Just keep it up. No criticism."

"We can win, Mr. Franklin," said Babe in his most lugubrious accents. "We'll pull this out for you. They can't beat us."

"Sure," said Ben. It was apparent that Edgerton believed nothing of the kind, that he believed State to be too tough. Ben went hastily on. Jim Dugan was lying on a table while a trainer taped his ankle. Ben looked at the injury and saw that it was not bad. Dugan said,

"How'd you like that catch I made, Chiefy?"

"You're wonderful, Dugan," said Ben with mild sarcasm. "Stay onside, will you?"

"Oh, I got that all figured out from the bench," said Jim carelessly. "The center tips off the snap by jerkin' his elbows."

Ben narrowed his eyes. He said slowly, "Now that is cute, Jim. I hadn't noticed that."

"I'll be a credit to you some day," grinned Jim. "You can tell the world how you developed me."

Ben grunted and went on. The time came and they filed back to the field. Ben sat on the bench and went to work on the third fingernail. And then he forgot about the fingernail and watched Jim Dugan play end.

The red head was carrying the rest of the line with him. By the time the State coach had figured that the center was tipping the play and made a substitution, Dugan and the others had figured the shift out to a science. The red head checked and slashed, then slashed and checked. He mixed his style of play until the State tackle and wing back on his side of the line were crazy. State threw in its plentiful reserves and Dugan took them as they came and set them on their pants. He bottled up the State attack and only fine kicking by Orpen and Eagles held Mawson from scoring. They tried Danton's end briefly but that old war horse turned them inside and big Tim Foley knocked them dead.

So State, fighting to hold its lead, was forced to go into the air for gains. The pass was their best weapon for ordinary purposes because of interchangeable tossers, but the danger of using it while in the lead had held them in check. They started working from fake sweeps and spinners now, with Orpen or Eagles chucking. Ben went back into the jitters. It was tough to keep track of the State key man and the air was filled with flying footballs.

He groaned as they marched. In five plays they were down on the Mawson five-yard line. Hob Ackerman called time out. Ben could see Babe Edgerton haranguing in the huddle. He saw Jim Dugan slap Babe on the back and make a laughing remark and then suddenly the others were laughing, too. Edgerton looked disconcerted, then angry. Jim patted his shoulder but the Babe flung away. Jim's grin was eye-filling as he shrugged and spoke to the rest of the team.

State tried the line again. The Mawson boys rose up and smote with everything in the book. State reeled under the impact of submarining stalwarts who tore and slashed at every play before it could get under way. Jim Dugan's headguard came flying out of the melee and the red thatch bobbed and weaved and butted in the warm October sun. State gained less than a foot on three plays and then Hob Ackerman grounded the inevitable pass in the end zone.

HOB got off a beautiful kick to midfield. Orpen took it running backward and Jim Dugan smacked him down. The pass attack got under way immediately.

Babe Edgerton knocked down a couple of long ones that almost clicked while Ben Franklin suffered in silence. Ben could see that Dugan, forced into a comparatively pacific role, was growing restless. He kept looking back over his shoulder and opening and closing his big hands. Ben thought that Edgerton was worrying, that the deft passing of the State backs and the slipperiness of the State ends were baffling him. Upon a quick hunch he sent in Handy Pinkerton and took Edgerton out for a rest.

Babe was frantic when he came in. He said, "Please, sir, let me get in again quickly. We've got to get a score. We can't let them beat us. We can't."

"Take it easy, Edgerton," said Ben. "Relax. Watch for a few moments. You can learn things watching from the bench. I found out about it today."

State was trying it on Handy Pinkerton without delay. Orpen went into the slot, then faded. Jim Dugan checked. The State end went down. Dugan jumped

away, out of position, and raced back with the end. Orpen threw the pass, a looper. It was intended for the right end.

Handy would have been out of it, decoyed by a back. But Jim Dugan was on top of the play. He leaped from behind and snatched. He took the ball off the fingertips of the astounded State end.

When he lit he was running. His long legs ate up space like a greyhound after a rabbit. He didn't even wait for interference to form. There was a lane down the sideline and he ran in it, swifter than Ben could believe possible. He scored without a hand being laid upon him. Hob Ackerman kicked the goal and the score became Mawson 14, State 13.

Ben said to Dolf Cavour, "All else is anti-climax. We got 'em now."

The game ended without further scoring. Ben stood up in front of the bench and said relievedly, "They outplayed us at that. It was a swell game to win."

Babe Edgerton said disappointedly, "By one point. That's not the way to win."

"They pay off on scores," reminded Ben. "And the day that opportunism disappears from football is the day the stadia will become empty. You can thank your un-serious friend Dugan for this one. Keep that in your mind."

Babe Edgerton looked as if it meant nothing to him. Ben started to say more, then stopped. Edgerton, he knew, was a football purist. He would never understand the cockeyed, carefree philosophy of Jim Dugan. Ben started for the dressing room. He had an impulse to tell Dugan that he had played a splendid game.

At the entrance he found Eve, hair tousled, her hands in her Burberry pockets, leaning against the wall. He said absently, "Waiting for Babe? I don't think he's come out of the stadium yet."

Eve said coolly, "Don't take anything for granted, Benny. I'm waiting to button-hole a guy and tell him he played one of the best ends these old eyes ever looked on."

Ben said, "Now ain't that funny? I was just goin' inside to do that very thing."

They looked at each other respectfully for a long moment. Then Ben said, "You're a bright girl. I'm glad I had you. I'll see that he doesn't linger too long."

"Thanks, father," said Eve. "I knew

you'd approve. The kid gets you, don't he?"

"He gets you," agreed Ben.

He went inside the clubhouse. His daughter leaned against the wall, her pert face inscrutable, patient in waiting.

THEY tried to make a campus hero of Jim Dugan. Overnight they bid him to dances, parties, fraternities. He laughed in their faces. He was polite to people who seemed sincere, explaining that he was broke and that he was busy. He went along with a gay hello and a ready gag for everyone. But he found one night a week to visit with Eve Franklin.

She explained, "After all, when a gal wants a man she gets him sooner or later. You have to give in. It might as well be now."

He had one long arm wrapped about her waist. They were in the living-room of the little house which she shared with Ben. Jim said, "I knew I didn't have a chance. You're too tough for me, baby. And speakin' of babies, old Baby Carriages don't like me comin' around here."

"Babe Edgerton?" said Eve. "Poor old thing. Look, let's tell him we're engaged. His sense of propriety will then come to the fore and he won't bother us."

Jim said, "We can't do that, Toots. I'm a poor, struggling student. I got a couple things to work out before we announce anything. You see, I want it to be swell. You know—something special. I want to give you tops in everything. Let's save it for a little while."

"If you say so," she murmured. "But kiss me, will you?"

From the doorway Ben Franklin said, "Before you kiss her, Jim, take a look at this play, will you? If we can get Babe to lead quickly enough I think I can use you on an end around. You see, Boyle checks, then takes the tackle on a mouse-trap. The guard must be blocked solidly. You come around on the loop. . . ."

Eve sighed, "There it goes. Two of 'em, now. Must I have pigskin all my life, day and night?"

But the redhead and the graying one were already together and she was for the moment forgotten. She looked at them affectionately, curling her legs under her, waiting. She was very happy.

The red-headed end and the coach grew closer and closer in an amazingly short time. The day before the second game Ben had the reserves going through plays while the varsity backfield and ends followed closely. Ben was pointing out errors of commission and suggesting strategies for the Kenton game on the morrow. Ben said, "Babe, you and Jim here could click a little better on defense. I wonder if you have a suggestion."

Edgerton said sullenly, "If I knew what Dugan was going to do next I could do a better job of backing up."

"If you knew what I was going to do next the opposition might know it too," grinned Jim.

Ben said, "Babe's got something there, Jim. You and the wing have got to work together."

"But I get ideas," said Jim, waving his hand vaguely. "Hunches or something. Like the State game. Something told me that end was the guy. So I drifted with him."

"And if you'd been wrong they'd have gone thirty yards around your end," burst forth Edgerton. "I think that was a dumb play no matter what happened."

"Have it your way, Baby," said Jim sweetly. "They paid off on it."

"And don't call me 'Baby,'" said Edgerton, suddenly angry. "My nickname is 'Babe,' not 'Baby.'"

"There are no 'Babe Carriages,'" Jim pointed out maliciously. "They are 'Baby Carriages.' A splendid article and very necessary. I see no disgrace in making them."

"Disgrace?" stammered Edgerton. "Disgrace? I'll—I'll—"

BEN said in a cold voice, "This is football practice. Not a vaudeville house, Dugan. Nor a boxing ring, Edgerton. You two get together and work out a system of signals. Jim, when you are going to turn the play inside, give Edgerton a sign. When you turn it out give him another. Working with that head block gives you plenty of leeway. We can't win ball games without teamwork. Your particular problem right now is to work with Edgerton."

"That's right," chimed in Babe sententiously. "I'll work with you, Dugan. I

disapprove of you in lots of ways but I am out to help the team."

"So nice of you," murmured Dugan.

Babe said, "When you turn them in, put out your right hand just as you hit them. On the reverse, put out your left hand. . . ."

"If the light turns red will you take my tail light as a signal?" asked Jim innocently.

Ben said sharply, "That's enough. You're not funny, Dugan. I'll give you the signs before the game tomorrow. Take a run around the field and go to the showers. And one more word between you two will find you both on the bench."

He turned on his heel and walked away. The idea was beginning to bear in upon him that he was going to have a headache on his fine young ball club. He debated the advisability of shifting them. It wasn't in the cards. Rink Danton and Hob Ackerman had been playing together for three years and a break would sadly disrupt their styles.

He sighed and went home. Eve had a hot dinner on the table for him. Ben kissed her and said, "Look, baby. Could you speak to Jim about Babe Edgerton? I'm afraid they're going to row and I got an idea you're mixed up in it. Can't you help out?"

Eve ladled out mashed potatoes. Her face was grave and serene and particularly beautiful, Ben thought. She said,

"Benny, there's one thing. I'm never going to try to tell Jim anything about his relations with other men. That is one department in which he excels, clown or no clown. You let him work it out. He'll be all right."

"I hope so," groaned Ben. "It looks like the season depends on it."

KENTON came up from the south with a powerhouse outfit which loved to bang at the tackles. They would go outside, then they would go inside. Always they went hard and fast. It wasn't spectacular football but Kenton won a lot of football games.

Ben said before the game, "The ends'll be in for it. Don't try to make tackles. Leave that to the secondaries. Bull into the interference. Take two men. I don't want to see either of you go down under one man. Ackerman and Edgerton will be

responsible for the ball carrier. Dugan and Danton for two blockers. Stop the off-tackle attack and we'll win. Fail and they'll plunge you dizzy."

Everyone but Dugan looked impressed. Jim said *sotto voce*, "And will the big bad wolf eat us all up, grandpaw?"

Ben wheeled on him and said, "I sincerely hope so, you flip wise-cracker. Now get out there and try to be serious long enough to stop a few plays."

Dugan said, "Baby Carriages is to stop the plays. I've to bust up the steamroller. Some fun."

They went out and Kenton immediately started rolling. On the very first play they rolled at Jim Dugan, four men ahead of the ball. The red-head ignored Ben's instructions and knifed through. Ben came up off the bench in indignation.

The red-head slithered past a charging guard. He reached out one powerful hand as the blocking back cut viciously at his knees. He nailed the ball carrier in that one fist and jerked. The interference went on but the ball carrier remained. Kenton lost four yards on the play.

They vengefully tried him again. Jim put his hard head in the midriff of the number two back and swung him into the path of the ball. His long legs drove like pistons. Everyone went down like a house of cards.

After that Kenton laid off the left end. They tried the other side of the line and made little progress there. They flung a few passes around to no avail and then lost interest. Without the power they were really not a ball club. In the first two plays Jim Dugan had stopped them in their tracks for the afternoon.

Ben noticed, however, that during the festivities Babe Edgerton was not having such a good time. After Mawson had scored three times and eased off a bit on defense and the Kenton plays went for small gains, it was often because Babe was slow in covering. Several times he was completely out of the play. Instead of making his customary clean tackles from up close he was diving into chancy flying parabolas.

Ben waited until between halves. Then he said, "Edgerton, what's wrong? Your timing is lousy."

Edgerton gave him a baleful look. He

said, "Did you give Dugan the same signals you gave me?"

"What about it?" demanded Ben.

"Someone didn't learn them properly," said Edgerton darkly. "At least I hope it is that."

Ben forebore to answer. He went about his duties with the team without further inquiry. In the third period he watched Jim Dugan closely.

The red-head was giving his signs correctly so far as Ben could see. He began to wonder if Edgerton had dared to try to put the end on the spot. He was just about to get angry with the blocking back for being so poor a sport when it happened.

Kenton had a third down on their own twenty-five and was trying to pull out with the same old powerhouse. Jim went into it and flashed Babe the signal that he was going to turn the play inside. Edgerton hesitated, then moved to cover the ball carrier. Dugan put a spread block on the lead man and swung his broad shoulders. The interferers banged over and tumbled together—and the man ran outside. Edgerton saved the play with a broad-jumping acrobatic tackle.

BEN was on his feet instantly. He snapped, "Jones. In for Dugan. Make it snappy."

Jim came off the field swinging his helmet, grinning. He said, "Duck soup, eh, Chief? I thought they were tough."

Ben said flatly, "Don't talk to me, Dugan. I'm too mad to talk right now. I'll see you after the game."

Dugan shrugged his shoulders and sat down on the bench between two second string linemen. In a couple of moments he had them laughing and joking and cutting up. They cheered together as Reb Stuart and Hob Ackerman ran the clumsy Kentons ragged and won by five touchdowns. Jim Dugan acted like a youth without a care in the world. Ben scowled murderously. The red-head knew full well he was being disciplined but he wouldn't let anyone else know it. He'd had his fun and he was willing to pay for it.

Ben got him alone after the game and said, "The lousiest thing a man can do is cross up agreed signals. That was a rotten thing to do, Jim."

"Chiefy," said Jim blandly, "I haven't the faintest idea what you mean by all that."

"You know damn well what I'm talking about," said Ben flatly. "You crossed Babe Edgerton on those signs."

"But Chiefy," said Jim. "I never did like that idea of signals. I can't remember them in the heat of the play. Besides I still don't know which way I'm gonna turn 'em until they get to me. I tried to give him the dope. But it just didn't work."

"You mean you didn't deliberately cross him up?" demanded Ben disbelievingly.

Jim looked him straight in the eye and said, "Do you think I'd do that, Chief?"

Ben was the first to look away. He said with some embarrassment, "Well, I admit I did. But forget it. Eve is waiting for you outside."

To Babe Edgerton he said, "Dugan can't work with those signals. You'll have to get along without them."

"But they're a good idea," protested Edgerton. "They'd give me the jump on every play."

"I said forget them," Ben snapped.

Edgerton's eyes narrowed. He said, "You're taking a lot for granted with that man Dugan, aren't you, Mr. Franklin?"

"That'll be enough of that," warned Ben.

"He's seeing a lot of Eve," Babe persisted doggedly. "After all, what do you know about him?"

"I know he's a swell end," said Ben dangerously. "That's all I need to know. And Eve is my daughter. And your best bet is to mind your own business. Catch on?"

Edgerton bit his lip but said nothing. It was after that he discontinued speaking to Jim Dugan except on football business. He retreated behind an enormous dignity and began to hold himself aloof from the entire team. His football continued as good as ever and Ben helplessly let things ride even while he felt that he was sitting on a keg of gunpower amongst a careless bunch of boys playing with matches.

Jim did not mind not being spoken to by Babe. He addressed the blocking back as Mr. Edgerton and was extravagantly polite to him. The rest of the team rallied about the gay red-head. Babe became unpopular. But the team won its next two games by comfortable margins. Mawson

adherents went football mad and began to babble of a clean slate and national recognition. It looked as if Edgerton had called the turn before the season had opened, Ben admitted privately.

IT was about mid-season that they opened the new gymnasium. Mawson had needed it for years and it had been finally donated. The donor, it was belatedly announced, was none other than Caufield Edgerton, Sr. Caufield Edgerton, Sr. was the father of Babe Edgerton, the blocking back.

They made a tremendous ceremony of the opening, complete with an unveiling of a statue of old Ebenezer Mawson, founder of the school. Everyone had to attend as a matter of course.

Jim Dugan managed to separate himself from the rest of the football team and slip to the edge of the crowd where Eve Franklin sat in her little roadster. He leaned on the door and said,

"This must be tough for poor Baby Carriages."

"It's his proudest moment," said Eve. "Look, there's his pop. Is it a good likeness or is it not?"

A square-shouldered middle-aged man with a hard jaw mounted the steps of the building and approached the veiled statue of the founder. Jim said,

"Whew! The spittin' image of the Babe."

Caufield Edgerton, Sr. began speaking in precise, dry accents. What he said was of no particular moment but was delivered with a great air of authority. Jim could see the Babe, standing bareheaded in a group of his fraternity brothers. There was a rapt expression on the halfback's face.

Jim said, "You were right, Toots. He's drinkin' it up. He believes everything the old man says."

"He's a conformist," said Eve. "There are millions like him, darling. The world is full of them. Maybe you should be more like them. Rebels generally get the eight ball in the end."

Jim said, "And stuffed shirts sometimes get rotten eggs thrown at them. But you got me wrong, Toots. I'm no rebel. I'm just a poor guy who's envious. When I make my pile I'll be just as pontifical as

Caufield Edgerton, Sr. I only hope I'm louder and funnier."

Edgerton, Sr. finished speaking. He reached over and tugged at a cord. Drapes fell away exposing a replica in bronze of Ebenezer Mawson sitting on a bench. And there, sitting up alongside the founder, was a nice, new shiny baby carriage.

In the ensuing pandemonium Jim Dugan said, "Now there you go. Someone around here has a sense of humor. You see? The stuffed shirts haven't got everything."

Eve gurgled with laughter. She said, "Jim Dugan, what part did you have in that awful thing?"

"That," said Jim, "is one thing they'll never hang on me."

They never did. Babe Edgerton never believed anything else, but Ben Franklin made careful inquiries and could find no evidence against any of the football squad. It was finally blamed on a gang of freshmen, names unknown, but Babe Edgerton privately had no doubts.

He became actually uncivil to Dugan. His temper grew short with the other men. He began pressing in his play. He even tried to pick a fight with Dugan to Ben's utmost amazement. Fisticuffs was the last thing you would expect from Babe Edgerton.

Jim laughed off the insults and refused to fight. His own popularity was enhanced by his attitude toward the hapless and distracted Babe. When Edgerton slipped on the field, Jim redoubled his efforts to make that side of the line safe. He explained to Ben one night while he waited patiently for Eve to powder her nose:

"The Babe is a victim of his own sense of proportions. He doesn't give value to the right things. He's too serious. I'm really sorry for him."

"If he doesn't snap out of it Cornwall will knock our pants off," said Ben grimly. "I never did expect to beat them. Their team is composed of a flock of ex-prep school captains. They got more reserves than Yale. I thought we might hold them to a low score until Edgerton went sour. Now I don't know."

Jim said easily, "They'll probably take us. But we ought to give 'em a go. And I think Babe'll snap out of it under pres-

sure. He's got plenty of stuff. He's just in a rut."

Ben said suddenly, "You've got a lot of sense for a crazy sophomore, Jim. Where did you learn all that?"

"Ha!" grinned Jim. "It's my genius, Chief. I inherited it from a long line of heavy thinkers. I been around, Chief. I earned my way about to get the money to come here. I've got an idea that I might earn some more directly. . . ."

EVE came into the room with her bright smile and her grey eyes and her ready grace. The two men broke off and turned full attention upon her. Ben forgot that Jim had been about to say something more about himself. The two youngsters drifted off into the night, arms linked, heads close together. Ben sighed and went back to his study. He was glad Eve had picked Jim Dugan. He had grown fond of the red-head from nowhere.

THE night before the Cornwall game Ben was wrestling with a plan to cope with the big Red team's reserves. The doorbell rang. Eve was out to a lecture so Ben went to answer. Babe Edgerton stood on the doorstep, his face flushed, his hair disarranged. Startled, Ben stepped aside to let him in.

They went into the study and Babe carefully closed the door. Upon his features was an expression half of triumph and half regret. He said:

"Are we alone?"

"I don't see anybody," said Ben impatiently. "What in hell is the matter with you? Somebody steal our signals?"

"Mr. Franklin," said Babe morosely, "this is something I hate to tell you."

"Then don't," said Ben.

"I've got to. It's about a member of the team."

"Who? What?" said Ben, suddenly apprehensive.

"Jim Dugan," said Babe.

"Well, out with it. What about Jim?" demanded Ben.

Edgerton paused. He swallowed hard, looked almost ashamed. Then he said, "Well—he's been seen. I mean it wasn't me that saw him. But plenty others have and several fellows on the team know about it. So you ought to know."

"Your story interests me strangely," said Ben wearily. "Will you, for the luvva Pete, get to the point? Where was he seen?"

"In Swamptown. Not once but several times. Shooting pool with a bunch of thugs," said Babe awesomely.

Ben Franklin swallowed hard. Mawson College was located on the outskirts of the lovely little town bearing its name. Festering on the opposite extreme edge, just outside township limits was the district known as Swamptown. It was a terrible little hole of a neighborhood, a relic of Prohibition days. The pool hall owned by the man Grogan was one of its least savory dives. Cheap gamblers made book and worse in its back room. It was strictly out of bounds for Mawson students under penalty of unconditioned expulsion from college.

"Go slow, Babe," said Ben finally. "Take it easy now. They fire men for being seen in Grogan's pool joint."

"A man that consorts with gamblers should be fired," said Babe piously. "Suppose we should lose a close game and the newspapers got hold of it? They'd swear he threw it or somethin'. Think of the scandal. No man with his right senses would enter a place like that during the season."

At least, Ben thought, Edgerton is still thinking of football and football alone in that tenacious one-track mind. The morals of the case did not concern the football purist. He sat and digested the situation.

Babe said hesitantly, "It wasn't easy for me to come to you with this. But I thought—well you haven't got any actual proof. Only what I tell you second-hand. Maybe . . ."

"Maybe nothing. I'm a member of the faculty here, Edgerton. If Dugan has been in Swampton he will be fired. What could he have been doing there?" moaned Ben.

"Well, the boys say Dugan is a wonderful pool shot and that he has been picking up extra money down there," said Babe. "He hasn't got much money. But if I'd known he needed anything I'd gladly have loaned it to him. I don't like Dugan but it would be for the team. He's a good end, I gotta admit that."

Ben looked at him and said, "Jim Dugan wouldn't take your money. Whatever he's

done, that kid is always on his own. He wouldn't take favors from you or anyone else. And now look. He's marked lousy by everyone that has heard this story and I've got to go to the Dean."

"But it's only hearsay, Mr. Franklin," Babe said urgently. "If you could talk to Dugan. I wouldn't have come to you if I didn't think you could talk to him or something."

"The hell you wouldn't," said Ben bitterly. "The old spirit of the law would have sent you here. Or your conscience. Or your dislike of Dugan. Go home, Edgerton. Go home and rest easy. You've just blown a possible undefeated season for your ball club. And almost surely the Cranston game. Go home and sleep tight."

Babe Edgerton's face was pale. He started to say something, then stopped. He shifted his weight from foot to foot, standing there. Ben's face was flinty. Edgerton turned and walked out the door.

BEN sat in the chair behind his desk. He heard Eve come in about eleven o'clock. He hadn't changed his position. She knocked, then popped her head into the room and made a face at him. He pulled himself together and said:

"Come in, baby. How was the lecture?"

"Terrible," she said. "You worrying about the game? Forget it. Jim says you can win."

"Jim said so, eh?" said Ben. He fumbled with a pencil. He said, "Jim won't play."

Eve crossed the room and stood over him. Her face was white and strangely pinched. She said, "Jim is in trouble. What is it, father?"

"He's been seen in Swampton," said Ben bluntly. "Shooting pool with the tin horns."

Eve demanded, "Who saw him? When? Have they got proof?"

"Babe Edgerton told me," said Ben.

"Baby Carriages? He hates Jim. Don't you believe him, father. Wait and ask Jim. He wouldn't lie to you. If he's been down there he'll tell you. Wait and ask him."

Ben looked at her. He said, "Sure I'll ask him. But it's true. I know Edgerton that well. He wouldn't come here with a cock and bull story. Others are in on it. Babe was only the messenger. The

team believes it. Maybe knows it. They'd have no confidence in Jim. I can't play him."

The tall girl sat down in a chair as her knees buckled under her. After a while she said, "You're right, Benny. It means expulsion, too, doesn't it?"

"If I go to the Dean," said Ben.

She said, "Look, Benny. School is important to Jim. If he was down there he had a reason. Maybe he needed the money."

"I thought of that," nodded her father.

"Well, it's not official. It's only hearsay. You don't know it. You can keep him out of the Cornwall game. Then he'll know. If he was down there and has a reason he'll come to you and tell you. It'll give him a fighting chance to stay in school. They wouldn't fire him if he confessed. And if you went to bat for him. You've got to do it, Benny. You've got to give him a chance."

Ben said wearily, "There was never any question of that in my mind, Eve. He'll have his chance. It's just that I was so fond of him. To think he'd throw me down that way. It means the Cornwall game and the Cranston game. I never would have believed it, Eve."

She said dully, "No. I wouldn't either, Benny. He—he let me down, too, you know."

"Yes," said Ben softly. "I know."

They sat in silence for a long time. Then Eve rose abruptly and left the room. Ben saw the tears on her face as she went through the door. The pencil broke in his big hands.

BEN stood in the middle of the locker-room and read off the line-up. When he came to the ends he said emotionlessly, "Danton and Jones."

A hush fell on the room. Ben finished reading the list amid dead silence. He said abruptly:

"All right. Get out there and play ball. Cornwall has a team made up of guys with two arms and two legs. You all have the same allotment. Use 'em."

It seemed peculiar to have Jim Dugan on the bench. He sat down among the substitutes. Ben was almost afraid to look at him. When he did he saw the red-head's smile, a trifle thin, but still a smile,

turned on the reserve gang, heard his voice making merry, whooping it up for the team. He told himself that the boy could not be wrong, that after the game he would come and talk it out and everything would be all right.

He turned his attention back to the game. Cornwall was turning Red Jones' end already. Red couldn't hold up against the power and speed. Babe Edgerton was smothered by the rampaging offense. Ben too Red out and tried Bill Kling. Kling was worse.

Still Jim Dugan laughed on the bench, encouraging the reserves as they went in one by one in vain effort to stem the attack of the Red team. The response from the boys seemed less spontaneous, Ben thought.

Cornwall, however, would not be denied. They scored in every period. Reb Stuart dashed eighty yards for a Mawson touch-down, but the final count was Cornwall 23, Mawson 7. Jim Dugan's smile had grown satiric at the corners long before the game ended. Babe Edgerton came off the field with tears streaming down his cheeks, his dream of an undefeated season shattered. Ben Franklin went straight home without going into the clubhouse with the team and waited for Jim Dugan to come with his story.

Eve came in and sat with him in the little study. The two waited until late into the night. Jim Dugan did not appear. At eleven o'clock Eve said:

"He had a date to go out with me tonight, Benny."

"That means he knows but that he isn't coming here," said Ben dully. "He's putting it directly up to us to ask him."

"I won't do it," she said fiercely. "I won't ask him. If he doesn't want to come to me . . ."

Her voice broke and the tears came. Ben said heavily, "We'll let it ride, baby. I can't have him thrown out. We'll just let it ride. I won't even take his suit. Maybe a week of second team stuff will bring him to his senses."

JIM DUGAN played out the week with the scrubs. He played it with the same thin smile on his lips, the same buoyant spirit, the same dash and skill. He picked up the second team line and carried it with

him. No Mawson varsity had ever had the workouts from the seconds that Jim Dugan inspired that week before the Cranston game.

In the lockers he was silent unless spoken to, then natural and gay. Ben watched and marveled at the display of coolness and courage. He wished longingly that the boy would come to him and tell him the truth. Time and again he started to speak, to urge him to do something. Fear of learning that which he did not wish to know held him back.

Babe Edgerton said to him privately, "You're giving Dugan a chance, Mr. Franklin. I don't blame you, but is it wise? Some of the boys . . ."

Ben said flatly, "I'm jeopardizing my position here in the school by doing this thing. Do you think I haven't considered all the angles?"

"Yes, sir," said Edgerton respectfully. "I was only thinking of the team."

"A hell of a team without Dugan," snorted Ben.

Edgerton winced. He said sadly, "I'm afraid you're right, sir. The guy has a certain air about him. Mind you, I don't like him. But he had—spirit, I guess."

"Edgerton," said Ben, "I believe you're growing up. A bit too late to help us. But keep it up."

That night before the Cranston game it became unbearable. Ben squirmed in his chair until 9 o'clock. Then he jumped to his feet and went to Eve's room. Working with swift hands he found some sun-tan powder and applied a heavy coat to his face. He experimented before the mirror with an eyebrow pencil, thankful that no one was present to hear him. He expected Eve to come home in an hour but knew that he would have plenty of time to get out of the house.

He rummaged among old clothes and picked a tweed suit which he hadn't worn in years. A snap-brim felt hat pulled down over his eyes and an enveloping raglan coat completed his disguise. He looked in the mirror and felt completely silly, but decided that he would do.

He got into his car and drove down to Swamptown. He parked a short distance from Grogan's pool hall and walked slowly to the dimly lit entrance. The hall was filled with smoke and guttural accents. He

slipped into a high chair against the wall and shrunk into his upraised collar.

Jim Dugan was running balls into the pockets at a table across the hall. Ben froze in his seat, anger rising within him. The brazenness of the red head was breathtaking. While Ben watched he ran twelve balls, winding up the game. His two unsavory companions exclaimed profanely and money changed hands.

Ben clenched his big fists. He was completely outraged. He had covered this boy at the risk of his own job. He had given him the benefit of every doubt, praying that he was misinformed. He had waited confidently for Jim to explain away his defalcation. The perfidy of the tall red head hurt the coach like a knife driven into his body and twisted.

Jim turned with his two cohorts and went to the rear of the hall. There was a door to the back room. The three went in. A slim youth in a tan top coat followed close behind. The slim one paused irresolutely outside the door, sank into a chair. Ben Franklin held tight and waited. He was going to have it out with Jim Dugan as soon as he emerged from that back room. He vowed to himself that another night would never pass without his getting hands on the redhead. Time passed swiftly.

Suddenly above the clatter of pool balls and the low murmur of voices a muffled voice shouted. It said:

"Chief! Ben! Make it snappy."

The voice came from the back room. Other, harsh noises of broken furniture blended with it. The slim youth near the door leaped and beat upon the panels, screaming. Ben Franklin hurled himself to the rear of the hall.

BEN tried to interfere. Ben's ham-like fists flailed, cutting a swift path. He put a hand upon the slim youth's shoulder, swinging him about. Eve Franklin's face, white under a man's hat, stared unbelievably at him. He growled:

"Get a pool cue and cover the rear, baby."

He put his brawny shoulder to the door. It gave at once. He dove into the room, fists flying. There were men milling about in confusion, arms swinging. He heard Jim Dugan's familiar chuckle even as he dropped a big man with a short right hook.

"Hold 'em, kid, I'm comin'," he roared.

There seemed to be four men and Jim Dugan. Ben grabbed two of them in his big paws. With a quick jerk he banged their heads together. Jim Dugan reached out from his spot against the wall and swung a roundhouse right. A thug hit against the opposite wall and went to the floor.

They both reached the last one at the same instant. Jim bent and flung a leg block on him. Ben pushed with his fist swiftly, from the shoulder. The man's head snapped back. He described a neat parabola and landed with his head through the window.

Ben whirled and shouted, "The door, Jim. Eve's at the door."

The redhead plunged past him like a streak. The slim figure in the top coat stood facing the menacing crowd of hoodlums. She held a pool stick by the ferrule and bradished the loaded end. A man started forward. She swung from the shoulder, straight at his head. He ducked under the blow and came in.

Jim met him halfway. He hit him with his lowered head, driving him. Four men went down under his rush.

Ben said, "Stay behind us, baby," and went eagerly into the fray. He was beginning to enjoy himself. Men went down like ten-pins.

Whistles blew and stetorian commands from the street beat upon the air. Someone fired a pistol and the brawl stopped as suddenly as it had begun. Ben saw the blue uniforms of the law and dropped a thug whom he had been using as a battering ram.

The Chief of Police was a big man with a walrus mustache and a pompous air. He waddled through the crowd and addressed Jim Dugan.

"Did ye plant yer gadget, son?"

"I didn't miss," grinned Jim. There was a spot of blood on his cheek but his smile was broader than ever. He went back into the room and stepped over prone bodies. He went to a table which now had only three legs and opened a small drawer. He took out a compact little instrument and removed a record from it. It was a small, flat disc of innocent appearance. Jim did things to the little box and replaced the record. A voice squeaked.

"Okay, Dugan. We put the snatch on Edgerton an' you cut in fer ten per cent."

Jim's voice said, "Not for ten per cent. I hear you gave Whitey twenty per cent for tipping the bank job."

"You hear too much, Dugan," said the first voice.

A second, heavier voice said, "Nuts to that. The kid's right. He knows we did the bank job and the Holleran snatch an' plenty other stuff. He's a smart kid. His in wit' the college gang is worth twenty to us. I say give it to 'im."

Jim snapped a button and the machine stopped talking. He said, "You see? I was a success. They liked me."

The Chief said, "Yer set for life, Dugan. That's a beautiful little machine. An' you'll get a nice reward for these muggs. You did a good job."

Eve Franklin said, "You didn't tell us. Why didn't you tell us?"

Ben said dazedly, "What in hell is this all about?"

THE Chief looked at him reprovingly. He said, "Why, it's Mr. Franklin. What you are doin' here? You should be ashamed of yourself, powderin' yer face and hangin' around dives like this. You should take example from young Dugan. Now there is an upstandin' young man. He's turned up a mob here we been tryin' to trap for months."

"Say that again, Chief," begged Ben, ignoring the insulting implication.

"He's been doin' this job unofficial, just to prove his little dooflicker. That machine don't need no electric wires. It works just as good as a Dictaphone, as ye can hear for yerself. Jim Dugan is gonna be famous, Mr. Franklin. He'll be a great credit to the college."

Ben gulped and stared at Dugan. The redhead was grinning. Eve stood against the wall, her face flushed and perplexed, half proud, half angry. The Chief said severely:

"Furthermore, why ye didn't play him in the Cornwall game is beyond me. We might of won with this boy in there. They was comin' around that end like locusts.

"An' by the way, Mr. Franklin. About that Cranston game tomorrow. If I was you I'd tell Ackerman t' use more passes in our own territory. They ain't expectin'

them when we're down there. I figgered it'd be a fine piece of strategy. Now I got a play here. . . ."

Ben listened almost patiently while the Chief elaborated his day dream. He kept looking from Jim to Eve. Jim just kept grinning and looking at Eve. Eve turned on her heel and walked out of the room, her hips swaying in the man's clothes, her stride patently that of a woman. Jim broke into a laugh and went after her.

In the car he held her tightly with one arm while Ben drove. Ben said, awkwardly:

"Jim, I never believed you were crooked, really. Why didn't you come to me and tell me?"

"The cops wouldn't let me," said Jim. "This was more important than football, Chief. If I told you you still couldn't play me on account of Baby Carriages and the others. I knew they were wise to me being in there. I had to play it out my way."

"But you could have told me," whispered Eve. "I nearly died. I just had to be there tonight. I borrowed these clothes and went in and they all looked at me so funny. It was terrible, Jim."

Jim said, "I couldn't tell you because you might have told your father. I was afraid he'd play me in the Cornwall game. It would have disrupted the entire squad. You see, they believed I was wrong."

"I still think you should have told me," she persisted. He tightened his grasp on her and she fell silent.

Ben said, "I still don't see something, too. I still don't see why you started a fight in there with those guys. Did they get wise to your gadget?"

Jim Dugan grinned wider than ever. He said, "Well, Chief, I'll tell you. I spotted you in there, all disguised. It tickled me. My well-known sense of humor got the best of me. I decided to give you a thrill. It was worth a punch in the nose to see you come through that door."

"Jim Dugan, you're too damn fresh," said Ben.

"Besides," added the redhead, "it was swell to be able to take a sock at those muggs. They made me hang out with them a couple of weeks but they never could make me like it. I worked years on that gadget. I've been working on it ever since

I came here. But if I had to hang out with crummy criminals to prove it I don't think I'd do it again."

Eve said, "Oh, Jim!"

Ben drove up in front of the little house. He clambered out on the driver's side of the car. He was stiff and sore from his exertions and his hands hurt where he had connected with flesh and bone. He wanted more than anything else to soak under a hot shower. He said:

"You oughta be in bed, Jim. But I'll give you a half hour. Take him home, Eve. It's been a great night."

BEN saved it until the team was waiting for the traditional pre-Cranston game address. Then he skipped the usual pep talk, his only one of the season, and read the line-up. He purposely put off reading the names of the ends until he had read all the others. Then he said:

"Ends, Danton—and Dugan."

A gasp went up. Ben stood a moment until the silence fell. He said:

"I'm afraid some of us owe Jim Dugan an apology for thinking the wrong thing about him. Through his able work in Swamptown, and a machine which he has perfected, the police were able to gather in a gang which had committed many crimes and were planning one for the immediate future.

"The crime which they were planning was kidnaping. The victim was to be a wealthy young man, the son of a well-known millionaire manufacturer of baby carriages."

He stopped. Babe Edgerton got to his feet, his face brick red. Ben said gently, "Yes, Babe. They were planning on snatching you from our midst. For ransom, you know. Jim was acting with the police."

Bedlam broke loose as padded and helmeted football players gathered around Jim Dugan. Ben shouted for order. He said, "That's all the speech I'm going to make. Time is up. Go out there and take it out on Cranston."

The Cranston team was already on the field. They looked big and strong and fresh. Ben knew pretty well what to expect from them. They would have a sound attack over the ground, they would block and tackle well and there would be a couple of razzle dazzle plays. Their

backs, Glass, Gifford and Pig Maloney, had been powerful as juniors and would be better today. They had a shrewd quarterback in Dodo Jackson and they had been playing together for three years, which meant plenty.

Cranston had won the toss and received. Stew Boyle kicked a nice high one down to the ten and Dodo Jackson started back with it. Jim Dugan swept in from the sideline and thrust aside two blockers in maroon jerseys. Babe Edgerton had a clean shot at Jackson. He dove and missed, rolling on the ground. Jackson sidestepped Tom Foley and rambled to midfield before Hob Ackerman dropped him.

Ben said to Dolf Cavor, "Edgerton is rattled."

"That guy don't get rattled on a football field," said Cavor.

"He's shot today," said Ben. "He's been jolted out of his single-track procedure. The clown made good. The plodding ant has been outshone and confused by the grasshopper. Edgerton can't make it out."

Cranston was working from an unbalanced line with a single wing-back formation. Jackson tried a sweep and gained two over Danton. Gifford and Glass tore through the tackle slots for seven more between them and the ball was well into Mawson territory.

It was fourth and a yard to go. Stew Boyle shifted over inside their tackle to add strength. That left Horder, their left end, to work on Stew alone and put the pressure on Jim Dugan.

Cranston started from the kick formation and the blockers wheeled and came out as the fake developed. Gifford followed behind an avalanche of interference, straight for Dugan's end. Jim went into them with his head down and arms flailing. His terrific charge smashed three of them to the ground.

Babe Edgerton was in there fast enough. All that he needed to do was turn them inside for Beans Bennet to nail the ball carrier at the line of scrimmage. Babe came in and drove. He missed the lead man. Dodo Jackson hit him and rolled him out of the play. Pig Maloney took care of Beans Bennet. Gifford loped on, picking up speed. Red Stuart caught him on the Mawson ten-yard line.

BEN could see Jim Dugan exhorting the line, running up and back, waving his long arms. Babe Edgerton fiddled close to the line, teetering on his toes. Ben debated yanking him. Only the low quality of his blocking backs deterred him. He knew Edgerton to be completely haywire.

Glass went into the line like a wild man. He got five with the whole team on him. Then Dodo Jackson called for a complicated triple pass. Jim Dugan got into the backfield fast, but the pass to Pig Maloney, who rarely carried, just missed his finger-tips. Ben groaned as Maloney carried Babe Edgerton over the goal line.

Cavour said, "They're wise to Babe. They'll give Dugan the works now."

"Maybe we can gain on 'em. Maybe we can match their scores," said Ben. "If we don't we're sunk."

Mawson couldn't manage it. They received, but the Maroon had brought down a team that could defend yardage against any ordinary attack. Hob experimented around with power and gave up. He kicked to their forty and Jim Dugan nailed Jackson cold.

Cranston immediately started all over again. Jackson had found out about Babe Edgerton very quickly. If Beans shifted over to cover Babe, Dodo flung a short pass into the flat and chased him back. The Maroon line clicked like a fourteen-legged machine, outcharging Mawson on almost every play. The ends and the secondary took the brunt of it. Babe Edgerton still jittered. And Jim Dugan took the beating.

He took it and liked it. He never stopped smiling, even as they went over him for first downs. He was under every play. Ben thought once he would never get up as four hundred pounds of beef on the hoof unpiled from him. Jim got to his feet and coolly discarded his head-gear. His grin was stretched from ear to ear as if the tough going just suited him.

He was kidding and riding the Cranston boys as if Mawson had the game in the bag. Cranston came on and on, but as they got down deep into pay dirt Mawson caught spirit and with spirit they retreated. The gains became smaller and smaller. The Mawson men were fighting and smiling with their chins up and their chests out.

Ben suddenly stood up. He said, "Pink-

erton, get in there for Edgerton and catch some of that fight."

Randy Pinkerton was eager and full of vim. He came up too fast on the first play and got sucked in as Jim Dugan was taken out by two determined Cranston blockers. Dodo Jackson cut back and ran full tilt over Hob Ackerman to score the second touchdown. The big scoreboard seemed reluctant to post the score. It read Cranston 14, Mawson 0.

The second quarter started. Again Mawson could do nothing with the Cranston line. They were too deep to pass, so Hob Ackerman kicked. He was booting them fifty yards that day, Again Jim Dugan stopped the receiver dead.

Cranston went confidently to the attack. Ben knew that they would run up a hundred points if they could. No Cranston team ever let up on Mawson when it was down. He shuddered at what the final score might be.

But Mawson had taken a brace. They again retreated, but the defense was growing more stubborn with every play. Twice during the period Cranston's power carried them to the twenty-yard line. And twice the gallant line in Black and Gold rose up and flung them back.

THE half ended with the score unchanged. Ben went into the humid dressing-room.

Babe Edgerton lay on a blanket in a corner and kept his face hidden. Ben looked at him, then back at his game, merry crew of fighters. His lip curled and he started for the boy in the corner, hot words on his lips. He leaned over to give voice when a hand on his shoulder stopped him.

He looked up into the sweaty face of Jim Dugan. The big end grinned and winked at him. He had a big towel with which he was mopping himself and on the towel were bloodstains from a cut over his eye.

"Chief," he said loudly, "that big tackle, that Fran Rice, is holdin' me on the defense. Every time I try to go down for a pass he grabs me an' holds on. We oughta plan to do something about him."

"That," Ben said surprisedly, "is what is known to all primer students as setting up the end. You ought to . . ."

Jim was making motions and gesturing

at the still prone Edgerton. He said, "I don't know what to do about it."

There was a stirring of the figure on the blanket. Babe sat up. His face was woe-begone but there was a light in his eye. He said in muffled accents:

"In order to avoid the setting up of an end you deploy into a wide-spread formation with the ends out. The fullback drifts from the tailback position. The opposing tackle then cannot follow the end."

"By gosh, you got something there, Babe," said Jim heartily. "It'll depend a lot upon the wing-back's ability to cover the passer, then go short for the flat ones. But it ought to work. How about it Chief?"

Ben stared unbelievably. Edgerton was on his feet, eyes flashing, all eagerness. He marveled at a mind which would respond so easily to obviously artificial stimulus. Dugan knew and Ben knew and Babe should have known that the stratagem against holding the end is always the same and familiar to every high school team.

But Babe, reader of the book, single-track-minded as ever, had risen beautifully to the bait. He had once again become a useful citizen. His confidence was restored. He had proved that he knew more than the great Jim Dugan.

Ben shook his head and said, "You start the half, Babe. Keep your head in there and watch for the short passes. And for Pete's sake, don't garbage tackles."

CRANSTON kicked and Hob ran back to the twenty-yard line. He hadn't been using the double wing because he hadn't dared gamble with the open formation. But he used it now, with nothing to lose and everything to gain. It looked exactly like a desperation pass formation to Cranston. Ben knew better as he sat forward and clenched his big hands.

Cranston ends followed over wide and the tackles shifted. There was a space between the tackles, and the guards. Hob Ackerman took the snap-back and whirled. Half-spinning, he faked to Reb Stuart. He ducked, held the ball and hit into the hole between guard and tackle. Jim Dugan swept in and took out the wing. Hob cross-stepped and gained ten yards, making it a first down on Mawson's thirty.

Again he tried it, working the other side of the line. Babe Edgerton went through ahead of him and hit the great Fran Rice, knocking him a mile. Hob got up to the Mawson forty-five and the march was on. Cranston hastily substituted a new man for Fran Rice.

Ben muttered to Dolf Cavour, "That was their mistake. If Hob only capitalizes on it."

The new man, of course, had instructions to stay in close and plug that hole. Hob Ackerman squinted at him and called a quick signal. The team snapped into position with machine-like precision, taking the same formation.

Jim Dugan didn't check or block. He went downfield and only the Cranston end followed him. The Cranston end could not cover Jim Dugan with a horse blanket. Hob went way back and heaved the ball like a javelin thrower. It was the longest heavy pass Hob had ever thrown. It didn't get much altitude but it zoomed.

Jim outran the end and Dodo Jackson came over. Jim faked Dodo by changing pace, then went ahead and leaped high. He seemed to go a mile and a half into the air. He clipped the ball with his left hand. It bobbed about on his fingers, then settled against his chest as he ran. Dodo Jackson was fast but Jim ran away from him. He scored standing up, all alone, still grinning.

Hob converted carefully and the score was Cranston 14, Mawson 7.

Cranston had fight of its own. Jackson sent them back to work on the tackles. Recognizing Edgerton, he figured to work the same racket as the first half had shown him was practicable. Two men went to work on Jim to keep him out of it.

The Babe turned into a fair-sized tornado. Jim managed to slow it up. Babe came in and tore it apart. Beans Bennet made the tackle at the line of scrimmage. The next time they tried it the lead blocker missed Jim. Dugan sifted through and threw them for a loss. Babe ran up and patted Jim's back.

Cranston gained a first down with a lucky pass down the middle and went back to power again. Babe was getting the cadence now, stealing a ride. He watched Jim like a hawk, decided at the last possible moment the possibility of making

contact and jumped the play. The Cranston juggernaut fizzled to a walk, then stopped dead.

Pig Malone was a great kicker. He began hitting coffin corner just about time the merry-go-round broke down. Hob kicked back gamely, but the Pig was having a field day. Time slipped away while the two teams battled each other to a standstill. And Cranston still clung to a seven-point lead.

The Mawson line was tiring under the hammering. Just before the end of the third period Ben took them out and substituted his reserves, Hoffman and Slater and Conger and Roberts. The ends he left in and Tim Foley remained at center. They jumped in and tore at Cranston like terriers after a rat. Jim Dugan went among them patting their backs and talking to them. The quarter ended.

They changed goals. Cranston couldn't do anything with the battling, fresh reserves and Malone kicked to the Mawson five. Reb Stuart courageously tried to run it back but got spilled on the twelve.

Hob sent them into the short punt. The line got low and charged like one man. Babe Edgerton put a rolling block on Gifford. Jim Dugan nailed Jackson. Reb went all the way to the thirty-five.

Again Hob reverted to the double wing. Jim Dugan was laughing at the reinstated Fran Rice, who couldn't make up his mind how to play it. Pig Malone backed up, filled and started forward. Cranston feared the long pass more than anything else. Jim went down and Jackson promptly covered him.

Hob raced along, the ball held in front of him. Ben almost yelled aloud as he leaped and chucked a basketball pass over the line of scrimmage. It was intended for Beans, but Beans couldn't make it. Babe Edgerton leaped from nowhere and took it over his shoulder. Ben had never known the blocking back to catch a pass.

Jim Dugan had checked, waiting to pick up the receiver. He moved now, heading for Jackson, the safety man. Dodo had drifted far, but he was a faster man than Babe. All three were suddenly running for one spot on the barred field.

Babe was running like a track star, but not as swiftly. He was just running

straight ahead with as much grace and about as much deception as a truck horse. Jim Dugan closed in. Jackson closed in. Babe's slowness allowed Jim to get there a bit ahead.

He took Jackson with his shoulder. He spun him and rolled him. Babe Edgerton ran on, never looking back. He scored all alone.

Ben said, "Even a tie. A tie would be swell. They've got the edge on us in power."

Hob Ackerman's kick was hurried. Ben grunted as it struck the post and bounced awry. The scoreboard read Cranston 14, Mawson 13.

Of course Cranston received. It was their job now to hold on to that ball and win by that extra point. They plunged and they plunged and they plunged and they got a first down by inches. Then they did it three times more and got another one.

The Mawson reserve line was whooping it up and fighting like wild men, and Jim Dugan was rallying them nobly. But Cranston's power was indubitable. Ben began to feel the icy clutch of defeat about his throat.

Yet somehow they held together. Cranston gained some more yardage but it wasn't enough. They wound up with a fourth down and two to go in their own territory. The redoubtable Pig Malone went back to kick.

There are some people who claim that Jim Dugan was off-side on that play. Ben Franklin knows better. Jim was just drawing on that reserve something which great athletes keep buried and use only in emergencies.

He was in on Malone before the Cranston kicker had a chance to swing his leg. He ploughed into the ball, snatching. The pigskin bounded erratically on the ground.

Jim, never having left his feet, was on it. Babe Edgerton came up at his side. Jackson, always the ball hawk, was close and at a dangerous angle. Jim yelled, "Take it, Babe," and dove at the oncoming quarterback.

Babe lunged full length at the ball. He fumbled it and drove it a couple of yards away. Three Cranston men were on him but he rolled and crawled and got his hands on the leather. The three men and two

more landed on top of him.

Ben Franklin was out on the field before the whistle blew. He knew instinctively that Babe was hurt. They rolled him over and he was out like a light. The trainer washed his face and the doctor examined him hastily and said, "No broken bones."

BABE woke up. His face was a study of confused determination. He saw Jim Dugan standing solicitously nearby. He said, "Did I save, Jim?"

"Finally," grinned Jim. "But you certainly looked funny scrabblin' around after it like it was an orange pit."

A creaky smile spread across Babe's usually serious features. He got painfully to his feet, clutching at Ben's arm. He said:

"Okay, wise guy. Come on, Coach. Get the hell off the field and let us play ball. You're holdin' up the game."

Ben shook his head and walked off the field.

Hob Ackerman used the spread formation for the works. It was all he had left. It was purely a pass play and no one thought anything different. He took the ball and faded fifteen yards to give his receivers time to get downfield.

Jim Dugan and Babe Edgerton were ten yards apart and almost parallel when Hob cut loose.

Dodo Jackson fiddled about, watching Jim. Gifford came down playing the receiver, his back to the flying ball. Jim slacked his pace. Gifford followed suit. Gifford decided to take a look at the flight of the ball. Jim suddenly cut loose his speed and ran away.

He covered fifteen yards in three jumps. He threw up his hands and the ball stuck to them. He stumbled, but recovered himself. Babe Edgerton caught up to him and ran beside him. Jackson and Glass had run over on the tangent and were the only two left.

Ben saw Jim say something to the Babe as they ran, then saw the red-head put on speed and draw away from the blocking back. Jackson and Glass immediately flanked in order to pinch up on Jim.

Jim swerved inside of Glass and checked. The Babe cross-stepped awkwardly and came up clear of the three.

Jim lateralled easily into Babe's outstretched hands.

Glass tried to get back over. Jim put a head block on him, lifted him off the ground and flung him into Jackson. Babe Edgerton ran on unmolested. As he crossed the goal line the gun sounded and the game ended.

BEN FRANKLIN sat back on the bench and wiped perspiration from his brow. Eve came down in the wild mob of snake-dancers and put her arms around him. Together they made their way to where the players were running down the tunnel under the stadium. Unnoticed in the excitement they fell in behind two sweaty, begrimed men in Black and Gold. The shorter was saying earnestly:

"You let my father put that gadget of yours on the market. He'll make you a millionaire. The old man's a financial wizard. Look what he did with baby carriages."

The tall redhead said, "But look, Baby. That thing won't do any good on baby carriages. On account of babies don't say anything anybody wants to hear."

Babe said disgustedly, "G'wan, you damn fool. You'll gag at your own funeral."

Jim said, "Speakin' of funerals, would you like to be best man at a wedding?"

Eve Franklin burst forth indignantly, "That'll be enough of that funeral talk, Jim Dugan."

He turned and picked her up in the midst of the grinning players, holding her against his chest. He said:

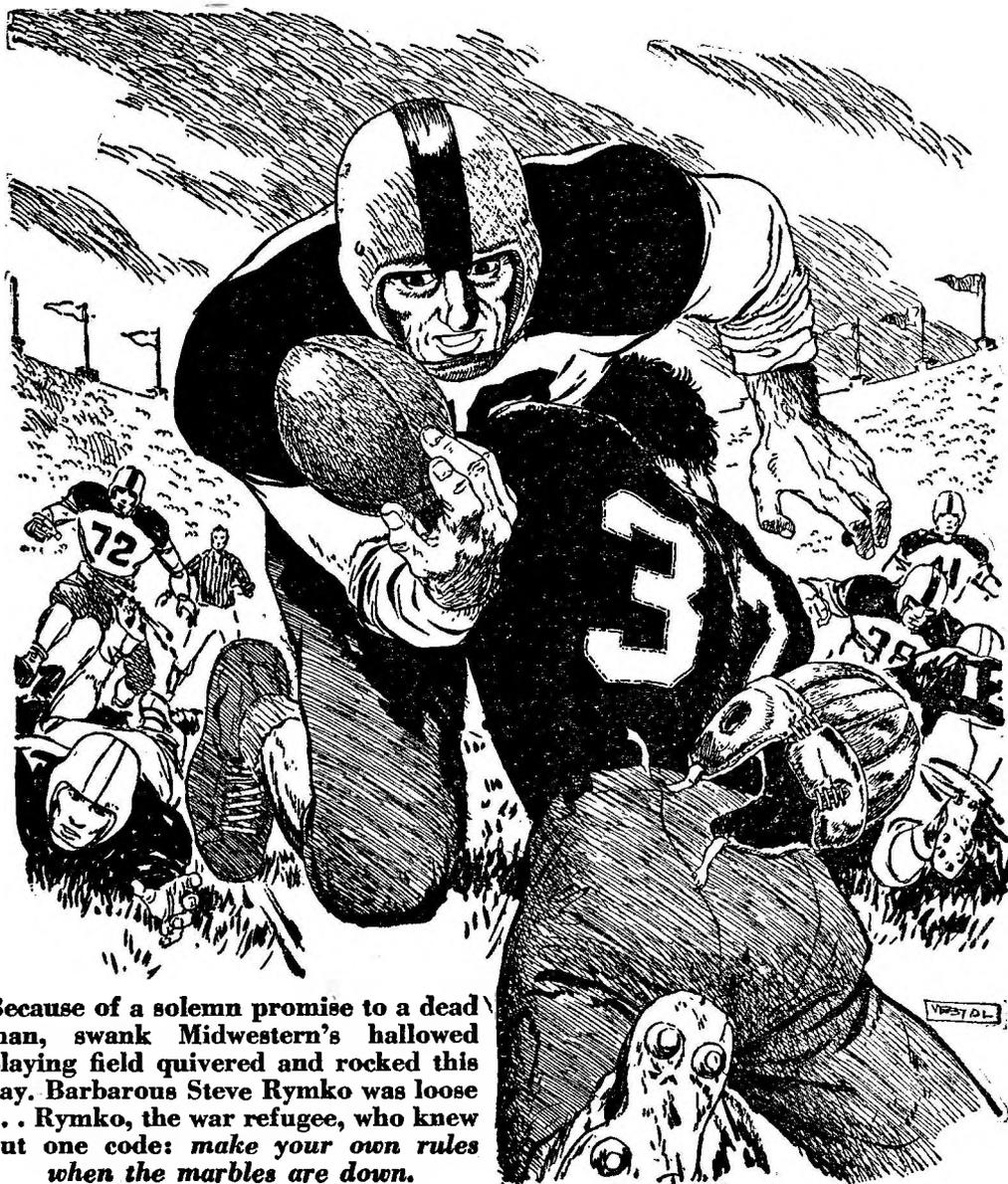
"It'll be a fine funeral, Toots. Death of a clown—birth of a husband."

Ben Franklin said, "Don't quit gaggin' on me. I want a son-in-law that'll keep us laughin'."

"Your football teams should do that, Chiefy," Jim assured him solemnly. "They make everyone else laugh."

He ducked into the shower room ahead of the wrath of father and daughter. Two seconds later the sound of merriment rolled out of the windows. The two sat and looked at each other. Ben said, "I guess we take him the way he comes, eh, baby?"

She said ruefully, "I'm afraid you're right. The clown's got a heart of gold."



Because of a solemn promise to a dead man, swank Midwestern's hallowed playing field quivered and rocked this day. Barbarous Steve Rymko was loose . . . Rymko, the war refugee, who knew but one code: *make your own rules when the marbles are down.*

THE SUB

By DON KINGERY

IT MIGHT seem a little strange to you if you weren't a Midwestern man. It's only an old battered headgear, and it looks a little ludicrous in the showcase among the time-honored trophies and the jerseys worn by Midwestern greats.

And it might seem even stranger to see

a bunch of big football players, tough, hard-bitten men, gathered in the dressing room before practice starts every fall. They pass the helmet around, and Raoul Warner tells them the story, and then they go out to practice behind the big stadium that was built because of that battered helmet.

There's an name on the headgear. It was scratched there with a nail, and it says *Stephen Rymko* in a crude, awkward scrawl on the mouldy leather. You look at the helmet, and then you go out and look at the huge stadium gleaming in the sunlight, and you begin to wonder.

You may remember how it was before the war, at places like *Midwestern*. A big college, steeped in tradition, with all the usual hallowed and time-honored customs that places like that adhere to.

Wars change some things, but they never really change places like *Midwestern*. To *Midwestern* the war was only a phase of madness, a crazy era during which the campus was turned into a hodge-podge of service training units, and the usually important things were shoved out of the way to make place for this new madness.

But after the war the hallowed men of *Midwestern* returned, and the University settled into its quiet and staid ways, unaffected by the murmurings of an unhappy world around it. Somehow the tradition of *Midwestern* left no room for unrest. You threw the tradition around you like a wall and sank into the protective shelter of the snobbish customs, and that made you different somehow from the rest of the people.

I was a senior member of the *Midwestern* football team. We played *Trenten*, *Tech* and a lot of other schools. We played the usual grudge game against *State*. Some games we won, others we lost. It didn't really matter too much. There was a feeling among the members of the team that football ability didn't radically affect a future seat on the Stock Exchange or a vice-presidency in a business founded by one's father or uncle.

But we might have been a hell of a football team—and we would never have found out if *Stephen Rymko* hadn't shown up one, hot, muggy day in early September, and made us laugh, then hate, and finally win *Midwestern's* first National Championship in the history of the school.

We had just come into the dressing room from the practice field. Our coach, a gentle, balding man named *Raoul Warner*, was standing near the door to the equipment room, talking to one of the managers. The rest of us—the correct, well-bred men of *Midwestern*—were lounging around the

dressing room before taking our showers and hurrying back to the comfort of our fraternity houses.

It could have been yesterday. The memory is that clear. The door opened. We looked up and he was standing there.

He was a heavy-set man, with broad shoulders and a strong neck. He looked a little like a professional fighter. But it was his clothes that made him look unmistakably out of place in the dressing room of *Midwestern*.

He wore heavy corduroy trousers, faded from many washings. There was a neat patch on one knee. He wore a thin shirt with one elbow frayed. His shoes were the heavy type usually worn by laborers. He needed a haircut; a coal-black shock of hair fell over his collar on the back of his neck.

His wrists were large and bony, and they hung below the cuffs of his shirt.

He walked over to *Raoul*, and asked, "Are you the football coach?"

Raoul looked at him for a long moment, then answered. "That's right. You wanted something?"

The stocky newcomer dropped his head, then looked up. His face was impassive, his features dark and blunt. There was something terribly hard about his face, as if it had been chipped from granite. "I would like to go out for your football team," he said in an awkward accent.

Raoul glanced around the room, and several of us were watching the newcomer with that casual sort of curiosity that one would display while watching a monkey shell a peanut at the zoo. Even that may be incorrect; very few *Midwestern* men were ever seen at a zoo.

Then *Raoul* turned back to the newcomer. "Are you in college here?"

"Yes."

"Your name?"

The stocky newcomer said it slowly, as if he were proud of it. "*Stephen Rymko*."

Somebody in the room snickered. *Rymko* looked around. There was no anger in the look, just an indifferent glance, as if the snicker had no importance but he would like to see who it was that snickered.

Then he turned back to *Raoul*. "I may try out for the team?"

"I imagine that would be all right," *Raoul* said. "I'm Coach Warner. You can

get your equipment here.”

Raoul turned and took up his conversation with the manager. Rymko stood for a moment, then stepped up to the window to get his equipment. Then he carried it down the room and looked for a locker.

“You can use that one on the end,” I told him.

His eyes went over me quickly, and something in their grey iciness made me shiver inside. “Thank you,” he said quietly, and walked to the locker I had pointed out.

RAOUL WARNER was associate professor of science at Midwestern. He had been a member of one of Midwestern's early teams, and he had been chosen later to coach football in addition to his regular duties. Raoul was as much Midwestern tradition as the ivy-covered buildings in which he taught his classes.

In all his coaching career at the school Raoul had had only one real star. Wade Wilson, son of a famous family, had possessed that certain talent and love for the game. And in Wade Wilson there was something that made him different from the rest of the Midwestern men. Some inner fire, perhaps. At any rate he was chosen All-Conference in his junior year and then he joined the Army Air Corps.

Wade had been killed over the English Channel after somewhat of a fabulous war record. His jersey was retired to the trophy case.

But before Wade Wilson died he wrote his father a letter that was not at all Midwestern, saying a lot of things the rest of us had never thought of, and asking that, if he were killed, his father set up a scholarship for a refugee whom Wade had met in Poland when he had been shot down behind the lines and fought his way back to freedom.

We didn't know it then, but that hot afternoon in September, five years after Wade Wilson had been killed, his friend, the refugee, had walked into the dressing room to keep a promise to a dead man.

Looking back at it now it seems there were a lot of things we didn't know then. We learned those the hard way, too.

Cool weather came early that fall at Midwestern. We walked to classes and now and then I saw Stephen Rymko on the campus. They said he lived in a cheap

boarding house a half mile from the campus. There had been talk once of tearing the house down. It was an eye-sore. I hadn't known whether they had ever torn it down or not until I found that Stephen Rymko was living there.

He came out for football practice regularly. And the fourth day Raoul put him in a scrimmage as defensive guard.

We had a pretty good bunch of seniors that year. David Fentress was a good fullback. I blocked. We had Walter Shearman at tailback who could pass and run better than most.

The equipment manager had given Rymko a good practice uniform, but then his sense of humor overcame him and he gave Rymko a battered, dusty old headgear of the type worn by players when Raoul Warner was on the team. When Raoul waved Rymko into scrimmage Stephen put that comical, battered headgear on his head and joined the defensive team.

Fentress grinned in the huddle and said, “Let's see what make the hick tick.”

We laughed. Shearman called a signal and we broke out of the huddle. Rymko was standing erect, watching us curiously. I don't believe he had ever seen a football before he came to Midwestern.

One of the subs told Rymko to crouch down, and he did, somewhat awkwardly.

The ball went back to Shearman. He spun, handed it to Fentress. A guard pulled out and blocked the tackle. I went into the gap and hit Rymko.

For a moment his stocky body was off balance, then a pair of steel-like arms went around my waist and I was plucked off the ground and held powerless in a vise-like grip.

Rymko dropped me then, and tried to tackle Fentress. The fullback faked, Rymko lunged, then Fentress was past him and running in the clear.

I stood up, my ribs aching from the grip of those terrible arms.

We ran several more plays after that, and Rymko never made a tackle. But after the third play the varsity center, Ned Barnes, walked back to the huddle and then fell to the ground. We pulled up his jersey and there was a huge red welt across his chest.

“That crazy Polack,” said Barnes when he could stand. “I tried to block him and

he threw me out of the way. I thought I was dead for a minute."

Raoul blew his whistle and stopped scrimmage. He waved another player in at Rymko's place and we went back to work.

After practice Rymko was standing by my locker when I came out of the shower. He looked at me evenly. "Did I do wrong?" he asked.

"How much have you played this game?" I asked him.

He shrugged. "All I know of the game is what Wade Wilson told me," he said quietly.

He grinned, and it was the first time I had ever seen him do that. It was then that I realized Rymko wasn't any older than the rest of us. He had just lived longer. If you had asked me to explain that sentence then, I couldn't have. It seems we all learned a whole lot before Stephen Rymko disappeared as suddenly as he had come.

After that first afternoon, however, it quickly became apparent that Rymko wouldn't develop into an all around player. He didn't know the niceties of defense and offense, the fundamentals of the game. All he had was that terrific strength and that squat, rock-hard body. And that could hurt our team more than it could help us.

So Raoul sent him over to the tackling pits, and he hit the dummies while the rest of us practiced.

He worked every afternoon, hour after hour, while the rest of us ran signals and drilled. Now and then Raoul would go over, say a kind word, and slap Rymko on the shoulder, but we all knew what was behind it. There were certain things that had to be done, no matter how awkward. Anyone else Raoul would have relegated to the scrub team. But the memory of Wade Wilson was strong at Midwestern.

When the traveling squad for our first game with Trenten was posted, the name of Rymko was there at the bottom.

SOMEHOW we eased by Trenten by six points, and Raoul gave us some new plays. Rymko went with us, silently, without emotion, and he sat on the bench and watched us win our next three games in a row.

It is hard to say just what elusive quality turns a good team into a better-than-good one. Maybe it was Rymko, eternally ham-

mering at the dummies hung in the tackling pits. But all of us worked harder that year than any Midwestern team had ever worked before.

Stephen Rymko got into a game now and then but never for over five or six plays, and never except when we were far enough ahead so it wouldn't make any difference whether he made a mistake or not.

We beat the College of Mines by three touchdowns when Fentress went absolutely wild one afternoon and battered the Cougar line for over 150 yards. A week later Tech came, and was beaten as Shearman threw two touchdown passes and Fentress ran for another score.

And so we worked, and became slightly snobbish and insufferable because of our record. The silent Rymko had never been overly popular with the team. We resented his hardness, the manner in which he took coldly and without emotion the tradition of Midwestern. Strange how cruel the young men of Midwestern could be. We tolerated him, it seems, in our own thinly-veiled manner. I had never seen him laugh after that first afternoon in the locker room. Every afternoon he would take exercise with the rest of the squad and then go belt the tackling dummies.

Now and then Raoul would put him in a scrimmage at a defensive position. We found him harder to handle. He had watched the games, and we found him picking up the small tricks of defense. We felt his harsh hands and his gouging shoulders when we tried to run his position, but Raoul always took him out after a few plays.

Then it was time to take on State. We were unbeaten.

State University was a tremendous up-state school which had set some kind of a record for continuous victory. Barney Gregg was head coach there, and every year he brought in a herd of prep talent to feed the huge plant that was State football.

This year they had Mule Swensen back, a huge blond who was said to be the greatest fullback the section ever saw. I know he had literally pounded us into a shambles the year before. State had beaten us by five touchdowns and Swenson had scored four of them.

The night before the game there was a big pep meeting. Raoul made a talk and the senior members of the squad stood up and said things about tradition and honor.

Rymko sat quietly with the rest of the team, and after the meeting broke up I walked towards the frat house. The rest of the bunch were going to Raoul's place for a bull-session but I felt strangely restless. I wanted to walk for a while.

Rymko was walking down the dark sidewalk in front of me. I called. He stopped and waited

We must have walked two blocks in silence, then he spoke.

"This game tomorrow. It means a lot?"

"I guess so," I answered. "Nothing like life or death, though, I don't guess."

He grinned faintly, and then it was gone. "It is good to do something that is not life or death," he said.

I felt dimly uncomfortable, and I said nothing. Then he said, talking more to himself than to me. "At this college everything seems to be not as important as life or death. Is that only the way I feel?"

"Maybe," I said. "I don't really know who made the rules here. In places like these the rules are made before you ever show up. Then you follow them and everything is okay."

"You have never made your own rules?" he asked. Then he shrugged his shoulders and walked for a long time without speaking.

"When did you meet Wade Wilson?" I asked.

"You knew him?"

"Yes," I lied. "Everybody knew Wade Wilson here."

"He was a very good man," said Rymko. "I met him in Poland during the war. He was shot down. Together we fought our way back to the American zone. Then he was shot down again. I never went back to Poland."

"Did you know that he wanted you to come to school here?"

Rymko looked at me in the darkness, and I could feel his grey eyes going through me. "We talked often of America and football. Wade Wilson loved the game very honestly."

Then he said, "I promised him I would come here and study and play football as he did. It was a thing that meant very

much to Wade Wilson."

"You'll get to like it," I said. "Education is a fine thing."

Stephen Rymko shrugged his broad shoulders again. "It is not always well to let another make the rules for you," he said.

He turned off at the next corner, and I said, "See you tomorrow."

He looked at me, and his face, in the dim glow of a street light, looked like a savage, emotional mask. "Beat State," he he said. "That is the thing, isn't it?"

"Sure," I said. "I guess that's it."

He looked at me for a long moment, and I thought I saw faint mockery in those cold grey eyes. Then he walked away in the darkness.

RAOUL stood there holding a roll of tape in his hand and tension had etched lines in his usually calm face. "Beat State," he said. "I can't think of anything else to say. Let's just try to beat State."

We stood up and shed the long minutes of waiting and went out into the bright sunshine to meet State. They were on the south end of the field and they looked huge and tough in white jerseys and gold pants. I tried to find Swenson in the gang of State players down there, but couldn't, and we started our pre-game drill.

Raoul had on a heavy overcoat and he stood by the bench and watched us. Fentress had worry in his eyes and Ned Barnes spat nervously on his hands and kneaded them together as he looked at the State squad on the other end of the field.

We went back into the dressing room and Raoul walked around nervously, looking at his watch. Then we were out there again and lining up to kick off to mighty State.

I walked up and slanted the ball and Shearman held it there. Far downfield I could see Jess Flores, State tailback, standing under the goal posts. I saw the big number 33 on the man in the left coffin corner and knew that was Swenson.

I kicked the ball to the right.

A State halfback brought it up to the 30 and went down in a sea of arms and legs and it had started.

Ned Barnes was backing the other side of the line, and he looked over at me. Fentress and Shearman yelled from the

halfback positions and little Robert Freeman stood at safety. State boomed out of the huddle, set, then shifted ponderously and with delicate precision.

Swenson came off right tackle, head up, the ball hanging at the end of one big arm like an apple. A State blocking back nudged a hole between guard and tackle and Swenson hit it, splitting it with his shoulders. He bucked like a big horse and Wallace Thompson, Midwestern guard, spun away from him and fell to the ground. Swenson crossed over towards the sideline and contemptuously belted a tackler aside.

Then he trotted like a blooded stallion, slammed into another tackler and literally ran him into the ground. He hit the open and those big legs stretched and he ran away from everything on the field. He was coasting when he crossed the goal.

It was a little shocking. Barnes had a frightened look on his face and Fentress, who had been run over on the 30-yard line, was sick at his stomach in the end zone. Swenson held the ball and Flores drilled it between the goal posts and State went back upfield to kick off, looking big, cocky and capable.

We fought, but there was too much Swenson. Shearman unreeled a dipping, twisting run that carried us to State territory—and when we bogged down Fentress had to punt. The ball kicked up a puff of lime as it went out on the State five.

State unfurled into a single wing and Swenson cracked center. I moved in there, brushed aside a blocker, and unloaded on Swenson.

It was like being hit by a freight train. The shock jarred me into haziness, and I clung to him instinctively. He roared over me, pulling me downfield, and he carried me eight yards before Fentress came over and cut his legs from under him. I stood up and I was a bit frightened. I weigh 225 stripped, and Swenson had carried me like a baby. It drove you a little crazy.

Sometimes Flores carried—but mostly it was Swenson. We had studied pictures of him. When he came we shifted to meet him, but it was no use. He rammed and bucked and tore you apart and then ran over you. He scored again midway in the first quarter and we were a battered, dirty and tired lot of men as we lined up to receive. Barney Gregg sent a platoon of new State

players, and Raoul ran a substitute end out on the field.

Early in the second quarter Shearman went back to pass, was trapped, and decided to run. He found room down the middle, cut outside when it got crowded in there, and went all the way to State's 25 before Swenson, tailing him, picked him up on one shoulder and threw him onto the cinder track that ran around the field. They carried Shearman to the bench with a broken arm and Fentress shifted to tail and I went to fullback, and there was hell to pay.

FENTRESS called the signals and we went out there. Barnes streaked the ball back to Fentress, who spun, hid the ball, and then gave it to me as I went by. There was a small hole and I dove in, was surprised when nothing hit me. Wally Thompson blocked a line-backer and I put my head down and ran. Swenson hit me as I crossed the goal line and knocked me out of the end zone and into the shrubbery that bordered the stands. We had scored ourselves a touchdown.

State roared then. Swenson battered our tackles and Flores started flipping short, accurate passes to keep our defense open. He completed enough to keep us honest. Swenson did the rest. State slashed deep into our territory and the gun caught them there.

In the dressing room at halftime Raoul Warner chalked desperate defenses on the blackboard, but we all knew it was futile. We rested quietly, then went out again to face Swenson and State.

We received to open the third quarter, and State choked us off inside our fifty and Fentress punted beautifully. Then Swenson started snapping big chunks out of our line again. Ned Barnes went out of the game after Swenson had ridden him savagely into the ground. Thompson followed him minutes later after trying to tackle Swenson alone. We gathered our battered forces and tried to stave Swenson off—but it was a losing cause. State moved to our thirty and poised for the final spring.

We called time and flopped wearily to the ground. Fentress had a cut under one eye and there was a knifing pain in my ribs. The rest of the team was gouged and torn by the incessant hammering of State.

"What the hell . . ." Fentress began.

We looked towards the bench, and saw a stocky figure detach himself from Raoul and trot towards us. It was Rymko.

Fentress stood up and waved at Raoul. He held up two fingers—the sign he was refusing the substitution. Raoul sat down on the bench.

Rymko trotted into the group and tapped Al Roberts on the shoulder. "I'm for you," he said quietly.

Roberts looked at Fentress and the captain shrugged his shoulders. Roberts started to the bench as Rymko put on his battered old headgear and stood quietly on the border of the circle of tired players.

The whistle jarred us back to war, and Rymko said, "I'm to take Barnes' place. The linebacker goes to guard and I back the line."

Fentress started to say something, then walked back to halfback. His face was resigned now, as if it didn't especially matter who backed the line. Swenson would ruin us anyhow.

State huddled, came up to the line of scrimmage. Flores called signals in a shrill voice. The State line shifted, poised itself. The ball went to Flores and Swenson crossed those big legs and slid by the little tailback. Then he came over tackle with two men in front of him. The Midwestern line heaved over to meet the threat, and Swenson split them with ponderous power. The State star bucked into the open—and was suddenly hit by a squat, savage figure who belted Swenson up into the air and then slammed him down with tremendous force. Rymko looked down at Swenson's face, and for a moment they stayed like that—Swenson's surprised blond face and the darkly savage, scowling features of Rymko. Swenson got up and walked stiffly back to the State huddle.

We looked at Rymko in surprise. Then State was coming again.

They didn't believe it, I guess. They thought it was a freak tackle. Swenson dug in and belted over guard, running hard, and Rymko moved to meet him. Swenson saw Rymko, lowered his head and bucked. Rymko crouched, then struck into the big State fullback. There was a tremendous impact, and Swenson's body was twisted crazily into the air, then slammed into the ground as Rymko's shoulders

gouged into him.

Mighty State called time.

We were watching Stephen Rymko in shocked disbelief, and I saw something about the man then. There was that glitter in his eyes, that slant of his wide shoulders, that told us the story.

You can call it crazy if you wish but there are times when a man can rise above himself and become greater than he is. All I know is that Rymko, on this stretch of bright green grass, far from his homeland, was paying back a debt to a dead friend, Wade Wilson. You cannot tell me that the ghost of Wade Wilson wasn't on the playing field of Midwestern that day.

FLORES looked out of the State huddle and his face grimaced as he talked. Then State was coming up to the line again.

I shifted towards Rymko, then went back to my position. I knew State would have men on Rymko, but Flores was smart. He might decoy with Swenson and cross us up.

Then I saw Swenson's face when he came out of the huddle. It was set in anger, the lips pressed into a pale slash across his face. I knew then State had accepted the challenge. It was Swenson or Rymko—and State didn't doubt that Swenson would win. He had never lost before.

Swenson faked, dipped, then took the ball from Flores and came into the line. Two men shuttled ahead of him and went for Stephen Rymko. Rymko's long, steel-like arms tossed one of them aside, and then the other was plucked off the ground and thrown back into Swenson. Swenson hit his own blocker, knocked the man to the ground—and then Swenson blasted into Rymko.

Rymko's squat, powerful body uncoiled and hit the big fullback. Those arms encircled Swenson's waist and lifted him. The big fullback pumped his legs and Rymko's jersey was ripped by flying cleats. Then an arm shifted, clamped around Swenson's legs. The State star fell to the ground and lay there, stunned. He was shaking his head when he went back to the huddle.

Flores skittered back and laced a bullet pass to a big end and State had a first

down. But it didn't change anything. Somehow everyone knew the game had become a battle between Swenson and Rymko.

It was then that Flores made a mistake that was to cost State badly. He faked to Swenson who dove into tackle. Then Flores was streaking down the middle, trying to sneak past us. Rymko started for Swenson, then stopped and leaped at Flores. Flores was spun by the arm that Rymko had thrown out, then the stocky Rymko was driving into Flores, bruising him backwards. Flores fell heavily.

Flores was no Swenson. And he had been hit by a man who was playing with a strength that was greater than his true strength.

They carried Flores off the field.

We lined up, and State huddled. The whole crowd suddenly became silent, waiting for the next play. State came out of the huddle and we could hear the hoarse voice of the sub tailback as he called signals. Stephen Rymko reached down, pulled up a handful of grass, and tossed it away. The wind scattered it. Rymko crouched and waited.

Swenson would buck. We knew it. Flores was gone. Swenson had to break this man in front of him.

The play unfurled. Two men led Swenson. I went over there and sliced one of them down. Fentress had come up from a halfback position and he laid his body across the other blocker.

Swenson steamed towards Rymko.

It happened then. You cannot say why, or how, those things must be. But it happened. Swenson looked into the hard, glittering eyes of Rymko and something inside him broke. His stride hesitated.

It might have been different because Swenson was truly a tremendous man. But there was Stephen Rymko, his eyes cold and icy and filled with a crazy fire—and when Swenson hesitated, Rymko struck him terribly hard. The bigger man's body jerked crazily, like a rag doll. He went down and the ball bounced away. Then Swenson lay there.

When Swenson got up he was broken. He shook off Rymko when the stocky man tried to help him as he got to his feet. Then he toppled forward on his face. They helped him off the field—and the thousands of people cheered as Rymko walked towards the Midwestern bench, holding his battered old headgear.

There was more but it doesn't seem important. I scored a touchdown and Fentress ran for another through a shattered State defense. Late in the game Fentress, a fine runner against an ordinary team, broke away for still another score and Midwestern had won themselves a National championship.

The dressing room was a madhouse. The rich men wandered around shouting and laughing, and Al Roberts' dad, who owned half the steel in North America, said, "We'll build a new stadium. We'll give Midwestern a team they can be proud of."

And Rymko, with the flash cameras of the press popping around him, scrawled his name on his battered helmet and gave it to Raoul Warner. Then he smiled quietly and went into the showers.

They built the stadium, and Midwestern's team lived up to it.

The trophy case has a lot of jerseys and trophies in it now. Weber, King, Tally, all of the greats of Midwestern who had a part in building a football dynasty at the school.

Stephen Rymko dropped out of school the day after the State game. Perhaps college wasn't for him. We heard he was working in the Oklahoma oil fields, fighting his way to the top of a tough business. Perhaps it was like he said the night before State. "It is not always well to let someone else make the rules for you."

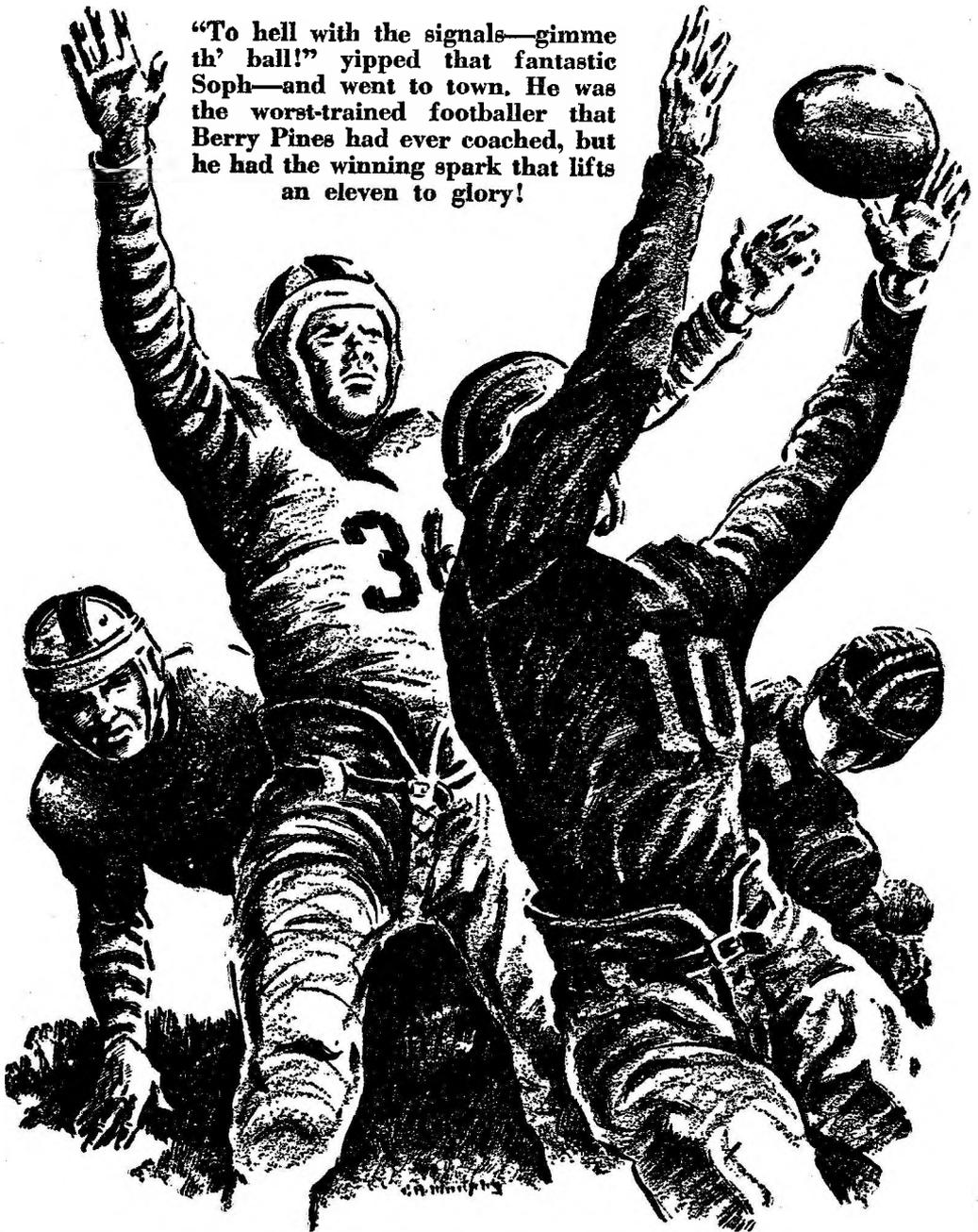
But he kept a promise to a dead friend, and today the gleaming white stadium of Midwestern shines in the sunlight, and the grads walk around the halls and look at the helmet in the trophy case and say, "You see that old headgear there . . .?"

It's a thing, somehow, that makes you proud, even in the hallowed halls of staid old Midwestern.

LINE BUCKAROO

By ANSON SLAUGHTER

"To hell with the signals—gimme th' ball!" yipped that fantastic Soph—and went to town. He was the worst-trained footballer that Berry Pines had ever coached, but he had the winning spark that lifts an eleven to glory!



THE score was Boonton College 6, Exton University 6. There were two minutes left in the game. Berry Pine strode up and down the worn grass in front of the Exton bench and glared out at his Green-clad veterans.

Time was out. Exton had only just scored after a three-quarters uphill battle

for which Berry Pine had only himself to blame. Berry Pine had allowed himself to Master Mind again.

After all these years he should have known better. Berry was a grizzled veteran of the football wars these days. He was, until this Exton job, considered through—finished—passe. He had awak-

ened one day to find, to his amazement, that he was no longer a young, vital leader of men. A newspaper sports writer had referred to him as "that aging mentor, Berry Pine."

The job at Exton, now in its third year, was to have fixed all that. How he had wrangled scholarships, combed the backwoods and mining towns and truck-companies for those stalwarts out there on the field. He had brought them all in as freshmen—legitimately, too, he told himself fiercely. They had kept up in their studies—physical ed, mostly—but they had qualified. He had seen to that, too.

They had played good football, too. Sophomore year they had lost only two games. Junior year they had tied one and dropped one. They had done too well. They had aroused alumni hopes for an undefeated season and a mythical championship in this, their last year of service.

So, by building too well, Berry Pine had defeated himself. For his veterans were weary. They were blase. They believed in their press clippings. They lacked that spark which alone makes a truly great football team.

Witness the opening game, against Boonton, weak but scrappy Boonton. Berry had tried the Master Mind in the old Rockne pattern. He had started his seconds, just to show the first team it was not indispensable.

The seconds had shown them. The seconds had allowed themselves to be soundly thrashed and scored upon before Berry could rally his wits to get them out of there. It had taken the stolid if expert varsity until this last two minutes to break the inspired Boonton defense for a score. And now the conversion must be made if Exton was to win. Two minutes were not enough for another touchdown.

Furthermore, it was too early in the season for perfect condition and the Exton line was drooping like a pack of weary hounds, tongues lapping their chins. Berry Pine stopped striding and turned his eagle eye upon the bench. The second team, in bad standing with everyone including themselves, avoided his fiery stare. Berry said sharply:

"You, sophomore—what's your name?"

A big, raw-boned youth with a crew haircut and large, greenish eyes wide-

spaced, started, and said:

"Er—Jack Jamison, sir."

Berry Pine snapped, "Get in there for Parker at left tackle and make it good. If the second team can't play ball the third team has got too."

He was especially tough about it, fearing defeat, unwilling to show that fear. He was the rough, mean coach, Berry Pine. He was the man who ruled like a Dictator. He was the Big Boss in his football camp. The wide-shouldered kid leaped to get a headgear from the pile and ran out on the field.

Red Parker, Captain and poorest-conditioned of them all, staggered off, panting. Berry Pine got him by the elbow and walked beside him to the sideline. It was a fine sight for the cheering stands. What he said was:

"You big, yella palooka. I bring you here and try to make somethin' of you and you throw me down. I oughta slap you down right here in front of everybody."

Parker panted, "Nix, Coach. I'm bushed. Got a bum gam, Berry honest."

"You'll play on it. All season. You'll play or I'll cut your heart out an' make ya eat it," Berry said tightly. "I can't lose this job, I tell you. It'll be my finish."

ON the field Jack Jamison stood apart from the others, obeying the no-talking rule. Tommy Grey, wary Exton quarterback, said, "Ain't that the kid scrub was doin' the drop-kickin' in practice? Guess Berry's mad at me an' wants him to make the try."

He called a signal. Jack Jamison heard it with unbelieving, appalled ears. He wanted to cry out, to protest, but he was afraid of the talking rule. He didn't know much about the rules, really. He stood, dry-mouthed, trembling, allowing the terrible farce to go on. Jack Jamison had never been in a game of football in his life before!

Tommy Grey knelt, faking the placement, clearing a space. Giant Toots Carrigan bent over the ball. Jack took his place and tried to keep his knees from shaking, wondering what in the world he would do when Tommy held the ball. He was NOT the scrub who had been practicing drop-kicks. He had never tried a

drop-kick, even in practice.

The ball came back as his heart stood still. It did not go to the faking Tommy. It came straight to Jack Jamison. For a split second he stood there, holding it, frozen in horror.

Tommy yelled, "Boot it, sucker!"

The posts seemed a mile away. Aroused Boonton linesmen bore down upon the poised figure. The ball game hung in the balance and on the sidelines Berry Pine felt himself going stark, raving mad.

The Coach could not stir. All the incidents of his long career in the game unreeled before his drowning eyes. It was, he knew, the end. The utter shambles of an ending. This tragic comedy of errors he could never live down.

Jack Jamison took a step. He dropped the ball. It touched the ground on its end. He swung one of those oak sapling legs, good football legs. The blunt toe of the kangaroo shoe made contact. The ball took off from the ground. It soared.

It did not soar very high. It was not going over. It was, miraculously, straight. But it was too low. Berry Pine groaned horribly.

A Boonton back, zealous in defense, leaped into the air. He got his hands on the ball. He slapped it. He slapped it upward. It went over the goal post cross-bar. It became a point for Exton.

Exton won the Boonton game, 7 to 6.

IT was Wednesday. Berry Pine strolled away from the 'varsity practice and nosed into second team maneuvers. The tall, rugged form of Jack Jamison was amazingly awkward at the task of learning tackle play.

Berry got the boy to one side unobtrusively. He said in a gruff voice, "You're an awful bonehead but you got promise. Look, when you make that block, don't throw all your weight. Roll with the man—like this."

He threw an unexpected, fierce rolling block at the youth—and Berry Pine at fifty could throw them and make them stick.

Jack Jamison moved without seeming to move. He just took himself almost imperceptibly out of the way. Berry fell all over the grass and rolled ignominiously. Jamison was at his side in an instant, all

politeness, helping him up.

Berry threw off the aid, roaring, "What is this? What you all starin' at? Get back to work, you blasted so and sos. By Harry, I'll have work outa you punks or know the reason why. I'll have a football team or some of you bums'll never graduate."

To Jack Jamison he said never a word. He walked away from the rangy youth and did not go near him the rest of the week. But at odd moments he found himself wondering how the kid could have anticipated his move, how he could have escaped that sudden block. It took marvelous reflexes to move like that. Reflexes and speed. And yet the soph kid did not know football. He was as green as grass.

The second game, against Lollard, was different. Berry had given them the word. The veteran 'varsity started. In four minutes it had rolled down the field for an easy score, pushing Tuck White over from the three-yard line in a magnificent surge. Tommy Grey converted to make it 7.

They were all smiles, then. They patted each other on the back and trotted back down-field well satisfied. And for three quarters and well into the fourth they did nothing else but kick listlessly out of danger and let Lollard try to gain.

Berry, juggling his scanty reserves like a W.C. Fields, raved and ranted and shouted himself hoarse. But nothing could arouse them. They were satisfied. The "rainbow" backfield of Tommy Grey, Greasy Green, Bill Brown and Tuck White was apathetic. The seconds were worse. The line was sloppy, from Meenie Todd through Klegg, Carrigan, Borom, Marrani to Sloppo Gargan on the right end. Red Parker's leg bothered him. Nothing was right.

In the last period Lollard started moving. They didn't stop until they were inside the ten-yard line and then they showed no disposition to let up. Exton, its back to the wall, took time out. There were weary men in there and Lollard was hot.

Berry Pine never took his eyes from the play. He just snapped without turning his head, "Jamison! In there for Red."

The kid did not speak, either. He went onto the field, his legs steady now that he'd had his baptism of fire. He went in all gravity, as if he were a bulwark for the

jaded Exton line. He had, Berry Pine suspected, no suspicion that the Coach was just playing a hunch.

Berry trod the grass he had worn so smooth. It was pure gambling and he knew it. Jamison was too raw, too green to be in there at that strained moment. He had no right to insert a sophomore linesman of no experience at this spot. He kept his face turned toward the play, his eyes peering at the action.

The kid stood up in there. The others crouched and were taut, some swung their arms like fighters. But Jack Jamison just stood up, relaxed, those green eyes upon the play. The Lollard line shifted to his side. The Lollard quarterback was going to capitalize on that stand-up stance. Berry Pine groaned.

It was a reverse spinner with blockers ahead of the ball. They came straight at him. Klegg, the guards and Butts Marrani who had shifted over for the play, dove under, trying to submarine the avalanche. Jack stood there, letting the wave break on him.

They came, a hot-eyed horde of wild youths intent on tying the highly touted Extons. Jack Jamison stepped in among them. His forearms, big, well-developed forearms, seemed to brush a couple of blockers away like they were flies. He did not crash. He seemed to be reaching for something, bending low, stretching out muscular hands. He was almost negligent in his movements. The blockers fell like ninepins.

The stocky running back with the ball picked up speed, trying to run down this calm, green-eyed stumbling block. Jack made a quick grab. He did not seek to wrestle the running back to earth. He grabbed for the ball clutched tightly in the Lollard man's hands.

He rose, heaving. He threw the ball carrier over his head as a bull would toss a pup, back over into the Exton secondary. Red Parker groaned aloud:

"The cluck chucks the guy toward OUR goal!"

The Lollard man hit all sprawled out on the Exton five-yard line. Jack lay down and seemed to be cuddling something. The referee leaped and tugged at the piling mass of players. Jack finally got up. He held the ball in his hands, clingy to

it tenaciously, his face pleased and proud.

Berry Pine muttered, "He stole it. He stole it just like he was a pro. Now what the hell do you know about that?"

Red Parker said, "That kid's our luck. I'm tellin' you, Berry. That kid's got somethin'—I dunno what. But it's somethin' we need."

The linesmen were reversing the chains. The Lollard running back was screaming protests, but the referee was adamant. In football you must hold onto that apple, come what may. It was Exton's ball, first and ten—and the danger over. Exton won the ball game, 7 to 0.

THE Pate game was a honey. Pate had a good team and somehow the Extons rose to the challenge of the Maroon and scored twice, in the first and second quarters, making it 14 to 0.

Pate, of course, took to the air. Amazingly they found themselves with a clicking attack. They scored a touchdown in the third quarter. They kept right on passing and Exton was queerly helpless to prevent them from completing.

Berry Pine could not have told you why he put a linesman in to stop an aerial attack. But when Red Parker came limping off the hardboiled captain said earnestly: "He'll do somethin', Coach. He always does."

The Pate passer had the ball, tincanning. The Exton line charged in and wearily began chasing him, knowing they could not catch the really elusive chucker. Receivers spread down and desperate Exton men tried to cover by zones.

Jack Jamison just stood around, hands on hips, seemingly out of the play. No one heeded him. The passer leaned back and threw a heavy one destined for the flat where two backtracking Pate eligibles waited.

Jamison's heavy legs seemed to contain hidden springs. He went straight up in the air about a half a mile. He took the leather out of the air as if it were wafting gently by instead of zooming with meteor speed. He dropped back to earth.

The disappointed receivers were on him like a pair of buzzards. Red said, "Well, Berry, I told you. He stopped 'em, anyway. The kid's got somethin'."

Berry yelled, "Stopped 'em? Look at

'im!"

Jack Jamison was running. He wasn't cutting or swivel-hipping or reversing. He was just running like a man in a hurry to get some place. Pate men dove at him and glanced off. He charged like a locomotive, straight through and over.

Exton veterans, quick to take advantage of a break, formed interference. The Green wave swept on. Ignoring everything but his objective, Jack Jamison took his big frame galloping along in its midst.

He touched the ball down. They crowded around him, slapping his back. Tommy Grey tried to kiss him. They were as hilarious as a high school team scoring its first touchdown of the season. Jack Jamison stood among them, his green eyes far away. Berry Pine had a queer, shivery feeling. He had never seen a boy look so utterly happy. It was like looking through an open window into a house of peace and contentment.

The tough coach shrugged and spat. He said, "I always get 'em. It's genius, I guess."

Red Parker said shrewdly, "It's damn good luck. He's got 'em sparked. They like that quiet kid."

THERE were just two more games. There was Vale and then there was Belfry. Exton had slid through, sometimes pressed but always winning. Always at the psychological moment there had been Jack Jamison with something new, something different.

Berry Pine sat in his quarters on the Exton campus and gloated. Vale would be tough, but the scouting had shown how to beat Vale. Only Belfry stood between him and an undefeated season and a new contract. He was back up there. He was Berry Pine, the Miracle Man again.

Belfry would be the hurdle. He had plans for Belfry. He had a play. It wasn't anything much—but he knew it would click. It was in the pattern of that remarkable season that it should click. It was the oldest, simplest of them all—but it would humble great Belfry and clinch the Eastern title. It meant a new, bigger-salaried, long-term iron-clad contract. It meant an annuity upon which he could eventually retire. Berry Pine was happy. He picked up the evening paper.

It smote him right between the eyes. The headlines screamed at him. **EXTON FOOTBALL PLAYER A PHONEY. 'JACK JAMISON' REALLY BEVERLY HEIR. SOUGHT NORMALCY UNDER ASSUMED NAME.**

There was a hesitant knock on the door. Berry said, "C'mon in an' get a load of this."

Jack Jamison came in. He wore a top-coat and on his crew haircut was a hat which he removed at once. He put down a pigskin bag and stood there, fumbling with his hat. His green eyes were starkly tragic.

Berry said heartily, "Well, kid, you could knock me over with a belayin' pin. What's the idee?"

Jack said in a low voice, "I shouldn't have done it. But I wanted to be like other guys so bad . . . I needed to be like other guys."

Berry Pine said, "Why you're a stand-out, kid. You're better'n other guys."

Jamison went on, like a boy reciting a lesson, "I am really Beecham Horace Beverly Fourth, y' know. I inherited nine million dollars when my parents died. I was a baby. The Bank brought me up. I had private tutors."

"Sounds good," nodded Berry.

"It was awful," said Jack in dull accents. "Never seein' other kids, always protected—from everything I wanted. I had one consolation. I made myself strong and quick. I reckon I worked harder than any truck driver makin' myself strong. I wanted to play football more'n anything. Of course, I couldn't."

"You what?"

"I never played until you stuck me into the Boonton game," said Jack simply. "I learned outa books—and by myself, in a gym. I finally got some money of my own and entered here as a sophomore. The Bank is goin' nuts. Of course this ends it."

"Ends it?" Berry Pine was on his feet, the blood drained from his face. "You're gonna quit?"

"You didn't read all the paper, I guess," said the boy simply.

He picked it up and turned to the inside pages. There were pictures and more captions. One was of a leering, naked child on a bear rug. It was captioned, **THIS**

BABY HAS NINE MILLION REASONS TO SMILE, Underneath was the likeness of a slum child, hollow-cheeked, swollen with rickets. . . . THIS BABY HAS NOTHING TO SMILE ABOUT.

Berry Pine opened his mouth. Then he closed it again. The green eyes were fast on him, earnest, appealing for understanding. There were a thousand things Berry Pine ought to say. He had no right to stand there gaping at this youngster.

No one would believe that this reserve linesman was his spark plug, the whip that made the team perform. When his team fell apart against Vale and Belfry no one would believe it was because this discovered son of the pampered rich had quit. They would just say that after all, Berry Pine did not quite have it. They would just start looking for another coach.

There were many ways he could hold the boy. An appeal to his obvious generosity, a direct challenge to the Bank and the money which meant nothing, really, beside football would do it. He felt he could make the kid stay if he only tried. He could see it in the pathetic green eyes.

He heard himself saying, "Well, kid. I wouldn't want you hurt. I wouldn't want you on the spot."

"The newspapers—they'd be riding us to death," Jamison-Beverly was saying.

"Uh—yeah," said Berry, swallowing hard, thinking what all that publicity would mean to him in dollars and cents. "Sure, kid. Ride us to death. Well—uh—anything I c'n do for ya?"

Jack Jamison said, "I was awful proud to be plain Jack Jamison to you and the boys. Say good-bye to them for me."

Berry Pine stood there and stared at the empty doorway. He stood there a long while. Then he sat down and lit his pipe and closed his eyes. He realized then that the sports writers had been eminently correct. He was getting old.

IN the dressing room, before the Vale game, Berry Pine said, "Some of you are sore because Jack Jamison quit. You thought he was our luck. He, a green soph kid with no experience. You've built him up until you believe you can't play ball without him. Lemme tell you what I think about Jack Jamison."

Red Parker said sturdily, "He had some-

thin'."

"He had the guts to try to live his own life," said Berry Pine in a strong, vibrant voice. "He wanted to be like you. Yes, you. He wanted to make his own way. They wouldn't let him. He could have thrown them down and stuck. He didn't do it because he thought it wasn't right—that his money was a responsibility which he couldn't avoid. How about you guys? Have you a responsibility?"

He glared at them accusingly. Red Parker got up and managed his bad leg without limping. He said:

"We got one toward that kid. C'mon, you bums."

In the last quarter it was cold. Berry Pine shivered on the path in front of the bench. Red Parker said, "I c'n make it now. Lemme go back in."

It was plain on the scoreboard, Exton 6, Vale 0. A fighting, game, inspired Exton team had scored early and fought off the Vale counter-attack despite lack of reserves. Parker's leg was bad, but Vale was threatening on the Exton twenty.

Berry said, "Belfry next week, Red."

"I gotta do it. I gotta do it for that kid," said the hard-boiled ex-mine boy.

Berry sighed. He said with unaccustomed gentleness, "Well then, Red, go ahead."

Red dragged himself out there. Vale threw fresh backs at the tired Exton line. Red Parker, sans headgear, got his flaming thatch into the fray. Vale men went skirling about the football field like leaves upon a windy day.

The gun barked. Red Parker slumped to the ground. They bore him tenderly off on a stretcher and lugged him to the clubhouse. The doctor looked at the swollen leg.

Berry said, "No dice, huh, Doc?"

"He's played his last game, and it was a good one," said the doctor with finality.

Red Parker was blubbing like a baby. He managed to say, "I liked that kid, Berry. I hadda go all out."

The other players stood around, their faces glum despite the day's victory. Without a competent left tackle Belfry would slay them and they knew it.

Berry Pine said, "Get dressed, you palookas! You wanta catch cold? Scram, and stop bellerin'. We haven't lost a game

yet, have we?"

He bored them with his eyes, putting on the act, playing the undaunted, tough coach. He didn't convince a man.

THE week dragged by. The papers lost track of Beecham Horace Beverly Fourth and promptly turned to a love nest murder and the European situation. Exton trained for Belfry, whom they would meet away, in the northern city which housed that great university.

Berry Pine got them through it, whipping them along, using a second team fullback named Jonesy in the right tackle slot, shifting Butts Marrani to the hard side in Red Parker's place. They were all right mechanically. But no team can lose two key men in a week and stay up there.

He talked to them quietly in the strange dressing quarters under the big concrete stand. He didn't try to arouse them with words. He tried to show them that he had confidence in them, that he knew they would do their best, and their best would be good enough.

He had lost his hard-boiled attitude somewhere along the line. He was resigned now. The alumni would take his scalp but there was always another job—a smaller, less lucrative job, but one which he could tackle. He was getting old to try new fields but he was satisfied. So he was musing as the dressing door opened and a pale Jack Jamison appeared.

Red Parker, in street-clothes and on crutches, whooped, "There he is! Looky yonder, you punks. There's your boy!"

They whacked him on the shoulders and mussed him up. They were glad to see him. You could sense the change in the dressing-room.

He said at last, "Gee. I came up to wish you luck, fellas. I been hidin' in a lumber camp. I flew down just to sneak in here and shake hands."

Red demanded, "You ain't gonna play?"

The kid looked bewildered. He took in Red's crutches, the heavily bandaged leg. His face changed color twice, from pink to white to deep red. He said, "You can't play, huh?"

Red said, "The Vales did me in."

Berry Pine held his breath, staring. If the kid played now they would crucify him.

They would call him a monied Merriwell, a grandstander, a last-ditch phoney. The kid couldn't play sixty minutes of football or anything close to it.

He would certainly flop. He would be trapped by his own unorthodox maneuvers. A smart Belfry quarterback would sooner or later capitalize on his inexperience and make a monkey of him. The kid knew it, too. Berry could see it in the familiar green eyes.

He hesitated a moment, standing there, the Extons around him eager-faced. Then he slowly took off his necktie. He said simply, "Well. When do we start?"

Berry shook his head. He could not trust himself to speak. He sent them out there to play Belfry, which was the best football club in the East and one-two in the country that year.

RED PARKER grunted, "They'll probably kill him."

Berry Pine winced. It was undoubtedly true. The Belfry quarterback had run true to form. He had early spotted the roving, individualistic style of Jack Jamison's untutored play. He was seeking first to take the sting out of it.

The Belfry powerhouse, operating from the single wing, was rolling up there at the tackles. It would sweep at Butts Marrani, plucking yards or feet as Butts fought them off with dogged courage. It would swing back and throw itself at Jack Jamison.

Jack met it in his own way. He stood squarely on his two feet and hand-fought his way in. He nabbed the ball carrier or the lead blocker and threw him forcefully into the ball carrier so that Todd, the end, or Tommy Grey, backing up, could spoil the play.

And when the play was to the other side, somehow Jack Jamison would follow it around, going out of position but so rapidly that no advantage could be taken by Belfry.

He wasn't saying anything, as usual. The others were slapping his back, nudging each other, yelping encouragement. But Jack was playing the game, every fiber of him intent on the play, trying to learn as he went.

The second quarter was ending. The Belfry attack had foundered on the tackles.

The Belfry passes had been knocked endways by the Exton backs. Belfry's scoring thrusts had been foundered again and again by the inspired play of the Exton forward wall, led by the intrepid kid with the green eyes.

By the same token Exton could not put two first downs together to save their souls. Tommy Grey's great kicking had pulled them out and kept the battle between the thirty yard lines. But the Belfry line had charged hard and stymied any advance.

Berry Pine gritted, "If we can hold out this half and the kid comes through. . ."

"Don't put it all on the kid," begged Red Parker. "He's been takin' an awful beatin'. Put Jonesy in and give the kid a rest, Berry."

Berry hesitated. It was Belfry's ball on their own thirty-five yard line. It was a good time to insert reserves, with only three minutes to go in the half. He made a motion to the sub tackle.

"After this play," he said.

The play started. It was another plunge at the tackle with Tim Boyer carrying for Belfry. Jack Jamison was through like a flash, reaching for the thundering backfield ace.

He was through fast. He was in plenty deep, playing in the Belfry backfield. There had been no one to even attempt to stop him. The defensive end and wing-back were busily blocking in the Exton secondary. A lurking guard was low behind the center of the Belfry line.

The guard flung himself at Jack's knees. A tall back whirled and shoved. Jack went end over end. He had been mouse-trapped, allowed to come through and ambushed.

Boyer sped over the open ground where Jack should have been. The blockers had done their jobs. The field was broken to bits. Tim Boyer turned on the heat. No one could touch him. He scored all alone in the corner of the field.

The half ended with the score Belfry 7, Exton 0 and Jack Jamison weeping alone in the showers where he had been hastily sent while Jonesy finished the period. Berry found him there.

Jack said miserably, "They depended on me. I let 'em down."

"Nonsense," snapped Berry. "You gonna get your tail down? What good you gonna be out there if you let down?"

"They suckered me," groaned Jack absymally.

Berry Pine's jaw regained its hardness. He stepped into the shower, ignoring the spray which drenched his heavy overcoat. He grabbed Jack Jamison by the elbow. His voice was hard as nails.

"Listen, mugg. You'll go out there in this half and mebbe you'll get suckered again. But you'll go out there and play ball. You've got this team dependin' on you. Without you they're licked. You don't want to let them down and by Harry, you ain't if I got to punch you in the nose."

He was the old Berry Pine, glaring into the startled eyes of the naked youth. Jack Jamison stammered, "Okay, Coach. I'll—I'll be in there."

BERRY PINE trod the path before the bench. The fourth quarter was beginning. It was Exton's ball—but on their own twenty yard line.

Jack Jamison was still in there. He had not been mousetrapped. He had played football like a man possessed. He was bloody now, and weary. But he was the first man into the huddle on every play and the Extons clustered around him while canny Tommy Grey called signals. With their backs to the wall and the shock troops of Belfry hammering at them madly, the Extons had not given up another score.

Tommy Grey called a time out. He drifted casually over while the others dropped to gain the second's rest. He spoke to the umpire, drifted back, looking at the hands of the big clock as if to check the remaining time. There were ten minutes.

It could be a tie, Berry Pine kept repeating to himself. Maybe with a tie his job would be saved. Or if it wasn't, he could cash in on the newspaper scareheads of this game. If it could only be a tie score. . . .

Exton was doggedly lining up. There seemed to be no spark, no lift to them, just determined, courageous stubbornness. The backs formed right in a modified single wing. The ball snapped back to Tommy Grey. Tommy faded and the stands arose for the expected desperation pass.

Belfry's secondary faded, too. The line went in warily. The line on the left got through without opposition. Tommy flung

back his right arm.

A figure loomed, running. It snatched the ball off Tommy's hand. Tommy promptly threw a block at a linesman in the White jersey of Belfry. The figure kept on running, out toward the end.

There other blockers appeared, as Berry Pine had cunningly arranged, seemed to spring fullarmed from the ground like seeds of the Dragon come to being. Jack Jamison, holding the ball as if it were a loaf of bread, ran painstakingly behind these blockers.

Belfry's men regained possession of their bearings almost at once. An avalanche of tacklers bore down. The impact was terrific. Great deeds were performed on the stricken field. And through it all Jack Jamison ran, without deception, without guile.

Finally, all his blockers were down. They took the last one away and left Jack alone, plunging goalward, unflinching despite his weariness. Then the Belfry's got their shot at him.

He took the first one with a straight-arm, murdering him and letting him lay. When a second dove Jack carried him a ways, then shed him like a crab shedding his shell. On the goal-line the safety man and two others converged. Jack lowered his head and dug in his cleats and still ran.

He ran over them all. Berry Pine unclenched the fingers that were cramped from digging into his palms. He said, "I never would of believed it."

Red Parker gulped, "He's got sometin', that kid. I dunno what it is . . ."

And then Tommy Grey missed the goal. It was the first time that year Tommy had missed one. But the scoreboard read Belfry 7, Exton 6.

Berry Pine said dully, "It just wasn't to be. They'll stall it out now."

The clock said eight minutes. Belfry received. When they finally had to kick and Tommy Grey received and ran back brilliantly to midfield there were only two minutes left.

They went into the single wing right. Berry said, "It can't be. Tommy wouldn't dare . . ."

It wasn't the old Statue of Liberty. It didn't even have deception. It was just a

plain end around. Once again Jack had shifted positions with the end and was looping unmerrily behind his interferers.

They got to him earlier this time. They were around him at the forty. They clung to him, too. Tommy Grey knocked a couple of them loose at the imminent risk of tripping Jack.

Jack never faltered. He just kept running. He got rid of them on the thirty. On the twenty-two more hit him but he ram-rodged a newly acquired straight arm and sent them reeling. He carried to the five. They got him there and knocked him all up and down the white line.

He got up and for the first time Berry heard his voice from the field. He said loudly, "The hell with the signals. Gimme that damn ball."

Shades of the immortal Coy, thought Berry. He'll do it. He'll do it.

He came again, a looming figure of destiny, running around with the blockers going down before the charge of the Belfrys. They had him, they ganged on him, they slew him.

And there was Tommy Grey. Tommy was sneaking through the center of the line and looping for the goal line. A Belfry secondary made a long leap. Tommy eluded him neatly. Tommy scored. Tommy had the ball all the time.

AFTER the excitement had died down and they were all dressed and showered and strangely loath to depart from the dressing room, Red Parker thought of something. He turned to Jamison.

"Jack—I mean Beecham—that's a hell of a name—you're comin' back next year, ain't you? You're needed here, kid."

Jack Jamison Beecham Horace Beverly IV looked at Berry Pine. He said, "I guess I need some coachin'. I guess the Bank'll have to figure somethin'. I guess I'll be back."

Berry Pine growled, "You're as graceful as a truck horse runnin' that ball. You need plenty coachin' on those mousetraps. You better come back."

Which seemed to settle it. At least Red Parker thought so. He said, "The kid's got somethin'. I dunno what it is. But it's somethin'."



CALL OF THE CLEATS

By JOHN STARR

Scatback Eddie Glynn was the greatest money player in the land . . . yet he didn't believe in "play for pay."

EDDIE GLYNN broke over tackle, tried to switch for the runaway which had made him twice All-American, most famed player in the land. He was a grateful figure in the spangles of the All-Stars; the lights shone down brightly, the night air in Chicago was balmy and seventy thousand people howled at the spectacle of the great Pro Champions, the Beavers, being badgered by the collegiates.

A bulky line-backer in the striped blue jersey of the Beavers reached out an arm. He leaned his weight. He trapped Eddie Glynn close, then rolled two hundred and thirty pounds over him. It was like being flattened by a steam roller.

Eddie Glynn gasped, "That's not necessary, Jansen!"

The big man sat up and leered. "You wanna make somethin' out of it, pantywaist?"

Eddie said coldly, "After the game."

"After the game I wouldn't be seen with you," sneered Jansen.

Before Eddie could answer, Rip Healy was on the field, motioning him off. He went to the bench. They crowd cheered him to the echo. He had done little or nothing, but he was Handsome Eddie Glynn, the people's choice.

Sambo Stanley regarded him gloomily. Sambo was big as an old house, strong as two horses and a smart football coach. He was leaving collegiate ranks to go to the Whales in the Western Division of the pro league. Last year he had been head coach at Midwest U., where Eddie had gained such honors. He said, "You can't break away from those birds?"

"They're tiring," said Eddie. "They scarcely hurt me these last few tries."

Sambo said without sympathy, "You shouldn't have made that crack to the newspapers."

"I realize that," said Eddie calmly. "But since I'm not going to play pro ball it doesn't matter after tonight."

Rip Healy was chugging outside tackle,

a blond boy with legs which went apparently in two directions at once. He gained eight yards before Jansen caught him.

Sambo sent in Donny Katler at fullback. He grunted to Eddie, "You're a fool, Eddie. I say so, Sis says so. You're stupid. I never figured you for stupid. But you are."

Eddie sat on the bench. His clean-cut features were set in a hard line. "I'll take care of my business. You manage your own. I'm not playing football for dough. I say it's a game shouldn't be played for money or marbles."

"You said it to the press," Sambo pointed out.

"Nuts," said Eddie.

Nevertheless he knew that he should not have given out that interview. He had just accepted a job writing copy for a large advertising agency and he had been feeling his oats. The reporter had been badgering him for a story and Sis Stanley had been importuning him to change his mind and go with Sambo to the Whales and he had a date that night with Lilian Montaye and he just plain shot off his mouth.

He said that football was a game of the spirit, that the pros were a large, lubberly bunch of lazy slobs. He said a lot of other things and added flatly that he would never play for pay. Coming from him it made a wonderful wire story. Every sports page in the country carried it and critics of professional football stood up and roared approval.

And this evening in Chicago the Beavers were showing their disapproval. Eddie had a black eye coming on and bruises all over his compact, one hundred and seventy pound frame. And the All Stars were in a scoreless tie with the pros.

Rip made it a first down, but Katler was hit very hard going into the line and fumbled. Sambo moaned and sent in his defensive specialists. On second thought he called out Prachek and at left line backer he put Don Dolan, the colored star from UCLA.

The Beavers were trying to capitalize on the break, with Koski running the team and attempting to pass to the great Hop Austin. Dolan moved into position and knocked over a screen pass. Austin grabbed one for five, but Dolan almost killed

him with a vicious tackle.

Sambo said, "Georgia Boy Cole going with me. And Rip Healy and Fred Fremont. Why don't you get wise? They'll give you fifteen thousand just for your name. Even this story could be used in your favor if you played your cards right."

Eddie said, "I prefer my brains unscrambled and my football playing for fun. That's all."

"Fun! You rode through college on it and had dough left over! You and every other man on this squad!"

"That's different," said Eddie calmly.

ON THE FIELD Don Dolan leaped and intercepted a screen pass on the midfield marker. The Beavers ran dejectedly off. Their defensive relief came on. Jansen, the huge line-backer, looked toward the All Stars bench and bellowed, "Where's Chicken-heart Glynn? Is he scared to play with us any more?"

Sambo looked at his former protege. He said bitterly, "Well? You want to? Or no?"

Eddie picked up his helmet. "I want to." He strode onto the field of action. Georgia Boy Cole was playing quarterback. The game was nearly over. Eddie went into the huddle.

Cole said, "This heah is it, boys. Try the 76 series." He was looking straight at Eddie.

Fred Fremont, a staunch lad from the East, was blocking. Kapowitz was in at full. Georgia Boy kicked the play off from the T, gave plenty of fake to it, then pitched out in the flat where Eddie was circling.

He needed to get up a little impetus, he thought. He liked elbow room which the pros had not allowed him. He saw Fremont throw his first block, saw Kap run low and slug the end off his feet.

There was a lane. Jansen would be in it and Murphy would be coming over. Then there were Songard and Martin, the wing-backs of the Beavers. Georgia Boy was fighting to get at Murphy. Jansen, huge and wary, came prowling.

Eddie seemed to fly as he turned the corner. He whirled up to Jansen. It seemed the big pro would kill him. Eddie did a neat step and whirled away.

Jansen fell ingloriously upon his noggin. Songard made a bid. He got a hand on

Eddie's hip pad, Eddie spun and left Songard hanging onto air.

There was only Martin now, playing deep. When Eddie began to run people screamed with joy. No one ever caught Eddie from behind in all his years of playing football in school and college. He whipped up to Martin. That canny gentleman, playing Eddie's feet and not his hips, lowered his headgear and rushed in for the death grip.

Even the motion pictures never quite showed clearly how Eddie managed this maneuver. That evening he had been eminently unsuccessful in doing it. Jansen and the others had hampered him, harrassed him, annoyed him. Perhaps he had not been whole-hearted in the game for there was Lilian Montaye, the job with the advertising people, the great big beautiful world outside school to face and dare. There had been the fierce colloquy anent Pro ball.

At any rate, Eddie Glynn had been somewhat of a bust. And now Martin, an experienced pro defender, was closing in.

And then Eddie simply was not there. He had, with the swiftness of light, removed himself. Martin was embracing the ozone.

Eddie was running across the goal line for the only touchdown of the All-Star game against the champion Beavers.

Coolly, bare-headed, smiling, he proceeded to convert the extra point.

Then he ran off and now the seventy thousand almost tore down the stadium. Eddie Glynn had come through one last time for his adoring public.

It was a satisfactory valedictory, he thought, sitting on the bench, watching Dolan and the others hamstring the passing attempts of the Beavers as the game came to a close. He had wanted just that one chance, with some good primary blocking to enable him to turn the corner and use his speed and elusiveness. The pros, especially Jansen, had bottled him up. But in the end he had triumphed. It was a good feeling.

Later there would be the club where Lilian Montaye sang, then a meeting with his new bosses. Then tomorrow he could forget about football, except for Autumn Saturdays when he would take Lilian to the field and be a grandstand quarterback

with great smug glee, like all other retired footballers.

Sambo came over. He said, "Nice run, Eddie. Once more, will you change your mind?"

"Nope. Thanks for everything, Sambo. But Nope!"

The stout giant shook his head, moving away. Eddie made ready to depart for the showers. He saw Sis Stanley in the box behind the bench and waved. Sambo's sister was a cute little trick with a red-haired temper and a sunny-day smile to even up.

Eddie slipped out of view. The gun went off ending the game. He was the first in the showers.

II

THE GREY TRANSPORT nosed in through the grey fog. The drab-colored uniforms of the returning soldiers were covered with grey beads of moisture. Up on the top deck they lined the rail, trying to penetrate the murkiness, longing for sight of Golden Gate which would tell them they were safely home.

It was four years to the day, Eddie Glynn thought, listening to a radio announcer recite the glory of the night's All-Star vs. Beavers contest. The Beavers had never relinquished their hold on the title. Sambo Stanley had not proven equal to the task of coaching his Whales into a win over Grab Noltey's big, tough team of veterans.

Four years, he thought, tenderly feeling of his left shoulder. The wound was healing. He had his discharge. The horrors of the war in Asia were already dimming in his mind. Man doesn't remember these things too well, he knew. It was the other thing which rankled like a fresh sore, the earlier failures.

As a copy writer he had been a good running halfback, he thought bitterly. As a beer salesman he had been even worse. Signing up for a war had been a relief from the jobs he had essayed in the two years he was assaulting the business world.

And what of Lilian Montaye, that tall, luscious blonde with the husky singing voice? He had no way of knowing whether she had found success. He had lost track of her just prior to entering the

army.

He was coming home. He was discharged. But what next? He asked himself for the thousandth time, what could he do? Drive a truck?

A G. I. nearby said, "Geez, I wish I was home in Chi. I'd be right up there in the stands watchin' them Beavers. There never was such a gang as them Beavers. No collegiate ain't scored on 'em since Eddie Glynn's day—and he was lucky at that."

"Whatever happened to Glynn?" someone else asked.

"Who knows what happens to them collegiate bums? He put the rap on the pros, didn't he? A big, fat schmuck, that's what Glynn was."

"A sweet runner, though," the other sighed. "I seen him beat Notre Dame."

"All right, a runner. So what else? A collegiate!"

Eddie pulled his coat collar about his ears and moved away. The foghorns were lowing like cattle. Whistles blew. He caught a glimpse through the fog of the amazingly slender structure which was the longest bridge in the world. He was almost home.

He ran a palm over his face. He was not so handsome any more. His nose had been broken in a jeep accident. The bullet in his shoulder had caused infection and there were lines of privation and suffering on him. He was twenty-six years old and he felt like a beat-up old man.

He carried his pack down the plank two hours later. The mist had cleared but it was raining in San Francisco. All around him men were smacking their lips over the food they were about to order in a famed restaurant as soon as they could get free, the drinks they would imbibe, the soft beds they would seek. Eddie Glynn had no such desires. He was beat-up in more ways than one, he thought grimly.

He drifted along, going with the mob, carrying his pack. He showed his discharge to a harried sergeant. He was directed to a gate, walked through it. He was a free man. He hefted the bag in his hand, estimated the money in his pocket and began walking, intent only on finding a cheap place to stay.

A booming voice called, "Eddie! Hey, boy!"

He stopped dead, Sambo Stanley was

hurrying toward him. In Sambo's wake came the small, pert figure of Sis Stanley, her red hair flying, her pretty legs twinkling.

He managed to say, "Say . . . this is great. How—how did you know I was coming in?"

Sambo coughed. "We find things out . . . never lose touch . . . you know . . . How's the shoulder? You all right, Eddie?"

"I'm all right," he said indifferently. Then he smiled at them and said, "I can buy you a drink or something."

"You'll buy nothing," roared Sambo. "You come with me. I'll do the buying."

THE GIRL was staring at Eddie. She had a piquant face, not beautiful but clear of skin and eye. Her nose was slightly tilted, her mouth generous, her teeth white and even. She said, "You could stand a big meal, you know."

Eddie grinned with one side of his mouth. "One meal won't do it. I look different, don't I?"

She said, "You look like you've been bad hurt, Eddie."

"It was just a shoulder wound," he said mechanically, then realized that she hadn't meant the wound. He followed them to a taxicab. They rode down to Fisherman's Wharf and went into the old DiMaggio place and Sambo ordered food in quantity.

Sis did most of the talking during dinner. Her voice was crisp and pleasant and what she said made sense. Eddie found himself catching up on the Stateside events in which he was really interested.

As they sipped coffee and brandy Sis said, "Lilian Montaye is in Hollywood, did you know? Just a stock job at a small studio. She's ambitious, though."

He answered steadily, "Hollywood sounds right for Lil."

"She's a very pretty girl. Acme Studios signed her."

He nodded, trying not to show his interest in this item. He was aware that Sambo was leaning back, puffing a cigar, staring hard at him.

He said, "Well, Sambo, what's the score?"

"We got troubles," said the big man bluntly. "On the Whales we got something bad wrong."

"You mean the Beavers are better."

"I mean we could be as good or better. We got the manpower. We pay the salaries—more than the Beavers."

Eddie said, "You know what I always said about pro football."

Before Sambo could reply Sis said, "Eddie, you never saw many pro games. You never saw the Bears play the Giants, did you? Or the Redskins and the Giants? Or the Bears and the Packers?"

Eddie said, "For one game maybe you can get them up. But I still think play for pay is no dice."

Sambo nodded. "And you may be right. I want to find out."

"No," cried Sis. "He's not right. The pro players love the game. It's just that we haven't found the right combination!"

Eddie said, "Well, this has been fun. I'm eternally grateful to you for meeting me and buying me my first civilian meal. I'd better be looking for lodgings now, I think."

"You think wrong," said Sambo. "You're coming to Birdland Village with me tonight."

Eddie sat quietly looking at his cigaret for a moment. Then he said, "You know I can't play football."

"You can sign a minimum contract. You can earn a bonus, or pretend to be earning one, on gate receipts and your performance. And you don't need to play a minute."

Eddie said, "Now wait, let me get this straight."

"Sambo wants you to work for him," said Sis in her clear little voice. "To find out what's the matter with a club which owns such stars as Cat Rosario, Joe Knowlton, Patsy Grove, Rip Healey—and can't beat the Beavers."

"You want me to be a stool pigeon?" asked Eddie incredulously.

"I want you to be a sort of psychological detective," said Sambo sturdily. "I know you, Eddie. You're a thinker. Maybe that's been your trouble, maybe that's why you didn't make good."

"Sam!" said his sister.

"All right, I shouldn't put it that way."

Eddie said, "There is no reason for untruths among us. We know each other. I've been an utter failure." He tapped the sleeve of his army jacket. "You see these? Corporal, I made. That's all. Corporal Edward X. Glynn, that's me."

Sambo said, "You could be a General. Only it isn't your racket. Neither is writin' ads. Nor peddlin' beer. You sign with me. As a player, because I want to know things. Then we'll talk about a coachin' job. Then if you get known and want to go back to coachin' at college, okay."

Eddie Glynn's hand tapped the table top. His fingers had long since taken over this trick of relieving pressure on his nerves. He was not aware of it, but by the tempo of his tapping his thoughts could be read.

Sis said quickly, "Don't be a fool all your life, Eddie!"

Her voice was sharply angry. Eddie's fingers slowed down. He looked at the small red-haired girl. He said softly, "I don't know why you should be so kind, both of you. How can I refuse you? I'll accept, Sambo. And thanks."

THE WAR had been rough. His failures in business had been, at the time, tragic. Nothing, however, was tougher than joining the professional Whales.

The newspapers crucified him. His exuberant remarks of four years ago were hauled out and misquoted. Pictures of him then and now were planted side by side. Sambo Stanley was unmercifully criticized for attempting to trade on the former reputation of an All-America. His war record was slighted. In one of the spontaneous, unpremeditated, cruel crusades, everyone was out to get Eddie Glynn for "capitalizing on something he probably never had and surely has not now."

Yet he went to Birdland and put on the cloak of the trade and worked as hard as any under the California sun.

His teammates were resentful. Rip Healey was playing in the running half position, Cat Rosario, the veteran passer extraordinary, called signals when Georgia Boy Cole did not. Fred Fremont was a blocker with the Whales now. They all knew him from the All-Star game, excepting Rosario, a phlegmatic man who was really the core of Sambo's attack. They greeted him coolly, they treated his distantly.

The old pros—Knowlton the fullback, Patsy Grove the elephantine line-backer, Jimmy and Wings McFee, the defending wing-backs, Kit Frizoli the end, Doberman, Consella, Hoff and Stevens on the offen-

sive line, were more outspoken, scornful. Pastor, a flashy left end and pass catcher, summed it up, "Why should he draw pay we could be givin' to a good man?"

He heard a lot of talk about pay. He was privately astonished at the low salaries the men received. He knew the Whales were the best paid in the league next to the Beavers, on a par with the Giants and Bears. Yet \$8,000 was a top wage. Rosario got about \$15,000 but he was a draw at the gate and the key man of offense with his passing.

For this was a passing team. Georgie Boy could heave them while Cat rested. Healey, Morgan, even Knowlton could catch them. Pastor and Kit Frizoli were near the top in receptions.

Knowlton could drive, Healey was a good runner, so was Georgia Boy. They used just enough running plays to set up a situation, then the air was filled with footballs. The Whales scored a lot of touchdowns. Their opponents did likewise.

Minding his business, setting his jaw against slurs, Eddie Glynn coned the problem. His mind, he found, grasped football puzzles as readily as ever. He looked to the defensive angle.

Sambo himself drilled the defense and there was no better man for it. He had giants who were fast and rugged. He had Overman, Grove and Regalski backing up the line. Jimmy and McFee were good enough pass defenders. Yet something was lacking.

Eddie was reading the papers one night, trying to refrain from wincing at references to himself. An item caught his eye and he went at once to the cottage where Sis kept house for Sambo during the training session. The Whales were opening the exhibition season against the Beavers the next week and Sambo was frantic, knowing full well that a decisive loss would ruin the gate upon their return home.

Sis said, "Well, stranger." She was wearing a light colored dress and her legs were tanned and bare.

Eddie said, "I've been too busy to call around. I've been too busy to call my soul my own, even if it was worth owning."

"Feeling sorry for yourself?" she snapped.

He looked at her in honest amazement. "Are you kidding? Why, baby, I'm the

happiest guy in this camp. I'm busy. I'm getting in shape. I'm eating and getting paid for doing what I love to do."

"You mean you've already changed your mind about pros?"

"Nope. I mean this club needs something and I'm trying to figure out what."

Sambo came into the room. He said, "You better figure it before next week. They gave me notice. Beat the Beavers or resign. I don't blame them, either."

"No answer yet," said Eddie. "But you know Pulman won't do. And I've got the man for you."

Sambo said, "You got me a line-backer?"

Eddie extended the clipping. "Don Dolan just got discharged from the Air Corps. A captain, he was."

"Dolan . . . yeah! From the All-Star game!"

"A guy with spirit and guts," Eddie.

Sambo said, "What's wrong with this club? Why can't we figure it out?"

EDDIE hesitated. Then he said, "Sambo, I used to run a little. Maybe I can do it again."

There was a small, uncomfortable silence. Then Sis said, "Have they clocked you, Eddie?"

"We'll try that tomorrow," he said a trifle stiffly. "I'd get Dolan if I were you, Sambo." He left.

In his room he lay a long while staring at the ceiling. His shoulder was healed. His body was tanned and he had taken on ten pounds. He weighed exactly what he had in the All-Star game four years back.

He tried to examine what lay within him. It was not easy to analyze himself. He only knew he had to put it on the line to try it out.

He could ride along and finally help with the coaching. He knew that now. Sambo had given him the chance and it was there. He was good at it. He crimped his toes, lying under the sheet, aching with the chance to get out and show them.

The next day he ate sparingly at breakfast, took a long walk-and-run, fifty paces of each, over the hill behind the practice field. The morning air was brisk. It would be hot later on, but he had easily accustomed himself to the heat. He came

back and at eleven was on the field dressed in shorts, T-shirt and football cleats.

Pink Mann was the backfield coach, a quiet fellow with sound fundamentals packed inside him but with little imagination, Eddie thought. Pink had a stop watch.

There was a crowd lounging, pretending not to be interested. Rip Healey, Mack Morgan, Kid Frisoli and some other speedsters were practicing starts. Sambo puffed up and snapped, "What is this?"

Pink said, "Some of the boys want to be clocked."

Sambo scowled, sensing a frame-up, but Pink was innocent. The men had worked it out themselves, to show up Eddie. Sambo said, "Okay. Down on the goal line. I'll run this myself. Pink, you start them. Get two more watches. I'll be at the finish line."

He stormed downfield. They started under the south goal and ran north. Pink seriously lined them up. They got down like track men, balancing.

Eddie bent into the football back's stance, one hand resting on the ground. His jaw was set, his eyes burning. Pink gave them a count . . . one, two. . . . Three!

Rip Healey beat the count. But Eddie took off smoothly, right with the number three. He ran lightly, in his old style, head up. He did not pump his arms as did Frizoli, nor pound the earth like Morgan. He ran over the sod and at midfield he suddenly began to sprint.

Healey and Morgan both led him then. Eddie passed Morgan. Then his cleats spurned a bit of dirt and he flew. At the ten-yard line he caught Healey. He went past him as though the backfield ace was standing still. He romped over the goal line.

Sambo stared at his watch. He cocked an eye at the two assistants helping keep time. They shrugged, shaking their heads.

Sambo said, "You beat ten seconds, Eddie." He nodded, shrewd enough not to make a fuss about it. He went off to work with his linemen.

Cat Rosario strolled over. He said, "You feel okay, Eddie?"

"I feel good enough," snapped Eddie.

Cat was a tall man, lanky. He looked frail until you got a close glimpse of the rawhide and whipcord which he used for muscles. He was thirty-two years old. He

said, "Pink, when we scrimmage, I'd like to see Eddie try to run a little."

"I'll check with Sambo," said the backfield coach.

That afternoon there was scrimmage for real. Sambo was unhappy about the team and he warned them it was for blood. He put the defensive line in front of the offensive backfield and used the secondary backs behind the offensive line. Cat Rosario worked with Healey, Fremont and Knowlton.

Eddie worked with Georgia Boy, Mack Morgan and Calloway. Sambo gave the ball to this combination on the twenty and said, "Let's go now or let's never go."

Georgia Boy tried Calloway at the line. The Beavers never fought them harder than the Whales fought each other. Calloway got one measly yard.

Georgia Boy said, "Glynn, I hate to do it, but. . . ."

From the balanced T Eddie swung left. Georgia Boy gave him a perfect pitch-out. The defenders came at him. They were the big rocks, the tough tacklers, the men who rocked and socked. He turned on the heat, got a good block from Calloway and hit the corner.

They had him, it seemed. Then he cut, turning that corner. Patsy Grove wrapped arms around him.

Then Eddie was gone. Grove was tumbling. Zimmy was chasing. McFee was trying to head him off. Eddie just ran clean away from them. Sambo blew the whistle.

Eddie came trotting back. He said clearly, "Calloway, that was a hell of a key block! Bless you, my boy!"

Calloway, a silent big man, blinked, grinned sheepishly. Nobody else said anything. The practice went on.

The other team took the ball. Eddie was playing wing on defense. Cat Rosario began to pass.

Eddie covered Kit Frizoli. He got in the way of two intended for that gentleman. He covered Fremont on one. He batted down two intended for other fellows. His speed and savvy carried him where the ball was going. His fight and great hands did the rest.

Then Rip Healey came down, faked superbly. Cat hit him on the head and Rip scored.

Healey did it twice more, Eddie could-

n't figure his fancy footwork and superb timing.

Eddie scored again, running, for his club. Sambo called it off to wipe the blood off his snarling, fighting men.

That night Don Dolan came in. He was greeted with delight by all and sundry. The Negro was an extremely popular man, well-spoken, gentle, brave. By keeping the peace he escaped the criticism which brought Eddie's crucifixion about. He looked a bit too heavy, but was delighted to be with the team.

After the welcome, Sambo took Eddie aside. Cat Rosario joined them by pre-arrangement. They went into Sambo's cottage. Sis served them cooling drinks. Eddie was puzzled when Pink Mann joined them looking solemn and worried.

Sambo said in his blunt fashion, "Cat, I got an idea. It's all mine. Pink don't like it. Eddie doesn't know about it."

Rosario said slowly, "If it means using Glynn as starting halfback I'm ready to listen."

Sambo sighed with relief. "I knew I could count on you. But listen to this: I'm going to convert Healey into an end."

There was dead silence. Then Rosario said, "That means upsettin' the whole outfit, Sambo. That's a real major operation."

"This is the first decent scrimmage we've had," said Sambo doggedly. "I think I know why. So do you. I think if we needle them some more, and make a good switch also, we might yank them together. I'm gonna do it. All I want is your support as we go along."

Cat Rosario said, "Sambo, I'm for the club. Maybe you don't know it but I'm for you, too."

"That's all I want to hear! Now let's talk some football. You saw Healey today. Let's figure some real razzle dazzle!"

Eddie saw Mann regarding him queerly, knew the reticent coach would like to speak but had not the courage. He drew a deep breath and threw in his own oar. He said, "How about let's figure some basic running plays? How about thinking of Calloway as a blocker? We've got Dolan for line-backer, that will relieve Cal."

"You get more, quicker, by passing," said Rosario.

"I'm a runner myself," said Eddie. "You guys put me in there. I want block-

ing so I can run and running so you can pass."

They regarded him thoughtfully. He pounded a fist into his hand, telling them. Pink Mann found his voice and unexpectedly joined in with some very strong language.

When Sis looked in on them they were around a table with paper and pencil and they were no longer arguing against each other.

III

THE REPORTERS covering the Whales' camp did not spare the horses when they found Glynn at running back and Healey at end. Everyone got out his hammer and pounded. Sambo was called on the carpet by the owners. He told them, "You already asked me to resign if we don't beat the Beavers. Even the Beavers know that! What more can you do me?"

It was not an easy week physically, either, especially for Eddie. In the first place Rip Healey did not take kindly to the shift. And Healey had a lot of friends on the team. In the second place, Eddie needed the blocking to get going. He lacked initial drive, he found. His asset was speed and without a start his legs wouldn't get him where he should have been.

He got up early and worked mornings on starts. It was a thing that took long and hard work. He had only a week before the all-important charity game against the Beavers.

On Wednesday he was all alone, down at the end of the field. A voice said, "Eddie, you're working too hard. You can't get it back in a week."

He looked into the kindly features of Don Dolan. The big Negro was muffled in sweaters, sweating rivers. "I can try. I see you've been running off the lard."

Dolan grinned. Then he sobered and said, "Eddie, you got me this job. It means a lot. You know, coming out of service a captain, looking for a job. It would have been rough for me."

"Nuts," said Eddie briskly. "Crawl down here and try a few starts with me."

"Me, I'm a defensive back," protested Dolan. But he obeyed. They worked for a half hour.

Then Dolan said, "Eddie, you're pressing."

Eddie stood up. He stared at his new-found friend. He said, "Over-anxious. Straining."

"Uh-huh."

Eddie said, "Okay. Let's shower and eat. And—thanks."

They were to leave Friday for the city. Sambo knocked off all work on Thursday and gave them a talking-to which was without nonsense. He was far from satisfied. He roared at Rip Healey, "You could be the greatest pass catcher since Hutson and you're doggin' it. You're sulkin'. Maybe you don't even know it. I'll give you all that much credit. But you're all off the beat. Good? Sure, you're good—individually. But as a team, well, we'll know Friday night."

He did not mention that if they proved unworthy his job was gone, but everyone present knew it. They failed to meet his eye and the meeting broke up. Tomorrow night in the big stadium the answer would be clear to the world.

Eddie walked thoughtfully with Sambo to the cottage. Sis was waiting for them with milk and crackers and beer for Sambo. She said in a strange voice, "Hollywood called you, Eddie."

He knew at once. "Lil Montaye?"

"Yes. She left a number."

The phone was in the hall. He left the door open, calling the operator. His heart pounded a little.

Yet he had not thought of her since returning from the war, he realized. He had been too busy, he supposed. It was strange that the mention of her should excite him so.

Her voice, husky and slow, said, "Eddie? Is that you?"

"It's been me, right along," he said. "How are you?"

"Oh, Eddie I'm dying to see you. I hear you are making a terrific comeback."

"Who told you? It doesn't say so in the papers." He kept his voice cold and even. There was a silence. Then she said, "Won't you come and see me, Eddie?" Her voice broke a little. "Eddie, I'm in trouble. I need help."

He said, "I'll be in town tomorrow with the team."

"Tonight," she urged. "Sambo will let

you come up."

He fumbled with a pencil, got her address. He hung up and went into the living room. He said to Sambo, "Lil's in a jam. Is it all right if I go up tonight?"

"What kind of a jam? You need money? Can I do something?"

SIS sat upright on a chair, holding a glass of milk. It was slopping over, but she didn't seem to notice. Eddie looked at her and said, "Money she wouldn't need. I don't know what's the score. But I've been where I needed a friend. So I got to go up there."

Sambo said, "Take my car. I'll ride the bus. Check into the Lincoln House and I'll see you tomorrow."

"Thanks," said Eddie. He looked again at Sis. He swallowed hard and went out and got into Sambo's sedan.

He got into Hollywood about nine o'clock at night. He found the address on Hollywood near Laurel Canyon. It was a modest apartment house. He climbed stairs and rang a bell.

Lil opened the door, but he saw at once she was not alone. A man in a loud sports jacket and mauve slacks held a drink in his hand and stared at Eddie, a narrow-faced man with a mustache. Lil said, "Eddie! This is wonderful! Meet my agent, Sam Sadler."

Eddie met Sam Sadler and refused a drink the man offered him. Sadler seemed very much at home.

Lil said, "Darling, you look different! Oh, your nose!"

"It has been disarranged," agreed Eddie. "I'm no longer beautiful."

Sadler put his head on one side. "Rugged, though. Yeah. I see what you mean, Lil. Maybe yes, maybe no. *Comme ci, comme ca*. You know what I mean?"

Eddie said, "Frankly, no. But if it has anything to do with movies the answer is strictly for the birds. Know what I mean?"

"Tough," nodded Sadler. "Very tough interpretation. It could be, Lil, darling. Let me know. Must be going now." He put down the drink, nodded and seemed to drift out of the room.

Lil said, "Isn't he a doll? He used to be a ballet dancer."

Eddie was looking at her. Lil had changed. She was still lovely, still young enough.

But there were differences greater than his own badly mended nose.

She sat down, crossing her lovely legs. She wore some kind of hostess gown which was cleverly held apart in front. She drank deeply from her glass. She said, "Eddie, it's all right. When I called you I thought they were dropping my option. Sam thought so. He was sure of it, in fact. Now he tells me they are renewing. No raise, but a renewal. I get five hundred and I ought to get a thousand, but five hundred is all right. I mean, it's better than being dropped."

The place didn't look like five hundred a week to Eddie. Lil didn't look it, either. The hand that held the glass was not too steady. When she refilled it, the liquid was too brown with whiskey.

She rattled on, "So I thought maybe he could get you a part in a thing they are doing, a football picture. Not just a part, really, but the second lead. You were so handsome when we were engaged. I hate to think how long ago that was, don't you, darling?" She came close and kissed his ear and she smelled strongly of perfume and whiskey in equal parts.

It should not have made an difference, but it did. He said he definitely was not interested in an acting career, he said his health was fine, that Sambo was great, that the team looked wonderful. Then there seemed nothing else to say. Lil certainly was not interested in what had happened to him. She was thoroughly incurious as to how he felt about life and love and the condition of world affairs. In fact, Lil was only interested in what concerned her directly, and when he had arrived at this conclusion he knew it had always been so. He kissed her good-night and departed.

He was sure Lil did not mind his going. He wiped lipstick from him, disliking the taste. There was a car parked behind his on the semi-lit street.

He opened the door of the sedan. A man catapulted from a crouching position. Another circled, swinging a blackjack.

It was a well-planned, sudden attack. If Eddie had not spent some time in Asiatic warfare it would have succeeded. As it was, he kicked the first man in the crotch and ducked away from the blackjack.

The weapon flailed back, wielded by a

short, husky fellow who seemed to know his trade. It struck Eddie a glancing blow over the eye and he felt blood on his cheek.

He closed in. He grabbed the man's wrist and went around in a circle, holding it with both hands. He lifted a knee and dropped the thick forearm across it. He heard the man's groan and thought he had broken the bone, but he was not sure. So he loosened his hold and banged one to the soft spot behind the fellow's left ear and watched him hit the sidewalk with a sickening thud.

He hauled the first man to his feet. This one was retching, sobbing. Eddie hit him across the face with the edge of his hand, breaking his nose. Then he propped him against the car and said, "Stop weepin' and do some talkin'."

It took some time for the man to regain his voice. Then he mumbled, "It's the gamblin' syndicate. Please don't hit me no more! The big syndicate. The bettin' is on the Beavers. . . . We get a hot tip, see? You guys are loaded. You're the key guy, it says. . . . Please, mister, lay off me."

Eddie dropped this one over his side-kick. He got into the car. He turned on the light and in the rear vision mirror he saw that he had a deep cut and that his eye was swelling. He felt sick at heart and he felt dirty. He started the car and drove until he found an all night Finnish Bath. He went in and gave himself up to the attendant. He spent the night, thinking about perfidious people, men and women, and about the Beavers and the big backer-up called Jensen. It was an uncomfortable night for his brain, although his body did nicely in the warmth. They put a patch on his eye and he hoped stitches were not indicated because he would not have time for that.

IV

IN THE DRESSING ROOM before the game Sambo faced the team. His voice was low. He pointed to Eddie's eye. He said, "I thought one of you was a rat. Eddie was put on the spot and it had to come from the team. The newspapers have been saying Eddie is a flop, a has-been. But someone knew he is hot and told someone who hired some thugs to beat up on him.

This has to be one of you."

They were shocked to silence, Eddie could see that. He was grateful for his night of heavy thinking.

Eddie said, "Sure, but whoever told didn't realize what he was doing. It's a matter of knowing Sam Sadler, the agent, a weasel guy with a mustache. Or even of knowing someone who knows Sadler. He had an old friend of mine call me, made believe there was trouble and I was needed. Then he called in the tough boys. The idea was to beat me up, pour whiskey on me, hand me over to the cops. I'm ripe for that set-up. My bad press relations would really fix me good, huh?"

Sambo said quickly. "I don't wanna know who's acquainted with Sadler. That's not important. Whoever it is couldn't possibly figure this set-up. It could happen any time, to anyone. All I want to point out is that Eddie hadda fight two guys with blackjacks and then hide out all night so the story wouldn't break in the papers and louse up this whole club. Then I want a few of you to think what could have happened." He looked straight at Rip Healey and some of his close pals. "You guys are on the level, you're my guys and I wouldn't trade any of you for any of the Beavers. All I ask is that you prove I'm right."

They did not say anything. They sat looking at the floor, most of them. One or two glanced furtively at the white patch over Eddie's left eye. The trainer was rigging an iron mask to fit Eddie's helmet.

Sambo said, "I hope we win the toss. Eddie is gonna start at halfback. Cat at quarter. Healey at end. You guys know the rest of the line-up. Go on, get out there and take your bows!"

They shuffled into line. They stood in the tunnel as the spotlight played on the fifty yard line. Over the loud speakers came names. As each was called, he ran out and took his position in the line-up. Palmer, at center, was first; then the guards Consella and Hoff; the tackles Doberman and Stevens; the ends Frizoli and Healey.

Rosario got the biggest hand. Fremont went out and was cheered. The man called, "Left half, former All-American, Eddie Glynn."

Eddie trotted out and took his place. One or two people clapped. There was a

boo here and there. Then silence. He stood facing the multitude, ninety-five thousand people out to see the famed rivals in a great charity game. His face was white as marble.

Then someone yelled and began pounding his palms together. A shrill feminine voice pierced the air, "You'll show them Eddie!"

The clapping came from the men still left in the tunnel. The man who had started it was out in the open, wearing the gold jersey of the Whales, his eyes blazing, a hulking, awesome figure at this moment—Don Dolan. The others leaped to join him, the Whales to a man, banging their hands together in an unheard-of spatter of applause for a teammate.

The girl was in a box at midfield, small, red-haired, amazingly strong of lung. Thousands picked it up, the fans who love the underdog. It became an ovation.

Calloway came out and the cheering swelled. Eddie felt the blood returning to his face as they left the field for the final word from Sambo. He kept staring at the box behind the bench.

A tall woman stood up, waving frantically. Even at that distance he recognized Lil Montaye. Beside her was the skinny figure of Sam Sadler, who looked as if he would like to hide but did not quite dare.

"Eddie," screamed Lil. "That's my Eddie!"

He groaned, "Oh, no!"

Cat Rosario drawled, "Okay, I'll take her." Georgia Boy laughed and the tension was broken. A whistle blew and they took the field.

The Beavers also were ready. They looked just as big and mean as ever to Eddie. He remembered gloomily how they had bottled him up four years ago. He singled out Jansen, his nemesis.

Jansen was kicking off, Palmer having won the toss for the Whales. Eddie went back to the goal line and bent his knees to cure the nervousness. Rosario said to him, "Take it easy. They'll hammer us at first."

He nodded. Fred Fremont looked jittery, too. Calloway, starting his first regular game as a back on offense alone seemed calm and contented.

There was that electric moment, and

then there was the whistle. Jansen ran and swung a thick leg. The ball hurtled high and it travelled deep. Eddie ran back, almost grabbed for it, heard Cat say quietly, "No, Eddie. Too deep."

He settled down as the ball hit the ground behind the goal posts. He went to position as it was grounded on the twenty. Cat stood up before the line of Whales, facing them, and gave his signal.

He went drifting left and took his step toward his own goal. Then he cut back sharply and broke over to throw a block on the wing. Calloway was carrying into the line.

The gain was for three yards, but Jansen had slammed Cal pretty hard. Rosario called the play. Again Eddie was the flanker. Cat took the snap-back and faked to Cal. Then he spun and chucked it hard, on a line, to Eddie.

CAL SPUN out to make his block. Fremont was ahead. Rip Healey was the vanguard. Behind the screen Eddie started to run.

Jansen and Murphy were both over. Men tangled, went down. Cal elbowed a man and tried to keep his feet. Jansen splurged over Fremont. He hit Eddie from the side, driving him.

They went over the sideline. Jansen kept contact unnecessarily. They went down and Jansen applied his weight and an elbow. He grunted, "I still don't like you and I still say you're lousy."

Eddie didn't bother to reply. The patch over his eye was disarranged and there was blood on his face. He went back to work. He had picked up five yards the hard way. It was third and two. Cat was calling numbers.

They started as though to buck the Beaver line but Cat jumped and threw while in the air. Rip Healey also jumped—and caught it for a first down on the Whales thirty-five.

Again Cat went into the flat, protected by the back-tracking giants of the Whales line. His arm cocked, he feinted right, then left. Again he pitched to Healey.

Songard and Martin both came from nowhere. The old pros had been lurking, satisfied that it would be Healey. They pinched up, leaping. They carefully did

not foul the receiver, they merely smothered the ball.

A yell went up. Songard was down and running. He had the ball under his arm. Martin belted out Healey.

Eddie had been checking and faking in the flat. He got one glimpse of Songard and began to run. Songard was at the thirty when they came close together and the Whales back tried to fake. Eddie whacked him with a tackle which rolled him under Consella, who pinned him to prevent crawling.

Consella got up and said kindly, "These guys you got to nail down, Eddie."

Eddie nodded. The big man was right. Pro rules allowed the man to get up and run again. He went off the field. He looked at Sambo, but the head coach said nothing. Cat Rosario sat stonily on the bench. Healey looked downhearted.

Pink Mann came close to Eddie and muttered, "They can't forget that pass-pass-pass. It's in their noggins."

Eddie nodded but kept silence. The Beavers were putting on their own offensive show. They had the performers. Koski, Page, Porter and Soldowski, nobody ever knew which would carry or throw or pass. This was the most versatile back-field in the game, the wonder of the day and he was curious to know if they were different than in the All-Star game four years ago.

He found out they were indeed different, in far better shape, more poised and sharper. They rolled down to the fifteen, sent Soldowski through a hole for the goal.

A raging bull stuck a head in the way. A blocker went one way. Soldowski went another, straight up. Then he came down. Don Dolan had asserted himself.

They put two men on the Negro line-backer next play. Page, a nifty running back, slid past. Dolan got an arm on him. Jimmy grabbed him by the hips. Page swerved and carried Jimmy over the last fat white line with him.

Sambo said, "Go in, Eddie. Work the reverse on the kick-off if it comes in."

They went on. The trouble was that Cat was too old to run, Fremont too slow, Eddie thought. Calloway was fast for his size, but no sprinter. That left only Eddie, with the Beavers all lying in wait for him

and ready to slay him.

Jansen kicked off. It was slightly behind the goal, but Fremont took it and started upstream. Pivoting he suddenly raced for the sidelines farthest from him. Eddie made the loop and crossed over, going behind Fremont in the opposite direction.

Fremont reached out to hand the ball to Eddie on the criss cross. He snatched it back and Eddie faked. The Beavers had to split up in order to make certain who had the ball.

Jansen split on Eddie's side. He stretched his big body and laid a shoulder into Eddie's middle. Somehow his elbow hit the injured eye. The patch slipped again and more blood ran out.

"Looks like a pig-stickin'," said Jansen innocently and happily as he got up. "Nothin' trivial, I hope."

"It's a rugged game," nodded Eddie. Fremont, he saw, had gone to the twenty-five. The Beavers were not fooled too much. Georgia Boy was in the game calling signals now.

It was Calloway once for three. Then it was Eddie for four. Then it was the pass to Healey.

They were covering Healey like the snow covers Mt. Everest. They batted the ball down. Georgia Boy punted.

Eddie walked past the bench. He found Sis in the stands and waved unobtrusively to her. She gave him the clenched fist sign of confidence.

Behind Sis the willowy blonde stood up and yelled again, "My Eddie! Can't you do something, Eddie?"

There was a mocking jeer from disgruntled home town fans who found the Whales seven points behind and going nowhere. Sam Sadler tugged at Lil's coat. Sis turned and stared at the pair behind her.

Koski was shooting the works. The Beavers knew every crotchet of their old rivals. They were splitting guard and tackle now, with Porter and Soldowski alternating at picking off first downs. Don Dolan was massaging them plenty, but only after they gained through the holes they made.

Sambo grunted, "Without Dolan they'd have scored twice more."

Pink Mann said drily, "They will. They always do."

At that moment Koski sneaked back and threw a long pass into the end zone. Austin leaped a mile and took it in. The score immediately after was 14 to 0 for the Beavers.

Across the field Grab Nolty was laughing and hugging his stalwarts as they came off. Eddie donned his headguard. Sambo's voice said in his ear, "Let Mack Morgan go in for now."

Morgan went on the field. Eddie looked up at the big Head Coach. Sambo said almost diffidently, "If I sent you in with Morgan and left you in at safety, could you manage?"

Eddie said, "What have we got to lose?" "Okay, after the next play." Sambo looked harrassed, frightened.

THE QUARTER ended after the next play. Eddie went onto the field and said, "Fremont out."

Cat Rosario squinted at him. Mack Morgan looked mystified. They changed goals. Consella was moaning that he had a hole opened but couldn't keep it wide enough.

Play resumed. Cat called Eddie's signal. Mack shifted doubtfully to the blocking spot. Cat handed off on the quickie. Eddie sought the opening of which Consella had spoken.

He broke through like a shot from a gun. The squirming melee closed like a trap door behind him. He sprinted left, then lifted his right leg and went farther left before cutting back, a sweet maneuver in a broken field.

A wild-eyed Mack Morgan dug at Jansen, almost stopped him. Songard came like the wind. Eddie slapped a stiff one against Songard. Jansen tried to run him to the sideline for his favorite steamroller.

Eddie suddenly switched again. He turned on a dime. It took Jansen a depreciated nickle or two to get his feet uncrossed. Eddie headed downfield.

Martin came from safety and got him. It was on the Beavers twenty yard line.

Cat rattled numbers. The team lined up. Eddie shifted and went out on the flank. Mack took a throw-out from Cat and came in behind Eddie.

They got past the line. Jansen was right there. Eddie faked him, then went all out. He hit Jansen at the knee. He kept con-

tact. He took the big man off his feet.

Mack Morgan hit the two yard line before he was beaten off his feet.

Rosario was in there yapping like a terrier. There was sting and authority in his voice when he was aroused, Eddie realized. The veteran was a great quarterback. The ball was snapped.

Morgan faked. Eddie faked and ran into the flat yelling, "Here! Here!"

And Cat gave the ball to Calloway who slammed in behind Consella and Rip Healey, who blocked like madmen. Calloway staggered on the goal line, fell forward.

The Whales had scored a touchdown on running plays, without a single pass, the first time in many a ball game!

The stands were astounded, they were gratified. Eddie watched the offense team run off slapping each other on the back, happy as school kids. Don Dolan came on and grinned at him and said, "You watch the passes, I'll watch these runners."

Eddie said, "You've been doing right good. I should do so well."

He went back and used his remarkably good eyesight to watch Koski's slick ball handling as best he could from safety. He could feel away back there the power of the Beavers as they began rolling from their own twenty-six.

Yet Dolan never flagged. If they came through, the Negro wonder had them. His hands were like steel clamps. They beat upon him and he laughed. They showed him and he would not budge. They tried to avoid him and he was all over the place after them.

They began to pass. Zimmy and McFee did pretty well, at that, but Austin was a great receiver. They moved over midfield, to the twenty-five on short ones.

Koski faded. Austin came racing down, button-hooked. Page ran past him, was about to go beyond Eddie.

Koski threw the ball. It was into the end zone. It was designed for Page.

Eddie swivelled and ran. He had expected it. He had let Page get even so that Koski would throw it deep. Now it was a test of speed between the Beavers' swiftest man and Eddie.

They ran neck and neck under the floating pass. Page tried to sprint away. Eddie gathered himself. He let out the

last notch of speed.

He ran under the ball. He snatched it and made an arc and ran back past the bewildered Page. He came over the goal line with no one near him. He raced past the ten, the fifteen, the twenty as the disorganized Beaver outfit came to life and closed in on him. He got to the thirty before they swarmed all over him.

When he got up he was slightly dazed but otherwise fine. Mack Morgan came in and said, "You've got to get the bandage repaired, Eddie." He added quickly, "Come back in, boy!"

It sounded very good. Eddie went to the sideline. The doctor's hands were tender, the water felt good on his face. He tried to watch the action. Cat Rosario was throwing passes. The half was ending, he realized. It had been a quick one, few times out, no penalties.

The score was 14 to 7. He fretted as the medico put another patch in place. "You're going to have a scar, Glynn," the doctor told him. "This should have been sutured."

"Scar, shmar," muttered Eddie. "Get me back in that game."

But the gun sounded. He remembered to turn and give Sis the sign before he went off. Lil was dancing up and down, calling to him. He wondered if after all she had been in on the affair of last night and was trying to cover up. He did not think so. Poor Lil, she was gone down the road but she never would have the guts for it, he thought.

He was the last man in the dressing room. Consella was waiting for him. He hugged Eddie hard and said loudly, "I can lick anybody says this guy ain't great!"

Several voices chimed in, "Do you kidding? Do we know? GEORGE!"

Sambo started to say something, refrained. He walked among them, making small comments. Don Dolan was getting his share of praise from the veterans. Cat Rosario was also doing some quiet talking among them, especially to Rip Healey. It was very businesslike and calm.

Cat said to Eddie as they went out to play, "Can't go all the way on the ground in this game, you know. Get into the flat, will you?"

Eddie said, "Rip's the pass genius."

"Get out there." Rosario nodded.

FOOTBALL ACTION

The Whales kicked off. Two plays later Eddie was in on defense and Koski was opening up. But Consella suddenly seemed to come to life, subbing for Dobelli, who was slightly injured. He rode the plays, he fought them hand to hand.

Parkhill and Pugh, on the other side, also began to get lower and charge harder. Soon the line was out-charging and out-fighting the Beaver line.

The ball changed hands. Now the Beavers were invincible. Nobody could gain against them and Jansen nearly killed Eddie. The two teams, usually high-scoring machines, bogged down in a Kilkenny which was full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. The quarter rolled by.

There were bruises, there was blood. Eddie had four changes of bandage on his eye. He could hear Lil yelling each time, he only waved reassurance to Sis. He was getting a bit groggy from the slugging Jansen was giving him. The game was running out.

Then, with lightning suddenness, Rosario struck with a pass to Healey. The Whales end caught it going away. He went down to the five. Eddie knelt on the sideline and watched.

Knowlton, fresh in the game for a weary Calloway, surged at the line. It seemed he was smothered. Consella and Doberman heaved forward. Knowlton fought and clawed.

The referee jumped up, waving his striped arms. The veteran fullback had carried over!

Now the Beavers were frantic. They leaped like tigers as Rosario tried the placement, smacked the ball down to hold a slim, one point lead.

Time was running out. The Beavers needed do little more than freeze the ball. The Whales defensive unit ran on, Eddie in at safety.

The Beavers tried two slow running plays. They failed and were penalized for delaying the game. Koski threw a screen pass to stop the clock while he considered, then had to punt.

The ball was high and deep. Eddie took it. He was hit swiftly, on the Whales forty.

Rosario came in. He called the signal calmly. Eddie was flanker on the play. It had to be a pass. Rosario aimed at Healey.

Eddie ran into the flat. Rosario wheeled and threw it like a bullet. Mack Morgan shouted and up rose Consella.

Eddie grabbed the ball. Calloway was surging forward and blocking. The Beavers swarmed. Healey slammed into a man, kept going. Palmer came up. Eddie stayed behind the wall of blockers, along the sideline.

He saw the sturdy Whales do their jobs. He saw striped blue jerseys go down as though a machine gun was loose on the field. Twice he was tempted to let loose and trek for the goal. Each time he refrained, using the big, willing blockers.

At the twenty there was Martin and Jansen. He aimed between them. Jansen was closest. He thought Jansen had him.

Something exploded like a charge of T.N.T. Jansen was gone. Eddie lowered his head and butted into Martin with everything he had. The two of them slid. The gun went off. Eddie took his face out of the ground and spat out lime. It was goal line markings!

He looked back. Jansen wasn't getting up. Rip Healey was grinning to threaten his ears. Rip said, "Some block, huh, pal? Hadda do it for you! Man, you were great in there today!"

It was the final accolade. Eddie started for the tunnel on a staggering run as the crowd went mad.

He saw confusion behind the bench, saw Sambo tear people aside and leap up into the stands.

Then he saw Lil. She was sinking for the third time. Sis had her by the long blonde hair and was really giving her the old heave-ho. Sambo and four cops were reaching to quell the disturbance.

He said, "My cup runneth over! Guys, this beats the advertising business, beer, the army and college football. Lead me to the sport writers. Lemme tell them about teamwork, team spirit. Lemme tell them about the greatest football there is and the greatest guys that play it!"

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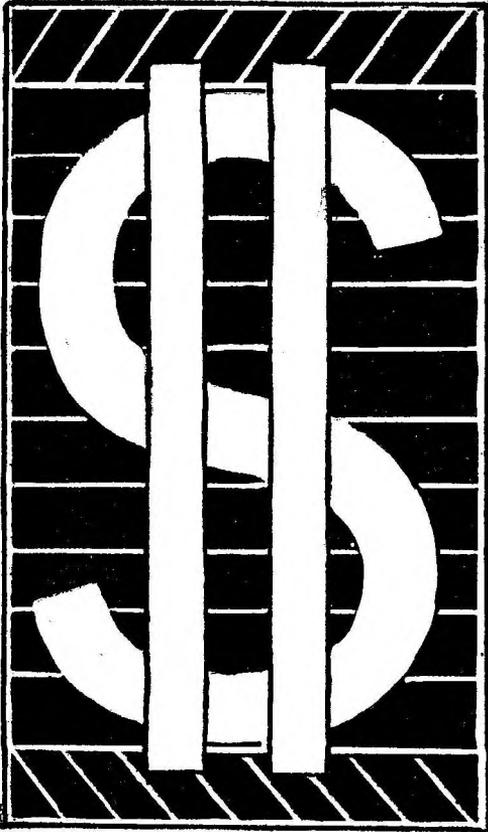
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A PASS and A PRAYER

By JOE BRENNAN

'Tis said that money talks. Well, it was really screaming the day the Pro Bulldogs squared off against the All-Stars . . . the day jet-armed Bill Bowers, pride of the lost eleven, couldn't find a target for love or money.

ALL LANKY Bill Bowers did was to take off his sport coat at the bench and slip on the jersey with the renowned number-11 emblazoned on it. His action tipped off the throng. Cheers avalanched from the jam-packed coliseum stands, for Bill was now going to—as the Los Angeles sports scribes had it—"make a few exhibition throws."

Sorghum-haired, 24-year-old Bill only balanced the scales at 163 pounds, but, like Sammy Baugh and Sid Luckman, he could electrify customers with passes that were off this planet. He had a toe, too, that was capable of wizardry and could dropkick a ball into your garage door at fifty paces. Because of his lack of stature, Bill brought a special technique to forward passing—a last instant leap as he heaved the ball. The jump and the throw all in one fluid motion, a thing of miracle muscular coordination even excelling that of the great Harry Gilmer, formerly of the University of Alabama.

Bill walked out to the 10-yard line just in front of the goal posts, nodded his gratefulness for their roar of approbation.

To thousands, this proposed exhibition promised more excitement than the play-off between these two hulking pro elevens. Yes-sir, Bill Bowers was their hero—the All-America collegian who used to spellbind all opposition with passes that were black magic all the way. And now? Well, just one more war casualty who had been released from the hospital within the last couple of months.

But they remembered his arm—his unerring golden arm—and now they were going to see it on display again. So, they yelled and yelled some more.

Two uniformed Bulldog players ambled along behind him, each carrying four footballs for the demonstration. Bill turned, accepted one of the balls and fondled it like a book-lover fingering some rare old cherished volume. He heard the loudspeaker blating flippantly, "And now your very own home-grown product will demonstrate how ye football should be delivered! We give you Bill Bowers!"

The noise drenched the gridiron once more and Bill thought, *Maybe now, for all the tea in China, I can't pitch a strike. . . .*

Just the same, he wrapped his long, capable fingers around the leather, waited for the whistle at the sidelines. Its high trill came through the crowd-racket. Bill cocked his arm, watched the player break onto the field and race diagonally away. When the man was far enough downfield, Bill let fly with a spiralling pass that arched perfectly into the moving receiver's arms. "Pretty as a flute!" cracked Denver Renshaw, one of the Bulldog players at Bill's side. The mob took up the hue and cry of approval.

RENSHAW slipped Bill another ball. The whistle again and another player broke from the sidelines. This time a different throw. Bill remembered the prearranged plan. He watched the man run to the left, swivel and swing to the right. Bill counted ten, then threw to a spot yards ahead of the churning runner. The throw was a bull's-eye, turning the runner into a miraculous receiver. The yukking of the crowd hit a crescendo. A third ball, a third pass-receiver. A fourth, a fifth and so on, each one doing something different—and Bill hitting their outstretched arms with all the precision of a battlewagon's range finder. The names of Bob Waterfield, Sammy Baugh, Otto Graham were banded up and down the high tiers of fans.

There wasn't a good voice left in the coliseum when Bill walked off the field and doffed the number-11 jersey. All the way to his seat on the bench as guest star of the Bulldogs, the clamor rang in his ears, and players slapped him on the back.

"Old Golden Arm!" were the words coming through the cacaphony that only a football stadium can know. "The Bulldogs need you!" they yelled, and "When you turnin' pro?" were other shouts that swept in upon him.

But to himself he kept thinking, *If they only knew. . . . Why, my legs are beginning to buckle now.* And he realized it would be months before he'd be ready for actual drilling with any team.

Bill sat through the highly publicized pro play-off, watched a lot of second-rate passing and could appreciate why the fans hungered for more of the "Golden Arm" stuff. Sure, the Bulldogs had won the Western Division championship, but they'd caught a team riddled with injuries. Well,



maybe next season he'd be in good enough shape to give the Bulldogs some high class chucking. He filed out slowly with the rest of the yawping fans.

The football banquet was a pip even though it was strictly stag. And Bill didn't get home to Clara and the kids till late that night. But, as always, she was thrilled to see him, her eagerness spilling over just as it had when they'd first married. He strode in, a little pleased with his fine throwing exhibition of the afternoon, but a little ashamed of something else.

He looked around. This new way of living. . . . He still couldn't quite get used to it; the apartment scrubbed bright and immaculate, all right but pitifully small. Everything neatly in its place, but "everything" constituting the items the Bowers rented. Rented? Yes, and the rent in arrears! He lifted her up, planted a kiss on her and wondered how she could still smile through all the financial reverses that had beset them of late. He just hadn't been able to get rolling financially. God knows, the government disability compensation was certainly inadequate.

"Oh, Bill," she cried softly, "I caught you on our next door neighbor's television. Y-you were beautiful. . . ."

He pushed his face into the wealth of her soft hair, said, "Guess I was old Golden Arm again, all right at that."

"They loved you," she agreed. "They threw away their minds when you threw away footballs."

He nodded, thought about it a little. "You know," he said, "by next season I'll be ready for the big-time pro stuff." He looked down at his shrapnel-perforated legs.

"My gams—they're not right yet. Full of rubber. But they'll be okay in time."

"I know they will," she came back, her eyes shining. "You were born to be the great footballer."

And he could see she was recalling the exciting years of collegiate football which he had back of him. Games which she'd witnessed from the stands with wide-eyed wonder and joy. And a certain bitterness wrenched him when he recollected how he'd allowed the Korean war thing to cut off his playing just when he was graduating into pro ranks. Flag-waver that he'd been, he'd volunteered to go over and trade punches with a terrible enemy. Those lost years had cost him some real dough. Maybe he could make them up, just as Bob Feller had done after World War II had robbed him of many a hatful in baseball. Why, that Bob could have been a 300-game winner! He thought of others, too, who had had their athletic careers cut short by war; many others. Some in baseball, some in the ring game, many in football.

Then Clara's quiet voice was breaking in upon his reveries. "I'd like to have been there in the stands today. It—it must've been even more exciting than . . ."

"Wish you could have," he said. And bitterness chewed at him again for an instant. His brow wrinkled. "I've done a lot for football. Sucked thousands into college stadiums. Did it for free. And do you know what?"

"What?"

"They had the brass today to give me only one ticket to get in." He blew air out of his lungs. "Me, a hospital case! I'm the guy who got out there and threw exhibition passes for them. Did it for nix, mind you!"

She grinned up at him. "It was all good

advertisting, Bill."

"Advertising?"

"Yes, publicity of the kind you'll cash in on later. Even our new home hangs on it." He noted her surveying their present cramped quarters.

"New home," he breathed to himself. And he reflected upon the government's new ruling on down payments on homes for GI veterans. He'd now need a thousand dollars to bind the deal for that last two-bedroom job in the Lakewood subdivision. "Clara," he said, and his words were clipped and tart now, "I'm beginning to think nothing counts but cash in hand."

"We'll have it," she said simply. "Time and work will do it."

"I guess you didn't read about the new government controls on building materials," he came back. "Lakewood is the last subdivision for the duration."

He saw her swallow and had the feeling that he had hit out at her. It made him press her to him again. But she's got to know the facts, he thought. And all his mind could grasp now was their great need for a thousand dollars. Only yesterday the two of them had examined the near-finished home, and the memory of Clara's excitement was still too sadly fresh in Bill's mind.

He released Clara, moved on into the bedroom to get a peek at his little Sandra and Brent who would be sleeping at this hour. And he was growling low to himself, "The game owes me plenty!" All the dough he had drawn into football stadiums—and here he had not even a small home which he could call his own. It made him grind his teeth.

IN THE morning Bill had a visitor. None other than fat, mountainous Gar Johns, gambler deluxe who fronted for a group that would move in on basketball, football or a YMCA picnic potato race—just so long as there would be a surety of scooping in a shovel full of currency for themselves. Ethics? Scruples? Hmm! The man had proved his larcenous calibre long ago when he had been fired from his pro coaching job for attempting to fix a game.

In Clara's presence, Gar Johns was all blubbery innocence. She knew nothing about the man and accepted him as a well-to-do sportsman. He sat there with his

hands folded neatly at the pit of his stomach and talked soberly of things heroic, things magnanimous. But when he got Bill alone, it was something else. Seated out in the gambler's car in front of the apartment, Johns' voice changed from the modulated, suave thing it had been to the big, obnoxious basso profundo bark the police knew only too well.

"I hear you're fresh outta scratch!" he boomed to Bill

Bill nodded and gulped a little, for he suspected what was coming now.

Gar Johns leaned closer, and Bill could have chinned himself on the porky man's breath. The gambler wasted no words. The three Los Angeles newspaper publishers were going to promote a big charity game between the Bulldogs and a galaxy of stars picked from the best teams of the country. A Sunday coliseum shindig, two weeks away. "Play for the Bulldogs in that one," Johns said. "They want you—and you can do us a turn."

"Who's *us*?"

"Myself an' a betting syndicate that'll be in on the know."

"What *know*?"

"That you'll be in there throwin' the game." His wink wasn't really a wink. He just let his fat eyelid slide down a moment. "An' you know," he went on, "what kind of throwin' I mean." He was enjoying his sorry pun.

Bill felt the cords tighten across his stomach and he wanted to belt the gambler on the beard. He started to get out of the car. Quickly Johns took him by the biceps.

"Look, Bill. John Q. Public'll be payin' the tariff at the box office only to see you an' a pack of stars. A win or a loss ain't gonna change the league standin' of the Bulldogs. This is postseason stuff."

Bill was out of the car by now, a little sick at even having listened to this much of the man's jabber. His voice came harsh and ragged, "Johns," he said, "you're talking to the wrong people. If you think I'm going to dirty up a clean game——"

Gar Johns broke in, "I tell you the fans won't be heartbroke whichever way the win goes. Nobody's gonna get hurt—an' you'll make yourself a nice piece of change."

Bill reflected upon what a hatful of coin of the realm could mean. That beautiful

little home. Tangled thinking crowded him. The thousand-dollar down payment Move from the dinky apartment No waiting till next season to play with the Bulldogs He felt himself weakening a little, and shame darted up into his throat like flame-driven mice.

Johns' words were wheeling in again, smashing the awkward silence that had been smothering Bill's thinking. "Bill, with you in there with the Bulldogs, you'll be in a key spot to wreck their game."

"Don't be crazy," Bill argued. "How long would any coach leave in a passer who's not throwing touchdown passes?"

"That's just it. For sentimental reasons, you'd be left in longer than makes sense. The crowd'll be payin' to see you more than it'll be payin' to see a win. An' Coach Turner knows it."

And all the time Bill was trying to tell himself that it was only right that he should make a pocketful for himself in football. Why not? Look at the mobs he'd pulled. Why, his Golden Arm had made the turnstiles click like castanets. And what had he gotten out of it but glory?

Still procrastinating, he said to Gar Johns, "Coach Turner understands I won't be physically fit till next season."

Johns grunted, "Huh, if you tell 'im you're ready he'll understand you're ready." Johns' cigar was at a bristling, confident angle now.

And in a voice pinched and high, Bill heard himself asking, "How much?"

"A thousand bucks," came the growl.

For a moment Bill caught himself trying to balance the chance he would be taking along with the kind of money offered. It was important money and he thrilled at the idea of collecting so much at one grab. Brother, what he could do for Clara! Still Well, conscience was nickering again. "I've got a reputation to look out for," he said. And it didn't sound too forceful to his own ears.

"I'll make it fifteen hundred!" barked Johns. "Not one button more. It's all I'm authorized to offer."

Bill caught the finality in the man's voice, watched him turn on the car's ignition. It called for instant decision, and the additional five hundred gorgeous dollars had Bill thinking about the down payment on furniture.

"I'll buy," Bill said, and his voice was a crippled thing, a shamed thing.

Johns agreed to pay Bill immediately after the game, not a nickel in advance. "We got to see you on the team first," he insisted. "Can't afford no slip-up. Now go tell Owner Turner you're his boy . . ."

BILL saw Owner-coach Turner the following morning, insisted he was now fit to play—and would the Bulldogs use him for the postseason game? They would, and gladly. Turner said he was glad of this opportunity to get a line on Bill's potentialities for the coming season. What's more, when he asked Bill what his services would be worth for the one game, Bill could only mutter, "A thousand dollars."

And he got it. Life seemed to be somehow summed up in the price of a down payment on a certain home which had walked into the heart of one Clara Bowers.

Still tight with fear over what he was doing, Bill hurried to Gar Johns' apartment, showed him the check from Turner, then demanded payment from the gambler.

"I'll give you half of it now," insisted Johns, "an' the rest after you produce the goods."

Bill settled for \$750.00 and walked out of the place with all the aplomb of a choir boy having been caught tilting the pinball machine at a charity affair. He went to the bank, cashed Turner's thousand dollar check, but stashed Gar Johns' wad of fifties into a hole in the lining of his coat. Next, he went to a telephone, negotiated a \$500.00 even-money bet on the All-Stars and sent a messenger boy to the betting office with the currency. He knew he was a full-fledged partner in crime when the receipt was brought back to him.

Hiking for home, Bill kept trying to talk himself into a perverted kind of reasoning. Why shouldn't he do this? Clara would never know. The fans would never know—and they'd think he'd simply resumed his football playing too many months before full healing had set in. By the time he reached the apartment he had almost convinced himself that this was the only logical course.

He thrust open the door, waved a crisp fan of five one-hundred dollar bills at her. "Happy birthday, Honey!" he called. "Merry Christmas and stuff! Here's half

the down payment on that Lakewood dream house of yours!"

Her wide eyes grew wider and wonder made her round little chin drop. She wanted to know how come. And quickly he was explaining that the Bulldogs had signed him for the big charity game. "This is the first money I've ever received for playing football," he said. And when he used the word "playing," something knotted in his throat, almost gagging him. He felt larcenous and rotten.

She took the money in trembling fingers and Bill saw that she was dreaming dreams. Dreams of a home for Bill, her chicks and herself. And he felt like a first-class heel when she smiled, "Oh, Bill, we'll bet it on you to win. Now we won't have to wait until next season for our Lakewood place."

How he loved her confidence in him. It made him ache inside. No, he wouldn't confess that he'd already bet on the All-Stars to win. She'd think he'd been out in the sun too long. Instead, he said, "When's my Clara going to get the gambling blood out of her veins?" It had been a stock joke with them all through their marriage that she'd always been ready to bet a dime or a dollar on anything she believed in. And now with her grey eyes drinking him in, believing in him so thoroughly, so absolutely—well, he winced at the perfidy of what he had done. He wanted to crawl away some place and hide. "We'll make no bet," he said. "Not on me—fresh out of a hospital."

Every afternoon of the days preceding the big game, Bill worked like a Turk with the Bulldogs. As long as they used him for passing only, he was the goods. He rifled throws to receivers that were marksmanship personified. Even Owner-coach Turner stood around with mouth ajar and tongue clucking. It was soon obvious, however, that Bill's legs wouldn't take too much pounding. "You're still not too long out of a hospital," Turner said. "We'll have to give you plenty of protection on your passes." And he instructed Bill's teammates accordingly.

The day of the big game blew in on a wind that promised tough ball handling. Bill Bowers, elected honorary captain for the day, was on the field going through warmup practice with the Bulldogs. And Clara was there in the stands with Linda

and Brent, the latter two all goggle-eyed with wonder at seeing their daddy romping with other gold-and-red clad footballers. Still, romping isn't the word, for Bill was, for the most part, standing and firing practice throws to ends and backs who made those quick little deceptive runs to right or left. He'd been groomed for the quarterback job.

As the minutes slogged by, Bill felt guilt crowding him harder and harder. His mind toyed with the pictures he'd seen recently of tall, handsome young basketball players with heads bowed in shame over having accepted similar bribes. And the newspaper headlines He kept pushing the thoughts away from him as you'd brush away ants from your plate at a lawn party. It wasn't easy.

Turner called his team off the field for one last-minute talk before whistle-time. Bill jogged in with the rest—only he made a hurried run to the rail fronting the fifty-yard seats. And there he stopped long enough to say a few words to Clara who had Linda and Brent on either side of her. The smiling, wide-eyed trust in the faces of his two children smote him with the impact of choir music.

He talked briefly with Clara but didn't really look into her eyes. He couldn't after having observed the youngsters. The whole episode put him in something of a stupor and he came away with only the clear recollection of her telling him to be careful of his legs. "Don't take too many chances with field running," she said plaintively. And he knew she was in the right of it.

But this thing of taking the bribe It gnawed and gnawed. Joining his teammates, he was again telling himself that a man's first duty is to his family. "And this one game isn't important," he kept muttering under his breath. But it was small comfort. He was a little surprised to find Turner not irked over his having been absent from the last-minute huddle at the bench. Well, no matter; maybe it again proved Bill's great value to the Bulldog lineup

THE ALL-STARS won the toss and elected to receive. The two teams took their positions. Bill, the offensive quarterback, sat on the bench and continued trying to convince himself he had a right to

sell out for this exhibition affair and collect something for his little family which had gone without for too long.

He saw a Bulldog kickoff propel the ball clear to the All-Star five-yard line where giant Ralph Gelinus gathered it in, waited till his interference formed, then came plowing back downfield in his usual bruising way. The runback was good for thirty-two yards.

Then Bill watched the visiting galaxy of stars hammer the hometowners for more hard, bludgeoning yardage. Each star, trying to outshine the others, ran and blocked and faked like a madman. The capacity crowd ate it up and howled for more. The All-Stars ran up four first downs before the Bulldogs could halt their onslaught. Bill listened to the sodden impact of tackling such as he'd never quite heard before. The blocking was blocking with a soul in it. The running was that of frantic stags plunging with the wind. Before he even got into the game he witnessed two men from each club being ordered from the field for slugging. Roughness and illegal handwork were producing miniature riots on play after play. With the Bulldogs finally holding for downs on their own twenty, Turner ordered Bill into the lineup with the offensive team.

"Bill," he grinned as a parting shot, "look out they don't hit you over the head with your scrapbook."

Pulling on his helmet, Bill thought about this and recalled that it's a hobby of professional footballers to make life miserable for much-publicized college stars. They did it to Grange and a host of other college stars when first trying to crack the play-for-pay sport. Bill forced a laugh, said to Turner, "Yeah, and the bigger the scrapbook, the bigger the lumps."

Bill took his spot, called his signals like the general he'd always been. His men spread precisionlike, steadied as still as statues, then sprang with the snap of the ball. Once again Bill was the field marshal of yesteryear and the mob roared its love for him. Trouble was, though, that Jake Spartan, the right end, couldn't quite get to the ball as it grazed his fingertips. The sigh that went up from the stands indicated that Spartan was no speed merchant in his running. But Bill knew he had thrown it that way deliberately. *Keep the ball just*

a little ahead of their hands, he kept reminding himself. And a few passes a little back of them It would be no great trick to make pass receivers look bad in their chores.

On the next play he sent Renshaw out on a flanking maneuver, fired a long pass to the man as he cut in toward center. It was a fast pass, a rocketing thing; and Renshaw just couldn't turn rapidly enough to trap it before it bounced off his shoulder blade. No one in the stands could know that Bill had fired it after counting "five" instead of "six." Even Renshaw looked as though the miscout had been a thing of his own bungling. Bill was still the fans' boy; he could do no wrong—and he could hear it in their yelling.

On the third down he resorted to a running play. Receiving the centered ball, he wheeled and spat it into the stomach of the oncoming Kirby Temple. The latter bucked and lunged for a good seven yards, but the noise of the fans told that they still wanted to see Bill throw his old fabulous passes. Too bad about these Bulldog pass receivers if they couldn't get to where the ball would be each time!

Bill kicked on fourth down; kicked right into the waiting arms of fullback Ted Davis who could run that ball like a package thief. The leather was hauled clear back to the Bulldog's twenty-eight where it was first down. The defensive Bulldogs came in to replace Bill and his cohorts. From there, the All-Stars worked two quarterback sneaks and one spot-pass down the center, parking the ball on the Bulldog's three. At that point rangy Kiesler of the All-Stars went plowing off tackle for the six points. The hometown fans wailed their anguish. And their wail hit a crescendo as the All-Stars converted for the extra point.

Score 7 to 0, with Bill Bowers feeling like a skunk. He had to look to the far rail with his three loved ones back of it in order to revive his feeling that the five hundred dollar profit he'd take on the All-Star win would be a righteous thing. But he couldn't be sure. He glanced over to where big, sophtic Gar Johns was sitting in a front row, and he saw the smug dishonesty upon the man's flat face. In a sense, Bill could hardly believe that he had accepted a seven hundred and fifty dollar

advance from him. He recoiled at the further realization that he had already fulfilled part of his role in throwing the game. Now he'd have to go the balance of the dirty way.

The kickoff went to Lars Sefton, the Bulldog back who brought the ball to mid-stripe before being stopped. Bill was calling signals on first down and he ordered the play into the All-Star's toughest line area—the tackle spot where raw beef and stunning power was a murderous trap.

Held for no gain, Bill next signalled for a throw to his left half, Jim Olivar. It would be a quick opener with a short, hard throw. Bill took the snapback, wrapped his fingers around the ball and laced it with the speed of light straight for the receding Olivar before the latter got fully turned around. It was a bull's-eye to the man's helmet where it bloomed off and ricocheted into the arms of a charging All-Star. The interceptor raced on through a startled broken field for another touchdown. All-Star supporters started throwing their brains away, while Bulldog partisans were suffering a virus of lockjaw.

The 13 to 0 immediately blossomed into 14 to 0 as the All-Star kicker split the uprights with a perfect conversion. Bill went to the bench with guilt hanging leadenly upon him. But the crowd still wasn't blaming him. It was those "slow" receivers who were fouling up the Bulldog cause. Bill didn't have the heart to even look up and acknowledge the vote of confidence the fans were still dumping upon him.

The crowd will always see what it wants to see, he thought.

With his five hundred dollar bet now so thoroughly protected, he went to Owner-coach Turner and said, "My legs are still to the rubbery side. How about not using me unless you're in trouble?"

Turner never looked up, simply grunted, "Check."

BILL felt the relief that stems from knowing that your wrongdoing won't have to be compounded by more wrongdoing. He sat heavily on the bench, wanted to put his head in his hands, but realized this might somehow put the finger of suspicion upon him. He couldn't get those basketballers off his mind.

The game developed into a ding-dong

battle with the teams working the ball up and down the gridiron as though no one knew exactly where it belonged. Due to an interception, the All-Stars collected another score just before the gun barked the end of the first quarter. The attempted conversion was blocked, leaving the total damage at 20 to 0.

Shortly before the end of the half, with their backs close to their own goal posts, the Bulldogs got off a quick kick on second down to the All-Star's twenty-two. At that point on first down an All-Star fumble was recovered by the Bulldogs. The ball had bounded and bounced clear to the three-yard line before it had been buried under a moil of men. Turner sent Bill in with the words: "A quick spot-pass down center to Kirby Temple is the ticket now."

Bill ran in, knowing full well he'd throw to Temple as instructed. But he also knew he'd be pitching a ball that would not be caught. Not by Temple, anyhow.

Signals and a snapped ball, with the massed hometown fans leaning forward as though they could help. Bill snagged the ball from center, jumped up in his old way and shot a rocketlike pass straight at Temple who was exactly where he should be. But it was the kind of a blistering pass that no man catches at such close range. The thing smacked against Temple's chest, bounced back crazily as many hands reached for it. Bill found his own hands, too, grabbing madly at the loose ball. His act was unthinking and instinctive. All of it honest.

And suddenly Bill had it in his own arms, and the thing to do was to plunge forward to pay dirt. His better, inner self had hold of him now. With no thought one way or another, he lurched on into hurtling All-Stars, churned his legs and flopped face forward across the goal line. Spread out like a man who'd fallen from a church steeple, he lay there still hugging the ball and listening to the rising ovation of the fans. For a moment, all he could think of was what big Gar Johns would be thinking now. Then the picture was crowded out by that of what Clara and the two little ones would be doing. The latter picture seemed the only one that counted.

Bulldogs helped Bill up, pounded him on the back, squeezed him as though he were a May bride all full of sweetness and

light. He'd scored, but he knew now he was a doublecrosser no matter which way you looked at him. But his mind was made up; the screaming of the crowd was sweeter than chapel music to his buzzing ears. He went out and toed that football over the crossbar for another point. The 7 to 20 tallies over there on the scoreboard made him stand up a little more like a man. He took a big breath and knew he was going to talk to Gar Johns.

The gun cracked out the end of the half. Bill started off the field, wondering what he could say to the gambler. Heading for the tunnel, Bill broke a little to his left to toss a smile to his nearby family. Enroute, he kept thinking, *Well, I can tell Johns I had to make one play look good in order to cover up this other larceny.* Then he was standing before the three who counted. Really counted.

Linda, still too young to be articulate, just gurgled up at him. Brent grinned with, "Gee, daddy . . ." It seemed to say volumes. But Clara . . . Clara was all shiny-eyed. "I—I knew you'd start coming through," she said in that low, strangely intimate voice of hers. "Y-you always will Bill . . ."

He tried to be flippant. "Yeah, me, Bill Bowers with the golden arm."

Through the crowd-noise he heard her add, "My Bill with the golden heart, too."

That did it. He winked away bleared vision, turned and ran for the tunnel.

TURNER had a habit of leaving his team alone between halves. He figured his players were adults and needed no pep talks. They were giving their all and they knew their craft forward and backward. "What more can be said?" had always been his reasoning. Now the Bulldogs were lying around on benches, relaxing and quietly trying to ferret out the reason for their dilemma.

Bill was full of his wife, full of his family, full of remorse—and he was telling his teammates he'd pitch now like he had never pitched before. He called Turner over and told him the same thing. Turner was quick to agree that connecting with passes could be the only answer. He granted that Bill was a great passer and that there were some crackerjack receivers available on the Bulldog roster—but that connecting was

the essence of all aerial football. They let it go at that, went silent, each man to his own thoughts about the inference.

Meanwhile, Bill went to his locker, extracted the seven hundred and fifty dollars from his wallet and clenched it in the palm of his hand as though it were something apt to come alive and scream out his double-dealing. He'd get it back to Gar Johns somehow, someway. He'd do it even if he had to take it to Clara and have her deliver it. Turner was ordering the players back to the field for the second half.

Bill let the rest of the team get well into the tunnel before he even left the locker room himself. Then he started down the hall toward the tunnel entrance, his intent being to get the bribe money to Clara for transference to Johns. But, hold on! Here was mammoth Gar Johns standing stiff-legged in the hall and looking at Bill as though he had egg on his chin.

Hurrying up to him, Bill heard him saying, "What was the idea of makin' that touchdown for—"

"Go copper your bets," Bill broke in. He jammed the roll of currency into the gambler's porky hand. "I'm going to collect a game for my Bulldogs."

"You wouldn't do that," grated Johns.

"Just stick around and see," Bill came back. Secretly, he was sick with the realization that maybe he didn't really have the ability to pull the game out of the fire at this late hour. Maybe he couldn't undo all the harm he'd already done . . .

The gambler's moon face was a riot of red by this time. "That means," he barked, "that you've bet on your own team!"

"No, you're wrong," Bill said thinly. "I stand to lose five hundred bucks. I—I already bet on the All-Stars."

A momentary silence, then Johns threw back his keglie head and chortled at the ceiling. "Why, you dumb cluck! First place, you're lyin' about the bet. Next place, the All-Stars have a 13-point lead."

In that instant two broad-shouldered hoods grabbed at Bill's arms and locked them behind him. Johns stepped in and smashed Bill twice to the jaw with brass knuckles. Bill sagged, tried to stave off unconsciousness while the gambler and his henchmen kicked and kicked at the half-healed legs which so recently had been relieved of shrapnel slugs.

"Bill!" came a voice from far down the tunnel. "Bill Bowers! Wherever you are, hurry up! Game time!"

The three men broke and ran the opposite way down the hall, leaving Bill slumped to his knees. In a matter of second, Turner was helping Bill to his feet.

"What the hell ever happened?" the owner-coach was asking.

In a low, crushed voice, Bill explained that he'd been worked over by gamblers. Several people tried to horn in on the confab, but Turner dissuaded them from interfering. Turner got Bill into the dressing room where they talked it over some more. It was a long talk, a talk with depth and feeling to it; the kind of talk men cry over. And Bill convinced his boss that he wanted to go out and win a ball game for the Bulldogs. What's more, he convinced the man that his chances of so doing were not too remote.

"Okay," agreed Turner slowly, "if you win the game for us, your secret is my secret." They shook hands on it.

When the two of them reached the field bench, the second half was already well under way. It was the All-Star's ball in midfield, and the score still at 20-7, favor the visitors. Bill sat there watching his teammates trying to fight off another sustained march by the All-Stars. With the numbness leaving and the aches taking over, Bill could feel some of the strength begin to sift back into his body. He'd go out there soon and, God willing, he'd work his golden arm to the bone and chuck enough touchdown passes to kick away the five hundred dollars he'd bet on the All-Stars. "A crazy thing," Bill breathed to himself, "but the only square thing."

And when the Bulldogs finally managed to get possession of that ball, Turner turned to Bill. "If you think you're up to it, guy, go in—and good luck to you."

Bill went forward, saying across his shoulder, "Thanks lots . . ." But his face was bleak, his thoughts lonely.

The Bulldog's ball on their own twenty-eight, first down, ten yards to go. Bill huddled with his men, wobbled a little as he took his quarterback spot. *I'm rocky*, he thought. *Maybe too rocky . . .* And he wondered whether or not he could make it. He snapped out his signals, caught the centered ball, cocked it behind his ear and

sent Jake Spartan twenty-five yards on a Statue of Liberty play. Next, from the All-Star's forty-seven, he fired a spot-pass down to Radcliffe who went booming for twenty more. First down on the enemy's twenty-seven, with the fans making the stadium bounce with racket.

Still quaking with shock from the going-over he'd received back in the hallway, Bill took the next snapback and tried a delicately timed play. A play to bear out that he could run with the ball as well as pass it. He turned, faked first to the right half, then to the left cutting across, hesitated a count and a half, hiding the ball with his back to the line of scrimmage, then came around to the left in a wide, circling sweep. He moved painfully but swiftly outside the end, who had come in fast, but tripped over his own halfback who had thrown a block. Bill sprawled and skidded across the goal line for a big six as the crowd went incoherent.

HE GOT up when he could get up, not before. The sight of his fired-up teammates stirred him. But the pain stabbing into his legs beat him into submission and made him agree to going off the field. He was being walked to the bench with his back to the playing field, but he could tell by the high screaming of the stands that the kick for extra point was good. The 20 to 14 score didn't look so insurmountable now—provided that his souped-up teammates could carry on from this point.

But, no, they didn't carry on so well without him. Things began to shape up like a general cave-in. At the kickoff they allowed the All-Star ball carrier to lug the leather clear back to their own twenty-seven yard line. Turner, sitting beside Bill, looked at the results of the damaging runback and said, "That just about undoes all the good you did, Bill."

Bill swallowed, turned to Trainer Hoerner who had been suggesting that Bill go to the locker room and have his bruises taken care of. "Look, Hoerner," he said, "Will you give these gams of mine a good massaging? Maybe we can bring them around."

Turner broke in with, "Forget it, Bill. You've taken enough shellacking for today."

Immediately, the trainer was working on Bill's legs. His wiry fingers executing their scientific probing and kneading. Bill watched his teammates trying desperately to hold back the hammering All-Stars; meanwhile, he prayed that his legs might come back to life before it was too late.

The Bulldogs held for the first two downs and it was obvious that they had seen Bill having his legs tended to in preparation for a return to the wars. Now they were demonstrating how they came by their name. Their tenacity had the crowd yukking it up like carloads of cockatoos. Bill saw his teammates block an All-Star attempted field goal, saw the ranting visitors get knocked back on their heels. The ball exchanged hands often during that third quarter, but it was plain that the Bulldogs were counting mostly upon Bill's return. He could see them glancing his way after each heartbreaking play.

Bill's stomach flip-flopped when he saw giant Ralph Gelinas of the All-Stars plunge through right tackle with the ball for thirty-eight murderous yards to the Bulldog nineteen. Bulldog players were strewn along in his wake like machine-gunned infantrymen. An end-around by Gelinas on the next play, and the man bulled his way over into the end zone for another marker. The conversion was pluperfect and the score zoomed to 27-14.

It again protected Bill's five hundred dollar bet on the All-Stars. But he didn't want the dirty money. "I—I'll give it to charity first," he breathed to himself. All he wanted now was the chance to make it a losing bet.

He watched the All-Star kickoff; a towering thing that twisted and turned up there in the sun and the wind. He saw Sefton take it back to the twenty-nine and get stopped as though a runaway truck had hit him. It ended the third quarter and weary Bulldogs slogged their way to the opposite end of the field to see what they could do with an inflated pigskin.

"Boss," Bill said to Turner, "let me go in now. I'll get you some yardage."

Turner looked at the trainer, saw the man shrug his puzzlement. The owner returned his gaze to Bill. "You're on your own, kid. But don't get hurt."

Bill was a man with a purpose now; a burning, all consuming purpose. He'd

caught fire. He showed it in the way he began whistling his passes around. He sent Olivar far down the field on the first play, fired a long, perfectly timed aerial which Olivar caught on his fingertips going full speed into the end zone. The fans were standing and fracturing their larynxes, but the screeches paled into moans when the play was nullified by backs-in-motion.

Bill threw another sizzling strike to where Radcliffe was scooting off tackle. But his bullet shot was a trifle too hot to handle and it bounced off the pad of the potential receiver. On third down, Bill made his famous jumping throw to Renshaw who was breaking into the clear around right end. The throw almost skulled the man as it rocketed on out into the flat and went for an incomplete pass. Discouragement bit at Bill for an instant, then he pushed it aside, knowing that his teammates would soon adjust themselves to this sudden stepping up of pace and tempo.

Undaunted on fourth down, Bill sent Spartan far down the middle, faked a run, then collected a touchdown on a pitchout at the end of a double spin. 27 to 20 was the score.

To save his legs, Bill had Olivar attempt the conversion. The man missed it when a terrific downdraft of wind caught the ball and blew it inches under the crossbar. The fans brooded loud and long over the miss.

Bill and his ten tired offensive handy-men went to the bench while the defensive crew came in. The Bulldogs got the kick into the air—a boot that had no depth due to the gale that was now whipping in and making the pennants on the poles straighten out iron-stiff. Giant Gelinas hauled the mail back through a broken field and stiff-armed Bulldogs to the face right up to the fifty-yard line.

TIME was running out and Bill needed eight more points the same way he needed his next breath. Without them he'd be the recipient of five hundred filthy dollars which would bring him shame such as he'd never before known. His desire to lose that bet was funneling up inside him like a mania, like an obsession. He simply had to win this game for his teammates, for Turner—but mostly for his own stricken conscience.

"Lousy dollars!" he muttered under his breath. "Lousy, stinking money . . ." And he knew he'd gladly hospitalize himself again with shattered legs if he could only smash out a win today. It killed him to sit on the bench and see others try what he knew he could do better himself.

But again the Bulldogs had been touched by what they'd seen crippled Bill Bowers do. Their great-hearted line now co-operated with blistering gang tackles in an effort to check the All-Star offense and force a punt. They didn't let the visitors squeeze out a yard on the first two tries. But the All-Stars did blast through for nine on the third down.

One yard to go for a first down on the Bulldog forty-one. With only five minutes left in the clock, Bill sat on the bench helplessly trying to fight off the cold, heavy hand of fear that rested on his shoulder. On fourth down the Bulldog line held like a barbed wire fence and the 70,000 hoarse voices in the stands got hoarser. Bill went in with the rest of the offensive unit.

Moving like a man who'd just come out of a train wreck with multiple contusions, he tried to steady himself. The great, surging yells of the fans fell upon his ears. He caught and promptly hit Olivar for thirty-nine yards, putting the ball on the All-Star's twenty-yard line.

Again he tried to ride on the high keening cry that swept in from the packed stands, but it didn't keep his next three passes from falling incomplete. Each one had been rifled dead-center to eligible receivers, but the intended men had obviously dropped them because of the terrific impact of each pitch. Time and again Bill had heard receivers complain that his fireballs hit them in the chest and knocked the breath out of them. And that was what was happening now; he'd have to make a change.

On the fourth down, he got Spartan far to the left, and although the man was covered, Bill let a long one go that was soft and feathery and dangerous. But Spartan had been advised it would be a floater, so he broke from the defensive All-Star half as though he'd just learned the man had leprosy. When Spartan reached the far spot, it was like taking wash off the line. He roared on toward pay territory. Diving for the end zone, he dragged two

All-Stars across the line with him, and the Bulldog score was 26—just one point back of the visitors.

The fans seemed to have quit breathing as the ball was placed for the try for extra point. And with the hush came All-Star padded giants lancing in and blocking the kick. A wail as though from a gargantuan wake volumed up from the Bulldog supporters.

Bill had pleaded with Turner to let him stay in the game to the very end. And Turner allowed it, despite his usual two platoon system. The Bulldogs kicked off downfield and pandemonium wracked the stadium as the big speed merchant, Gelinas, took the catch and bruised his way back through frantically grabbing hands. The fans were stick-straight on their feet and it looked as though Gelinas would go all the way for six.

Bill Bowers, now safety man with the shot-up legs, boiled toward Gelinas at an angle. It was a swan dive he made at the man's churning legs, but he had to be stopped at any cost. Few players had ever dared tackle Gelinas head-on when the latter had a full head of steam. But this was it; deperation. The impact was that of two men hurtling through opposite windshields. The ball squirted loose and bobbed crazily along the ground. A Bulldog player fell upon it and was immediately inundated by a half ton of roiling, swirling humans.

When they got Bill to his feet, they had to give him the all-around-the-Maypole-twice treatment before he could make sense. But the waltz-me-around-again-Nellie effort didn't bring Gelinas out of it. He was through for the day and taken off the field.

It was the Bulldog's ball, first down on their own fourteen. Bill tightened up his gang in the huddle, told them all he wanted was sound blocking from here on in. To his potential pass receivers, he said, "My throws are going to be floaters. No more rifle shots. So, break away fast from the guys covering you . . ." Hurriedly, he also told them that he was going to junk Turner's rule about never using quarterbacks on running plays. Okay to protect quarterbacks from injury earlier in the season, but now a quarterback had a lot of time to recover before next year.

And that's what he did, to everybody's consternation.

Signals and men tense with things to come. Bill, circling back to pass, sent both halfbacks and both ends out as receivers. The All-Stars, in order to cover all four of these men, were forced to drop all three line-backers into the secondary. Thus they were rushing Bill with only five linemen. If the line rushed him from the inside, he ran outside. If they "looped," he went up the middle. And, for variety, he passed. The All-Stars were no longer contending with Turner tactics, and the surprise change had them babbling to themselves as they missed assignments.

Bill engineered a sustained march clear downfield to the All-Star's two yard line. And there he noted the All-Stars gibbering over a means of stopping the relentless push. Bill realized he had a touchdown practically in the palm of his hand now—or, at least, within seventy-two inches of it. And yet a small chill wind of premonition blew between his shoulder blades.

It was fourth down, with the ball far to the right side of the field, a practically impossible spot for a field goal attempt. Cognizant that the half was running out and there being less than a minute to play, Bill was hurrying his calls. That's when he found the whole All-Star team collaborating on a device to beat him.

His signals cracked into the wind and *Boom!*—All-Stars rushed into the Bulldog line a split second before the center could snap the ball. It gummed up the works and gobbled precious seconds. The half-the-distance-to-the-goal-line penalty was a mockery to the Bulldogs. Bill looked at the clock, saw how little time was left. All the frustration of the afternoon rushed up inside him.

SIGNALS again. Another premature charge by All-Stars, slopping things up once more and collecting another off-side penalty. There were four more off-side penalties, which did the Bulldogs no good whatsoever, and the clock showed five seconds remaining. The officials were powerless to do anything, for they couldn't advance the ball on penalties once it had reached the playing field side of the goal line. Bulldogs were standing with their hands on their hips wondering how long

this kind of thing had been going on. No downs were being charged but the seconds were!

The All-Stars were beginning to cackle over their opportunistic device for protecting their one-point lead. They stood there with all the hauteur of giant, puffed-up peacocks. Bill cupped his hands to his mouth, cried at them, "It's not football!"

Laughing All-Stars stood in their own positions, taunting and waving their derision. In that instant Bill saw that he had seven men properly on the line of scrimmage; seven men all standing there forlorn and bewildered. Now some of the All-Stars were glancing at the distant timekeeper who was sitting with gun poised, eyes on his watch. Quickly, Bill signalled for his center to snap the ball. The man bent and swept it between his knees. Bill caught it as tardy All-Stars crunched in. Taking the big chance, Bill drop-kicked the leather at the crazy angle presented by the goal posts.

The ball went into the wind which blew and clawed at the uprights. The arc of its flight made Bill's heart somersault, then the ball swept down and bounced on the crossbar. Bounced twice—and lopped over drunkenly for a miracle field goal.

The wind brought the crowd-yells to Bill's ears in a surge that was deafening. He felt the ground move under him. Players were picking him up, hauling him around. He felt silly, felt childish. What did they take him for? A Tom Rover? A Frank Merriwell? A Buffalo Bill? Okay, so let it go He'd be all those guys if that's what they saw in him. All he could grasp was that he had just kicked five hundred bucks through those uprights. Five hundred dirty, smelly smackeroots which he didn't want. Brother! Maybe this would help to clean him up a little

He kept yelling down to the crazed Bulldogs who were parading him along. "Over to the boxes!" he yowled. "The boxes! Get me over to—" His voice was drowned in the uproar, but he simply wanted to get within smiling distance of his Clara, his

kids. People were piling out onto the field and it didn't look as though Bill's private personal Mardi Gras could ever push through.

He finally got down from the shoulders of teammates who wanted to lug him clear to the dressing rooms. He wormed and squirmed his way to that certain box, and while he leaned over the rail and hugged Clara, someone hoisted little Linda and Brent out onto the field. Instantly, Bill had the youngsters up in his arms, both of them wide-eyed with wonderment, although undismayed by the flaring of flash bulbs and the cries of camera men: "Just one more, Bill—hold it! —just one more!"

Meanwhile, Bill stood there, hugging first one little tyker, then the other, and saying things he'd never remember saying.

He was wild with excitement and was lost somewhere in that nether world between tears and cheers.

Putting the little ones back over the rail into the box again, he bent down to Clara, shouted through the noise, "All this—and half the price of a down payment on our home." His cup seemed running over. He was rich; had two of everything.

She crinkled her little nose at him, held him at arm's length for an instant. "Why, honey, now we've got the *full* thousand dollars." Something of sunset swept up into her face as she stammered self-consciously, "I—I bet the whole five hundred dollars on you to win"

"Y-you bet? You mean you—" He was gulping dryly.

She nodded and grinned, "I had your barber, Mr. Spinoli, place it for us. An even money bet."

Bill just stood there, trying to grasp the fact that she had recouped the exact amount of money which he had so foolishly and wrongly bet on the opposing team. Her good, sweet judgment shamed him. Judgment? Hell, no; her faith in him. That was it—her faith in him. And he loved it

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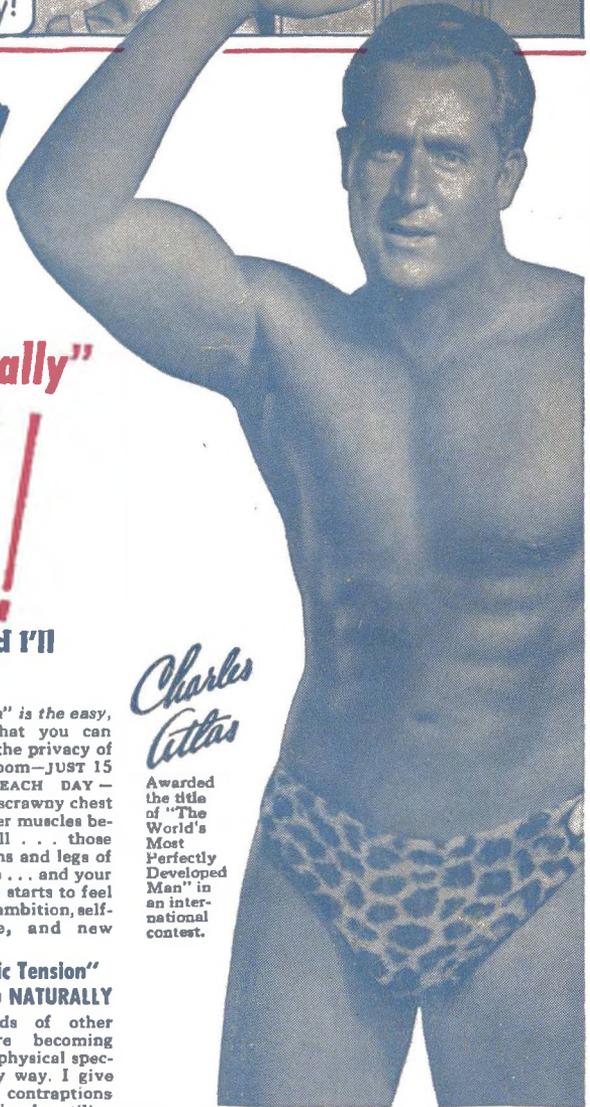
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