

1949

1st ISSUE  
(FALL)

# FOOTBALL<sup>★</sup>

Stories

20 c

## MR. GREAT FROM GEORGIA

HE BROKE EVERY RULE IN THE BACKFIELDER'S BIBLE UNTIL THE GAME BROKE HIM

A Powerhouse  
Novel

by  
**CURTIS  
BISHOP**



TWO CLIMAX NOVELETS  
**REVOLT OF THE RED VIKINGS**  
by WILLIAM R. COX

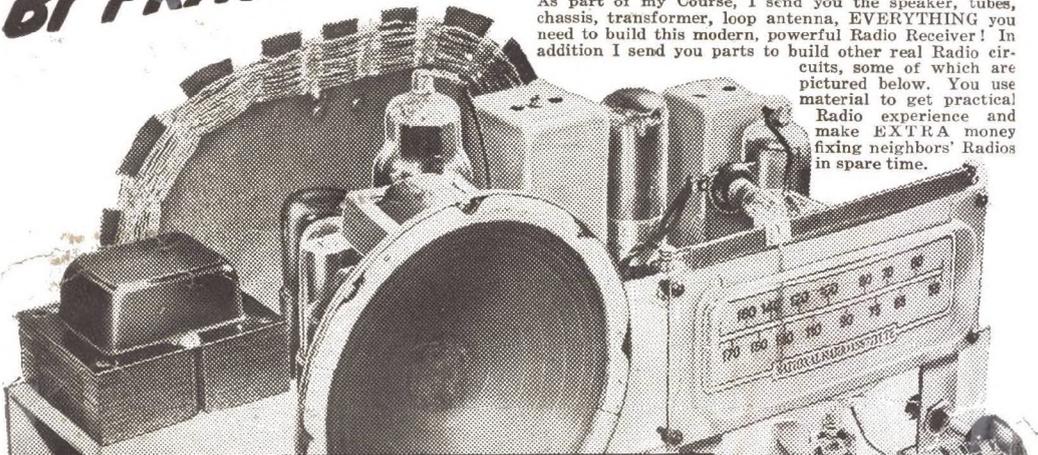
**THE FUMBLING PHANTOM**  
by STEWART STERLING



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FALL 1949  
(FIRST ISSUE)

# FOOTBALL Stories

T. T. SCOTT, President

JACK O'SULLIVAN, Editor

MALCOLM REISS, General Manager

## A COMPLETE NOVEL OF THE GRIDIRON

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*Hobey beamed . . . the ga-ga girls screamed . . . and every male at the airport was plunging a dream-knife into Hobey's back.*

L. Ravielli →



# MR. GREAT from GEORGIA

By CURTIS BISHOP

The coach crooned, the gals swooned, and the band struck up *Dixie* when the Georgia Ghost strode upon collegiate turf. But what a fizzle when he flaunted his stuff on the rugged, folding money fields.

RUFUS REDMOND'S twinkling eyes studied the back of his daughter's blonde head a moment, then he said carelessly:

"By the way, we got Hobeey Hatch."

Rufus could not see his daughter's face but he saw her blonde head stiffen and then, as she turned around very slowly, he was astonished at her expression.

"Are you trying to tell me," she asked in a strained voice, "that the Orioles drew Hobeey Hatch of Georgia in the draft?"

"That's right," said Rufus a little peevishly, surprised and hurt at her attitude.

"Let me get this straight," Ruth Redmond murmured. "As the Orioles finished

last in the American League last season, you, as manager and owner, got first choice on any college player who might want to play pro football next season?"

"That's right," Rufus snapped.

"And," daughter Ruth went on in that same strained voice, "your choice was Hobeey Hatch—the Georgia All-American?"

"That's right," Rufus snapped again.

Ruth stared at him and shook her blonde curls pityingly.

"And what's wrong with that?" snapped Redmond, who was affectionately known as "Red Rufus" along the pro football front. "Can you name me a college back who got more headlines than this same

Hobey Hatch? Can you name me another rookie who would give the Orioles as much color and crowd appeal? We need sensationalism, a punter, a passer and an all-the-way runner. I get all this combined in one boy—Hobey Hatch of Georgia!"

Ruth Redmond came over and sat on the arm of his chair, her fingers toying with one of his cleat-scarred ears. "You are a wise football man, Red Rufus," she murmured fondly. "The sports writers say there never was another center like you and I don't doubt that you are as good as anybody for one quarter even at your age. You never saw the quarterback you couldn't outguess on the playing field and you read and write passably well. But, Red Rufus, my darling, I wish you would just coach and manage the Orioles and let me handle the office."

"Hell's bells," snorted the old veteran defiantly, "there ain't a better football prospect in America than Hobey Hatch. Grant Rice told me Hatch could do more on a football field and do it better than anybody since George Gipp. And Grant's word is enough for me."

"Yes, darling, that's all true," sighed Ruth. "Mister Hatch of Georgia is super-human, magnificent, colossal, almost unbelievable; he may even have wings on his shoulders and a halo around his head. But, Red Rufus, but, you threw away our first choice in the draft. And we were counting on it so much."

"I don't see why," Rufus said peevishly. "When we sign Hobey Hatch we can go to the bank and borrow dough, enough to pick us up a wingback and a couple of ends. Give us Hatch, a wingback and two ends and we can give the Chicago Bears all the trouble they want."

Ruth sighed and went back to her desk. "What do you know about Hobey Hatch's personal life?" she asked gently.

"Nothing, and I don't give a damn," Red Rufus snapped. "I don't know what color he is, what his antecedents are or if he has halitosis. I just want him to play football. I just want him . . ."

The battle-scarred veteran of eighteen professional campaigns stopped and eyed his attractive daughter suspiciously. "What do you know about him?" he demanded.

"Nothing much," Ruth murmured. "I've really never met him. But I have read in the papers that his father is John F. Hatch, the Georgia boat builder."

"So what?" Red blinked. "Building boats is all right, if you like it. I built a boat of my own when I was a kid."

Ruth sighed and shook her head again. "John F. Hatch is worth millions, darling," she explained. "Hobey Hatch was born with a golden spoon in his mouth. I don't think he would be interested in professional football."

"Oh," whispered Red Rufus, his jaw dropping. "Oh!" he said in a louder voice.

"Yes, oh!" chorused Ruth unhappily.

RUTH REDMOND looked very trim and attractive in her tweed traveling suit with her tony red hat perched jauntily on top of her curls and her scarlet shoes flashing. Though two years out of college, she looked no older, and no more mature, than the coeds she passed as she walked slowly down Georgia's "fraternity row," peering through the gathering dusk at the street number of each building, until she reached the Phi Kappa Theta house. She checked the address with the number on a slip of paper in her hand, hesitated a moment, then walked boldly up to the porch, ignoring the curious gazes and muffled whistles of a group of youths who stopped their "bull session" to gawk, and speculate.

One of them finally came forward, a bespectacled freshman who greeted her shyly.

"I wish to see Mr. Hobey Hatch," Ruth told him with a flashing smile.

The freshman gasped; even freshmen and fraternity pledges could be impressed. "Yes'm," he gulped. "I'll get him for you."

One of the boys came forward with a chair but Ruth declined it with a smile of thanks. The freshman's voice was audible inside the three-storied colonial mansion.

"Will Mr. Hatch condescend to come downstairs and acknowledge the presence of a very attractive lady who wishes to see him?"

From the second story came back a chorus of jeers, then a laughing voice:

"If it isn't a blonde, tell her to go away."

From a half-dozen directions came the chorus: "It's a blonde. And how!"

Ruth Redmond blushed slightly, but at the same time couldn't resist a smile. Only two years ago she had been a part of this banal informality herself.

"Then tie her to the porch," came the shout, presumably from Hobeys Hatch himself. "Don't let a blonde get away."

The freshman came back to Ruth. "He'll be down in just a moment," he said gravely.

"So I gathered," Ruth said dryly.

It wasn't a moment, not more than thirty seconds. A husky youth in white duck trousers, sports shirt open at the throat with tails hanging out, and soiled house shoes came storming down the stairs and out the door.

"Where is she?" he screamed.

Then he saw Ruth, and, after a start, his expression changed. "I'm sorry," he smiled. "I had no idea it was a stranger. I thought it was one of the girls from the Pi Phi house across the street."

"That's quite all right," Ruth granted genially. "I'm Ruth Redmond, Mr. Baker. My father is Rufus Redmond of the Staunton Orioles."

"Oh, yes, pro football," murmured Hobeys.

"We were so fortunate," Ruth went on dryly "as to draw your name in the draft. We've addressed several letters to you relative to a contract. Did you receive them?"

"Oh, yes, I got 'em," Hobeys admitted uncomfortably. "I've started to answer 'em several times but every time I did there wasn't a single darned pledge in the house who could type."

"And, of course, you couldn't write a letter yourself?"

"That's what pledges are for," Hobeys grinned.

Ruth took a deep breath. She had been convinced herself that this trip was a waste of time and money, but Red Rufus, always an incurable optimist, had insisted upon it.

"Well, Mr. Hatch, are you interested in playing professional football?"

**H**E was a handsome youth—clean-cut features, black wavy hair, a quick ready grin. He was also a little spoiled and very sure of himself, but that could hardly be otherwise; in three years of col-

lege football Hobeys Hatch had been hailed from coast to coast. It is almost impossible for an All-American to keep from being conceited.

He looked a mite thoughtful.

"I hadn't thought much about it, Miss Redmond," he murmured. "I'm finishing here this month and . . ."

"We want you to play, of course," Ruth said crisply. "How about dinner with me tonight while we talk it over?"

"That's an idea," he said heartily. "Where are you staying; I'll pick you up."

"I'll meet you instead," Ruth insisted. "You name the place and I'll meet you there in an hour."

"Make it the Golden Lantern and two hours," Hobeys suggested.

"The Golden Lantern!" frowned Ruth. "That sounds like a night club."

"Best food in Georgia," claimed Hobeys. "Their clam chowder will melt in your mouth."

"Very well," murmured Ruth. "The Golden Lantern in two hours."

She nodded, smiled again at the boys gathered on the verandah, and walked back along the row of fraternity and sorority houses. Hobeys Hatch gazed after her a moment, then turned to his fraternity brothers with a swagger.

"Can Hatch pick 'em?" he chortled. "I ask you, can Hatch pick 'em?"

"Halfbacks have all the luck," grumbled a stocky black-haired boy who had not missed a word of the conversation. "It's funny no blonde like that ever comes to see a blocking back."

Hobeys' expression changed swiftly. "You are pretty keen to play pro ball, aren't you, Trigger?"

"You know it," shrugged the black-haired chap. "But no offers for Scott, not even from brunettes. All anybody ever heard about this Georgia team was Hatch, Hatch, Hatch; the folks up East don't even know we had a blocking back."

Perhaps there was a little bitterness in Trigger Scott's voice, perhaps not. Hobeys slapped his jaw lightly. "Aw, stop griping," he growled. "You wouldn't have met Ann Sheridan if it hadn't been for me. That paid you back for all your blocking right there."

But, as he and Scott went upstairs to dress, there was a thoughtful gleam in Hobeys Hatch's eyes. No doubt of it, something should be done for Trigger Scott, the best blocking back in Dixie for two seasons!

RUTH found Hobeys Hatch willing to talk about any subject but professional football. The Georgia All-American was eager to discuss, for instance, why her eyes should be a soft blue, why she danced so lightly, why she had curly blonde hair that tickled his chin when he held her close to him, and why a cruel Fate had not thrown them together sooner. Football, claimed young Mr. Hatch, was a minor item; romance was the major thing. Here they were, two of them, young, unattached; the music was good, the food savoury, and the Georgia moonlight beating down on them as they sat in the Golden Lantern's outdoor garden very inspirational.

"I didn't come down here for romance," Ruth said sternly, but with a responsive twinkle in her blue eyes. "I'm spending my dad's hard-earned dough trying to find him a triple-threat halfback."

"But football season is a long way off," protested Hobeys. "Now is no time to worry about football."

"We have to worry about it," shrugged Ruth. "We need a triple-threat halfback. If you aren't interested, I have to see some other prospects."

Finally Hobeys Hatch agreed to stop reaching for her hand and talk business.

"Frankly, I'm not too keen on the idea," he admitted. "I got a little tired of football here at Georgia . . . three bowl games in three years takes some of the thrill out of it."

"You have the summer to rest up," she pointed out. "By then you'll be stomping to go."

"Could be," Hobeys admitted. He studied her a moment with a speculative smile. "Of course," he murmured, "you date out the star halfback on your dad's team?"

"Could be," Ruth answered in kind. "It won't be in the contract, however."

"And," the All-American went on, "the Orioles are just my type of ball club."

"What do you mean by that?"

"A bunch of thick-headed broad-shouldered huskies," he shrugged. "Give 'em Hatch and they would set the league a-fire."

"It might not be so easy," Ruth challenged. Nothing infuriates a professional football fanatic so much as a college star's suggestion that the money game is easy.

Hobeys ignored her challenge. "Then the pros like sensationalism," he went on thoughtfully. "I remember a few years back when Davey O'Brien went up and the guys on the other team didn't want to hurt him because he built up the gate receipts. Hatch could really pull the crowds in when he cut loose."

"If you are thinking of a picnic . . ." began Ruth.

He cut her short. "Of course I'm thinking of a picnic," he smiled. "I don't need the dough; the only things pro football can offer me are fun and glory."

"And," he added in another breath, reaching for her hand again, "maybe a blonde!"

Ruth twisted clear of his grasp and fumbled in her purse for a blank contract. "It's a good thing my dad drilled me on pass defense," she murmured. "Here, sign this."

He shook his head. "There's another detail."

"What?"

"My roommate, Trigger Scott. Gotta have a blocking back."

"We don't need another blocking back," the girl frowned. "We have the best in the league."

"Scott knows me," Hobeys insisted. "He knows when I'm gonna give and when I'm gonna charge. I have to have Scott."

"Okay, you can have Scott," Ruth conceded with a sigh. "Now do you want the moon thrown in, or are you ready to sign?"

"A kiss from the blonde to celebrate," Hobeys proposed.

"Don't be silly!" she snapped.

His answer was to push the contract back with a shrug. Ruth hesitated a moment, then turned crimson.

"All right, *Mister* Hatch," she snapped. The crimson in her cheeks was anger, not embarrassment.

He insisted on payment in advance;

then, with a laugh, affixed his signature to the contract.

Later that night, much later, as Hobe Hatch didn't believe in going to bed with the chickens, Ruth wired her father:

*Just signed Mister Great from Georgia. Am not sure yet whether that is good or bad. It will be a busy autumn for both of us.*

## II

RUFUS REDMOND seemed immense in street clothes; in sweatshirt, pads and football pants he looked like the model for a General Sherman tank. Though past his fortieth birthday he still scrimmaged with his team, and occasionally played. He weighed two hundred and sixty-five pounds stripped and in his younger days had run down fast halfbacks from behind when they got in an open field. Most experts were willing to concede that Red Rufus had been the greatest center of all time, both collegiate and professional.

Rufus had done well financially, saving his money as he played twelve years for the Detroit Titans after leaving college, but the Orioles had been a heavy drain on his resources and he was close to the wall. He didn't mind admitting to his close friends that an unprofitable season would put him out of business, that he would have to borrow money to launch the schedule. But Red Rufus couldn't be gloomy with the season's opener just two weeks away, with all of his hard-bitten veterans back and three promising recruits coming up, and with the first bite of Autumn weather in the air. The thud of cleated shoe against pigskin drowned out the echo of warnings from his banker and his daughter as he stood watching his twenty-four gridsters hammer at each other in their first scrimmage of the year.

Hatch hadn't reported as yet—a long vacation trip would make the Georgia All-American a week late—but Trigger Scott was on hand, and, though he had accepted his daughter's contract with Scott against his wishes, Red Rufus was pleased with the rookie. Scott was built as a blocking back ought to be—low and heavy-set. Furthermore, Scott actually seemed to enjoy

blocking. Running at frontback in the B combination, Scott was acquitting himself well against the heavy veteran line, and that was enough to satisfy Red Rufus; the Oriole line was just as tough on defense as any in the league. They could stop any team's power attack; it was the razzle dazzle stuff and the forward passes which threw them. And, at that, the Orioles had amassed one of the most formidable defensive records in the circuit the year before; they had finished in the cellar only because of their ragged offense. The word was out among the experts that Red Rufus couldn't train an offense, that he was a defensive man from start to finish.

That was hardly fair to Redmond. College backs came high, particularly passers, and linemen were cheap and plentiful. You didn't have to buy an All-American lineman; you could take a big husky chap who had learned only the bare fundamentals and make a seasoned product out of him in a season. But backs were born with speed, a passing arm and elusiveness; and, until Red Rufus had gone on the line for Hobe Hatch, he couldn't afford to meet their price.

When Hatch got there he would have a ball club. He wasn't sure about Trigger Scott at blocking back; Jim Collins had played that spot for two seasons and Collins was okay. His pair of wingbacks, Tut Bobo and Mel Flanagan, were satisfactory—hard runners, good down-field blockers, good on pass defense. His fullbacking would be done by a recruit from a small Texas college, Ripper Murray. Murray weighed over two hundred pounds and couldn't go any faster than a Mack truck, hence his obscure college record; but Rufus was still old-fashioned enough to want a pile-driver in his lineup who could inch forward a yard under any and all conditions. He planned to alternate Murray with Red Burke, his veteran signal-caller, when Hatch was in the lineup. A backfield of Burke, Scott or Collins, Bobo or Flanagan and Hobe Hatch would put all the ball-carrying and passing burden on Hatch's shoulders, but Rufe was a little old-fashioned in that department also; he liked the single-wing and the idea of one man carrying the ball. Flanagan could punt with the

best of 'em and, with the new substitution rules, he could run Mel in on fourth down. Rufe himself preferred to punt on second and third, and wait for breaks, but he was reconciled to the necessity of "opening up." The crowds demanded it and the Orioles had to pull in customers this year or else.

Rufe had made another concession to modern football, a press agent. This worthy interrupted the scrimmage session now.

"Hatch is arriving on the five-thirty plane," he said excitedly. "Get into your clothes and come out to meet him."

"You do it, I'm busy," Rufus growled.

"Listen, Rufe," the publicity man said wearily. "The guy is news. I've gotten all of the dailies to send out photographers and some of the sports writers will be there. It would be a good idea for the whole team to meet him."

"Why?" scowled Red Rufus.

"Why? Publicity! Pictures!"

Rufus hesitated. "I hate to break up practice just for a picture," he demurred.

"Listen, Rufe, publicity brings in customers, customers pay in dollars, dollars enable you to sign guys like Hobe Hatch. Don't argue; go on in and dress."

His was an arbitrary attitude for a press agent to take—after all he was just *working* for Rufus—but Calvin Evans realized that all the burden of public relations was on his shoulders. Rufe was cordial enough, but never imaginative or talkative. Rufe thought press interviews were a nuisance, not a gift from Heaven.

Evans turned to the squad, which had stopped scrimmaging to listen and stare.

"Some of you fellows come in, too," he ordered. "How about you, Burke? And you, Carter?"

Mike Carter was their all-league end a tall drawling Texan. "Ah can wait to meet Mister Hatch," Carter grinned.

Evans appealed to Red Rufus and the owner-coach-manager nodded. "Better come on," Rufe said uncomfortably. "Gosh knows we need publicity."

"And *will* we get it!" chortled Evans. "This Hatch boy is colossal, Red. I called him this morning to check the exact time of his arrival and he gave me a slant that will leave the sports writers gasping for breath."

"Yeah!"

"Yeah. He's not only good color but he is plenty smart. You may be having to throw up temporary bleachers in Farrington Stadium before this season is over, Rufe."

Carter and Burke were following along. "You mean," demanded Red, "that this guy Hatch is overseeing his own publicity?"

"Just giving me a slant." Calvin agreed.

Carter and Burke exchanged glances. Think of that! A football player giving suggestions to the publicity man!

They dressed in moody silence, all of them dreading the chore before them. Going out to meet a rookie!

WHEN they reached the airport they found Ruth also waiting. She was wearing a sky-blue creation that made her look like a movie queen and Rufe eyed her proudly.

"Dressed up for the cameraman?"

The girl shrugged. "Your Boswell's idea," she said, meaning Evans.

"All we need is a band," Red Burke murmured bitterly, looking around at the cameramen and sports writers.

The newspapermen then descended on Rufus.

"Is this Hatch stuff on the level?" one demanded.

Rufe looked inquiringly at Evans. The publicity man made frantic motions.

"Sure it is," Rufus admitted cheerfully. Evans had schooled him to always back up press releases.

"How about it, Miss Redmond?" another skeptical news writer barked. "Did you persuade this Hatch to sign up all by yourself?"

"Why, yes," Ruth admitted slowly. "I went to Athens to see him last Spring."

The newspaperman turned to Evans. "I apologize. This sounded like a frame to me, something like you used to pull for vaudeville acts."

"Listen, Pete, I never give you a wrong steer," protested Evans.

Pete laughed scornfully. "I wouldn't believe you had been up in an airplane if I saw you come floating down in a parachute," he said with a conviction which

indicated he had dealt with Calvin Evans' publicity stunts before.

Then he saw the big ship floating down gracefully and turned away. Rufus reached out and grabbed Evans' shoulder.

"What *did* you tell 'em?" he demanded.

"Just gave 'em a story," Evans smiled, squirming free.

The palatial air liner circled, came in, nestled to the ground as lightly as a feather. They pressed forward. First out of the ship was a tall black-haired young man in expensive tweeds.

"That's him," yelled Evans, forgetting his grammar in his excitement. "Shoot!"

THE photographers obeyed. Hobe Hatch obligingly held up the unloading of other passengers as he posed in the doorway. Then he sighted Ruth and pushed his way to her. She held out her hand with a smile of greeting but that wasn't enough for Hobe; he pushed the hand away, caught her in his arms and kissed her enthusiastically. Cameras flashed. Then Hobe turned to Rufus with a grin.

"Mr. Redmond?"

"Yeah, Rufus Redmond," the coach-manager said surlily.

"Delighted to know you, Mr. Redmond," Hobe said enthusiastically.

Rufus nodded to the two Orioles veterans watching with wide-open mouths. "Burke and Carter, two of your teammates," he said unhappily.

"Hi," Burke and Carter said unenthusiastically.

The newspapermen pushed forward again. "Rufus, how about a statement?"

Rufus hesitated. "About what?" he asked unenthusiastically.

"About Hatch?" was the impatient answer. "Will you win the pennant with him?"

"I dunno," Rufe said cautiously. "I dunno how good he is."

Calvin Evans thrust himself into the picture. "Mr. Redmond is joking, of course," he declared with a loud laugh. "You may quote him as saying that with Hobe Hatch as tailback, the Orioles will have the most sensational team in football. You may quote him as saying that he is scrapping his old system and going in

for razzle-dazzle, with Hobe Hatch as the ringmaster. You may quote Red Burke and Mike Carter as saying that the Orioles are inspired by Hobe Hatch's presence and are determined to give him the best protection in football. You may quote Miss Redmond as saying that Hobe Hatch is her idea of a modern Sir Galahad, a knight in shining armor, and that he will wear a ribbon pinned to the shoulder of his jersey in every game this season. Think of that, boys. He will wear her colors just as did the knights of old."

The newspapermen looked at Rufe inquiringly. "That okay, Rufus?"

Rufe squirmed. "Guess so," he admitted unhappily.

Then, to Burke and Carter: "Can we quote you on that?"

Red Burke answered for both of 'em. "If it's all right with Rufus," he murmured uncertainly, "it's all right with us."

The newspaperman doing most of the talking turned to Evans with a look of disgust.

"I still don't believe it," he growled, "but I'll print it."

Hobe Hatch thrust himself into the picture. "Would you like another pose of Miss Redmond and myself?" he asked the cameramen.

"Sure."

Hobe reached out and drew Ruth close to him with his long right arm. "How's this?" he chuckled.

"Fine. Hold it."

Ruth wanted to tear herself away from his embrace but she smothered the impulse. Whatever this was, it was going over great with the press. And they needed publicity.

Then they wanted pictures of Hobe and Rufus shaking hands, of Hobe standing between Burke and Carter. They obliged, Hobe cheerfully, the others resentfully. Finally the news boys packed up their equipment and darted off.

Calvin caught Hobe's arm. "We gotta scram," he said excitedly. "We're due on a broadcast in twenty minutes. I have a taxi waiting."

"I'll call you later," Hobe sang back over his shoulder to Ruth as he darted after the press agent.

Rufus looked at his daughter; Ruth looked at Rufus.

"I don't think," Rufus said slowly, "I want to see a paper tonight."

"I'm sure I don't," Ruth snapped. "Let's go home; I need a rest."

But, being human beings, they couldn't wait for the early morning papers to hit the streets. They bought copies of all editions and carried them home. On every sports page was a lavishly illustrated story like this:

**LADY FAIR LURES  
GEORGIA STAR TO  
PLAY PRO FOOTBALL**

**Not for Money, nor for Glory,  
But for Ruth Redmond,  
Says HobeY Hatch**

The stories carried just about the same material. HobeY Hatch, son of a wealthy family, All-American star from Georgia, had been drafted by the Orioles. He had refused to even consider professional football until Ruth Redmond, pretty daughter of Rufus Redmond, had come to Athens to see him. He had fallen in love with Miss Redmond and, moved by the inevitable bankruptcy confronting the Orioles until they started winning games and packing in crowds, had agreed to play.

*"He is just like Sir Galahad," said Miss Redmond, looking at him with adoring eyes. "He will wear my ribbon on his sleeve just like a knight of old."*

There were quotes from Red Rufus. *"With Hatch in our lineup, we can lick both the Chicago Bears and the Washington Redskins."*

Burke and Carter were quoted, too. *"We will give Hatch the best protection of any back in the country. We will show professional football that chivalry isn't dead."*

Ruth and Rufus had barely finished digesting the stories when the telephone rang.

"Don't answer it," Ruth said weakly; "it might be Mister Great from Georgia."

"HELL," sneered Curly Frambeau. "What's the use of us working so hard! Hatch is here, ain't he?"

Frambeau was a big French-Canadian whose tackle play on the defense rated with any. He was an expert with his hands and he liked nothing better than a rough-house.

Hatch was slipping his jersey down over his black curly head. When his face was visible again, he smiled at Frambeau.

"You're right there, buddy," he said boastfully. "The depression is over."

They all dressed and looked at the Georgian. They were a matter-of-fact lot, all but Frambeau, and might never have mentioned the outburst of publicity had not Curly brought it up, and HobeY himself responded.

"What do you have cooked up for the papers next, Hatch?" asked Red Burke, who had not yet forgiven Redmond for dragging him out to the interview.

"Oh, we'll figure up something," HobeY said lightly.

Rufus appeared in the doorway, already dressed in jersey, trousers and shoes. Rufe didn't wear pads. They had been unknown when his football career started and he said they bothered him. It was hard to think of him as over forty years of age; he looked ready to step right into the lineup and play his usual game at center.

"Did you learn the signals, Hatch?" Rufe demanded.

"Some of 'em," HobeY said carelessly. "Some of the plays won't fit my game at all. I charted out some last night we can add."

A titter went up; Rufe squelched it with a glare.

Big Red was notorious for running his squad with an iron hand. The boys said he was harder on them than their college coaches had been.

"If you don't mind, I'll figure out the plays myself, Hatch," Rufe said mildly.

"Then you'll have to get some better ones than those," HobeY shrugged. "You couldn't make a yard against 'Bama or Georgia Tech with that kind of stuff; they would spot it in a minute."

Another titter; Rufe glared again; then said with forced gentleness:

"We might possibly give 'Bama or Tech a good game, Hatch."

"Oh, I guess they're all right—except for the passing plays," Hatch conceded. "And those don't matter; down at Georgia I made up half of ours in the huddle."

"Uh-huh," Rufe said unenthusiastically. "Well, we'll talk about that later."

He turned and went out on the field. The others followed him in twos and threes. There was no necessity of driving them to practice; they were professionals and they knew practice was essential to their physical and financial well-being. Trigger Scott came over to Hobeys and sat down beside him.

"Chum, you're getting these chaps down on you with that kind of talk," the blocking back said. "Why don't you go a little easy, take over the squad by degrees instead of one jump?"

"Why?" shrugged Hatch.

"They can get pretty rough," Trigger warned.

"We got rough with each other in Georgia," Hobeys snapped back.

Trigger waved his hands and went on out to practice. In three years he had jerked several games out of the fire because of that superb self-confidence. Just as long as there was time left for one play, and they were no more than six points behind, Georgia had been in the ball game.

Trigger personally believed in Hatch, too; any man who had played three years in Georgia, in three bowl games, naturally believed in Hobeys.

But, at the same time, Trigger could understand the attitude of Curly Frambeau, Red Burke and the others. They had felt that way at Georgia. Hatch had kept down mutiny and dissension on the squad by delivering game after game. They couldn't gripe about Hobeys's publicity as long as Hobeys had lived up to his headlines but, through three seasons, they had been a pack of wolves ready to pounce on their ace if he slowed up. He had never slowed up.

But this was pro football and Hobeys might find it a bit rougher. Trigger could not help hoping so.

They were divided into two squads when Hobeys finally trotted up.

"We were waiting on you, Mister Hatch," Rufe said gently.

"Had trouble with a shoe-string," Hobeys explained. There was no apology in his tone; he seemed to understand why they had waited. What was the use of starting without him!

"For the present, Hatch," Redmond snapped—the soft voice he used to express his sarcasm didn't seem to impress the Georgian; others players writhed under it but Hobeys didn't seem concerned—"we'll put you on the B squad."

TRIGGER was on the B team with him. In the A backfield were Tut Bobe, Jim Collins, Red Burke and Sully James. Sully was a one-sixty pounder who could "scat" but wasn't big enough for a full game's pounding. Hobeys studied Sully and chuckled. If that was all the competition he had for the tailback's job, Redmond was wasting time with this second-string stuff.

Rufe ran his plays close, nearly all of 'em from a single wing. Burke called the signals for the A squad and he didn't mix 'em up very much. There was Sully wide for three yards and then Red got inside tackle for another. On the third down Sully faked an end sweep, then faded back and passed.

Hobeys Hatch sensed the play the moment it started and, acting on an impulse, came up in a sprint, watching Sully's motion.

A defensive back's assignment on a pass play is to cover a receiver but Hobeys waited for the passer to commit himself, then depended on his speed to get over. It was sweet—when it worked. It worked this time. Sully wasn't a brilliant passer and his throw had a little loft in it. Hobeys cut over to his right at full speed, snatched the ball out of the hands of Mike Carter and raced for the goal line. Sully had swung out after throwing the ball to protect against an interception but Hobeys left him far behind.

The Georgian trotted back to Rufe and tossed the coach-owner the ball.

"That's what I meant by old stuff," he

challenged. "Anybody could have figured out that pass pattern."

"Well, we'll see what *you* do," Rufe grumbled.

The Bs took the ball. It was their first head-knocking and Rufe had not designated a signal caller for the second-string. Hobey Hatch grabbed the job.

"We'll use that wide tackle play," he said. "Number Six, isn't it?"

It was Number Six, all right. Rufe ran it in close, depending on his blocking to overpower the tackle. Trigger crashed into Curly Frambeau and knocked the big Canadian off-balance, but that was all; not many could carry the huge Frambeau out of the play.

Hobey seemed to dance a moment as if suspended on a string; then, when Frambeau staggered past Scott, broke wide. Mike Carter had committed himself on the wing, charging in to spill the play for a loss when Scott pointed it, and was caught napping by the sudden change of maneuvers. He got no more than Hatch's shoe-strings.

The Georgian flew for the sidelines with the halfback, Tut Bobo, keeping him covered. Bobo charged up at the chalk marks to block the ball-carrier out of bounds; Hatch stopped, spun on his heels, fluttered away from Bobo's frantic reach, reversed his field for three steps; spun again, stiff-armed a tackler to the turf, and cut down the sidelines. Safety man Sully James was on the play nicely and got Hobey after a twelve-yard gain but obviously Red Rufus and the rest of the Orioles were impressed.

That had been toting the mail! His blocking thrown back in his face, he had veered his direction and gone twelve yards all by himself!

"Nice," Trigger grunted.

"There'll be more," said Hobey.

The Bs took a long while in the huddle, Hatch doing most of the talking. They came out in the same single wing to the right, with an unbalanced line—the left tackle lining up between right guard and right tackle—and Hatch in the tailback position. Trigger Scott started for Curly Frambeau again but, just before they crashed, he veered his direction and flung

his stocky body at Mike Carter's legs. The big end had already pushed off Mel Flanagan, but this onslaught caught him by surprise. Rufe played a waiting tackle and Frambeau was too slow to concern Hobey. Tut Bobo played his defensive halfback's job wisely; he sprinted up to flank the ball-carrier, filling the gap left when Carter crashed to the turf.

But this was just what Hobey wanted. This was no end sweep; Hobey suddenly faded back, cocked his arm and whipped a bullet-pass to Ripper Murray, who had swept by Tut Bobo into the halfback's vacant territory. Murray took the perfect pass in stride and bore down on little Sully, who waited for him with legs braced.

Rufe Redmond watched with amazement. He had never seen razzle-dazzle work so smoothly.

Of course, Sully would stop it.

What happened next caused Big Red to lift his eyebrows again. Just before he crashed into James, Murray turned and lobbed the ball backward. There was Hobey Hatch speeding toward it; and, just as Murray plummeted into James and both of them crashed to the turf in a hopeful confusion of cleated shoes and jerseys, Hatch caught the ball, juggled it a moment, and outsped Red Burke to the goal line.

Rufus scratched his greying head. "Golly, golly, golly!" he murmured.

A man threw a pass from behind the line of scrimmage, yet scored the touch-down himself!

They were all impressed, greatly impressed. There wasn't one of them who had not become converted to Hobey Hatch's campaign for a more wide-open game, a greater variety of plays. For, following on the heels of their regular off-tackle smash, what could have been done about this play? Mike Carter, Curly Frambeau and Tut Bobo had been caught napping by a surprising change of tactics. For Mike, Curly and Tut there were no reprimands; it could have happened to anybody.

Had Hobey come back to them without a word and waited for them to volunteer surrender, all might have been well with the Orioles at the very start.

But HobeY didn't wait, of course. He came trotting back and carelessly tossed the ball to Red Rufus.

"See what I mean?" he gloated.

"Yeah, I see," muttered Rufe Redmond unhappily.

The Orioles glowered.

Ruth Redmond heard all about the crying need for wide-open plays and better quarterbacking that night. HobeY Hatch called her for a date and she spoke of another engagement. Then Calvin Evans took over.

"Get Hatch and go out to the College Inn," the publicity agent directed. "A couple of newspaper photographers will meet you there."

Ruth demurred but Evans was insistent. "For crying out loud! I'm getting you advertising money can't buy and you won't co-operate with me. Listen, girlie, this HobeY Hatch romance of yours is all over the country and . . ."

"But I'm not having a romance with HobeY Hatch," the girl broke in.

"But you *are*, until the Orioles get out of the red," Evans shot back. "When football season is over you can pick your own boy friends, but until then HobeY Hatch is your dream man, your knight errant, your Gary Cooper, your . . ."

"Nightmare!" snapped Ruth. But she went.

#### IV

**T**HE Orioles opened their season against the Spartans. Thanks to Cal Evans' ballyhoo and the interest over how HobeY Hatch could adjust himself to professional football there was a sizeable crowd in Farrington Field. The biggest, in fact, for any Oriole opening game.

Rufus was so affected by the sight of fans in the stands that he made 'em a speech before they went out. "This is a new year for us," big Red Rufus said awkwardly. "We have been the doormats of the league. We never had crowds before. You know good and well we have the ball club to beat somebody. Let's start today."

They felt good over his speech. All of them worshipped Big Red and his lovely daughter. Red Burke told 'em as they

waited for the Spartans to line up for the kickoff:

"Let's win this for Red. He's making money today. Give him another crowd or two like this and he won't have the bank hounding the hell out of him."

HobeY wasn't starting. The Orioles marked up a first down with Sully James picking up six and eight yards, then Sully shot a pass to Mike Carter for seven and Red Burke tore into guard for four. That put 'em up to their own forty-five.

In spite of HobeY Hatch's opinions, Red Burke was a quarterback. A twenty-five yard march behind them, almost up to midfield, all of their plays working—what was more unexpected than a quick kick! that was what Red called. Sully kicked it from three yards back of the line of scrimmage and the punt rolled out on the four-yard line.

Red Rufus beamed approvingly. This was *his* kind of football. Play it close to your chest and wait for breaks. The Spartans would kick out now and . . .

But they didn't kick. There was a man back in deep formation all right, a man standing in his own end zone. But it was not a punt. The man went through the motion, but there was no pigskin spiraling through the air; and suddenly there was a runner bobbing out in the open field, with Orioles frantically trying to reach him. The old Statue-of-Liberty play, the oldest fake in the books! The crowd liked that daring; they cheered the Spartan back on. Sully James dropped him on the Spartan forty.

HobeY Hatch was sitting by Red. "What in the hell did Burke punt for?" asked Hatch.

Rufus growled under his breath. Who would have looked for a Statue-of-Liberty from behind their own goal line in the first two minutes of play!

The Spartans always went wide-open. The Bears would beat 'em out in the western division but the Spartans would score touchdowns and pull in crowds. Jim Boothby, the Spartan tailback, took advantage of the Orioles with a quick touchdown shot. They had been caught napping by that fake run and Boothby pulled a masterpiece out of his bag. This looked like the old Statue

again and Mike Carter shot forward to smash it beyond the scrimmage, but Boothby didn't hand the ball to the man cutting behind him; Boothby faked the exchange, pivoted away from Curly Frambeau, fought for precious seconds with stiff-arm and nimble feet; then whipped a long pass to the Spartan end, Jake Boswell. Boswell led the league in scoring year after year because of his pass-catching. This one was in the groove—Boothby usually threw 'em there—and Boswell gathered it in out in the gloaming and kept traveling. Then the wingman kicked the extra point and the Orioles were behind 7—0.

Hatch looked at Redmond. "About time for me, isn't it?"

Big Rufe nodded gloomily. He didn't like football like this. All fake, all razzle-dazzle. Nothing a defense could do against it, for if it was well-timed and executed, there was no stopping it.

Hobey trotted out and the capacity crowd gave him a big hand. He went to the goal line and swung over to Red Burke.

"Hey, let's stop this kicking," he complained. "The only way to beat these lugs is to out-score them."

Red Burke's answer wasn't pleasant. The veteran quarterback was plenty disgruntled without Hatch rubbing it in.

The Spartans purposely kicked away from Hatch. The ball floated toward Burke and the redhead made ready to take it in. Just as the pigskin was about to settle in his hands, somebody ran into him; the ball hit his shoulder and bounded away; there was a scream of "ball" and just about eighteen players started diving for it. Trying to corral a bounding football is not child's play; it can take the most surprising bounces. This one veered away from two Orioles as if deliberately eluding them, and, with a sudden twist, plunged right into the waiting arms of a Spartan wingman who was down fast. Football and Spartan went to the turf on the Oriole ten-yard line.

Red Burke picked himself up slowly. The veteran reeled as he climbed to his feet. "What hit me?" he gasped.

Red was a veteran of four years professional play and could take his share of

punishment, but being hit off-guard was something else again. He looked around, blinking off his dizziness, and saw Hobey Hatch just climbing up. He looked at Hatch in disgust and walked back to his position on the defense.

Hatch caught up with him. "Why didn't you get out of my way?" demanded the Georgian.

Red gasped. Why didn't *he* get out of the way?

"Listen, glamor pants," the veteran signal called barked, "that kick was right in my hands."

"So what," snapped back Hobey. "I can run 'em back; I don't do all my running in one place like you do."

Red drew back as if to take a poke at the All-American, then shrugged his shoulders and went over to his left half's job. Hobey Hatch, still growling, stood at safety, his feet almost touching the end zone.

**B**OOOTHBY was quick to capitalize on confusion again. He faded back, ball clutched under his arm, feinting and twisting, waiting for a receiver. Burke and Bobo, the defensive halfbacks, raced to cover their men (Red Rufus used a man-for-man defense against passes). Hobey scorned to use such methods; he waited for Boothby to throw the ball. He was sure he could race up to knock down the pass as soon as Boothby had thrown the ball.

But he didn't take one thing into consideration . . . that Boothby held the league record for passes completed in a season. The squatty little Spartan found his receiver, cocked his arm and let fly. Hobey had taken only three steps to cover the play when the pigskin landed squarely in Jake Boswell's arms . . . and clung. The ball always seemed to cling to Boswell's hands, actually showed an affection for the Spartan wingman.

Boswell's sure toe converted and they were behind 14—0.

The substitute running out from the Oriole bench was Sully James, in for Hobey Hatch!

The Georgian came up to Red Rufus with resentment written on his handsome face. "You didn't give me a chance to get started," he fumed.

"You did enough," Rufe barked. "Sit down and cool off."

Hatch disgustedly flung himself to the grass and watched Red Burke launch the Orioles on a comeback. It began with a sixty-one yard punt by Mel Flanagan—the tall boy could kick with any of them. Leading by two touchdowns, the Spartans stayed out of the air and nobody brushed this Oriole line aside; Boothby had to kick for the Spartans and Sully took the punt on a dead run. A faster man would have broken by the Spartan wingmen into the clear, but Sully got only fifteen yards, putting them into Spartan territory.

Sully shot a pass over center to Mike Carter and the lanky end fell forward for a nine-yard pickup. With second and one coming up, Red displayed some of his quarterback genius; the Oriole backfield went into a spin out of a close formation and instead of a plunge at center for the first down, there was Sully scampering around left wing after a doublehandoff. The Spartans were fooled by the maneuver and James scatted down to the twenty before he was nailed by the safety.

It was good football and Rufe beamed. They looked on their way to a touchdown with safe, sound tactics. Red Burke plunged over guard for three and then lateraled backward to Tut Bobo for two more. Third and five was no time for a forward pass and Burke knew it; he called for an off-tackle smash and went forward with it to the twelve. That made fourth and two. Red's hesitancy was evident from the sidelines as he stood up in the huddle and surveyed the Spartan formation. Try for a touchdown or a field goal! Red tried for the field goal. Mel Flanagan raced back in for Tut Bobo and did the kicking, and the referee's arms waved that the score was 14—3.

"At that rate," Hobeey Hatch said to Red Rufus, "we can't beat 'em. It will take five field goals to beat 'em."

"Burke has been calling 'em a long time," Rufus said coldly. "He knows what he is doing."

Hobeey waved his hands as if to emphasize the futility of arguing with such an ignorant man and settled back to the grass.

The Spartans made a first down, then challenged the Orioles to another kicking duel. Mel Flanagan jumped in and out like a monkey on an organ grinder's chain, and his kicking pushed the visitors back to their eighteen at the end of the first quarter. As the whistle sounded Rufe stood up and called out a full lineup of substitutes. Hobeey Hatch returned to the tailback spot.

THE Spartans had the wind now and kicked back immediately, but Boothby aimed the punt for the sidelines and Hobeey couldn't touch it. From their own thirty, the Oriole reserves went into action. Hobeey picked up five at tackle, Ripper Murray added two and two and they had fourth and one on the thirty-nine. Mel Flanagan ran out for the fourth-down kick.

But they didn't kick. Trigger Scott had been entrusted with the signal-calling assignment and Trigger listened to his old roommate's argument. They came out with Flanagan in the tailback position, but instead of a punt, Mel handed the ball off to Hatch and the Georgia Ghost started on a wide sweep of the Spartan right end. Suddenly he veered his tactics and faded back, the ball grasped in his right arm, his eyes searching the field ahead of him for an eligible receiver.

The Spartans should have been trapped by such tactics, but weren't; their secondary was all over the Oriole eligibles immediately and the left side of the Spartan line bore down upon Mr. Hatch with intended mayhem expressed on their countenances.

Mr. Hatch saw them coming, however, and had different ideas entirely. He tucked the ball under his arm and streaked back to the center of the field, leaving two of the would-be tacklers dangling in thin air. Clear across the length of the field he danced and bobbed, twice narrowly evading being trapped behind the line of scrimmage. He was hemmed in at the sidelines and realized it; he reversed his direction again.

Now the entire Spartan forward wall and one of the halfbacks was in hot pursuit. They formed a circle around him on the Oriole twenty and Rufe Redmond

closed his eyes to the inevitable crashing tackle, and the loss of the ball deep in their own territory.

Redmond's eyes were still shut when he heard a roar above him and looked up to see what had happened. At first he couldn't understand the situation. There was Hobeys Hatch walking down the field without the ball in his hands and the Spartans who had been out to murder him a minute ago were striding along with him. The play seemed to be over, but where was the ball?

Then Rufe saw the ball. Trigger Scott was holding it in the end zone, standing there with a grin spreading from ear to ear waiting for the referee to get down there. Rufe looked quickly at the scoreboard. Yes, the figures had changed; the score was now 14—9 in favor of the Spartans.

Rufe shook his head. "Golly, golly, golly!" he murmured.

Red Burke was sitting by him, and the redhead was also gasping for air. "I have seen lots of football," Burke avowed softly, "but never anything like that."

"What did he do?" asked Rufus weakly. "I didn't see it."

"He threw the ball to Scott," Burke gulped. "Right when they were on top of him he jumped up and slammed it down to Scott. About thirty yards. Nobody was thinking about Scott."

"How come Scott down there?" demanded Rufe. "He's a blocking back."

"Search me," shrugged Burke. "I don't believe in such football myself. It can't be done."

**F**LANAGAN converted and it was 14—10. Ordinarily Red Rufus rested his first team only for a few moments at the end of the first period, but this time he kept them benched until three minutes before the gun. That gave the Georgia Ghost almost full ten minutes of single-handed action, and he loved it. He didn't score, but twice filtered into Spartan territory with long runs and his long passes kept everyone in the stadium tearing their hair and screaming in shrill voices. When Red Burke and the regulars trotted out, and Hobeys turned to the sidelines, there was such an ovation as Farrington Field had never heard before.

Rufus listened to it and sighed. There was no checking this kind of sensationalism, this razzle-dazzle! Hobeys Hatch had won more cheers from the crowd in less than one period than had the Orioles during an entire season. As wild as it was, and as dangerous, they were stuck with it.

Hatch replaced Sully in the starting backfield at the half and Red Burke was instructed to get the Georgian plenty of chances to score. Burke nodded glumly. It broke his heart but on the first play after the Spartans had kicked over their goal line, he called a pass play. Hatch shot it to Mike Carter on the thirty and the tall wingman lumbered up to the forty. There wasn't an eligible receiver on the Oriole squad who was an all-the-way running threat when the ball reached him; Red Rufus had picked his ends for their defensive ability, not their ball-carrying genius.

The Spartans didn't mind a razzle-dazzle duel. Even with a 14—10 lead, they were willing to gamble. Jim Boothby matched his right arm against Hobeys Hatch's and the two of them had it out with the other twenty players running frantically over the field in pursuit of a football that was never still. Passing honors looked even, either one of 'em could hit a dime at thirty yards. Hobeys had an edge because of his running ability; when trapped behind the line without a receiver open, he could go forward for a gain. Boothby had an edge in receivers; there was nothing on the Oriole roster to compare with Jack Boswell.

It was Boswell who went over for the touchdown that gave the Spartans a 21—10 lead.

Immediately Hobeys forged back into the picture. The kickoff came to him on the five; he raced up to the twenty, then lateraled the ball across the field to Bobo. It wasn't the kind of a lateral the Orioles were used to, not one of these tosses backward four or five yards. Hatch coiled the ball under his arm and *slung* it, a thirty-yard throw that spiraled perfectly. The Spartans had swung over to one side of the field to gang Hatch—for when had a single one of their number trapped him in an open field—and Bobo raced to the visitors' forty before he was hemmed in and forced out of bounds.

Though disgusted with such a game, Red Burke was willing to make the most of it. He called a play in the huddle that caused them to blink.

Hobey was the tailback, of course. Ends and halfbacks were wide, and the Spartan defense spread out to cover them. The tackles were a bit wide also; with the ends responsible for the flat in the pass defense setup, the tackles had to work overtime to watch out for the amazing Georgia Ghost's speed.

Hobey took the pass from center, faked an end run; then cut back into the center of the line. There yeoman service had been done for him; the Spartan guards were tied up in knots and the lone line-backer left to cover "bootlegs" was lying flat on his back snarling up at Trigger Scott. It wasn't a line plunge, for Hatch never lowered his head; the Georgian plummeted through the hole as if fired out of a cannon and was in an open field before you could say Jack Robinson.

Boothby swung over from safety to head him off; the Georgian bore down on the Spartan with long legs churning—then, with a suddenness that left Boothby dangling on an invisible string in empty air, reversed his direction and swept on untouched. Flanagan converted and it was 21—17, with the tiers of seats expressing an enthusiasm for their club that surpassed anything Red Rufus had ever heard.

Twenty-one to seventeen and still a full quarter of action left! This was football for anybody's money!

**T**HE Spartans were afraid not to go wide-open. One touchdown was nothing against this slim bolt of lightning; a single play from anywhere on the field could wipe that out. And the Spartan ball club was the passing combination—Boothby to Boswell. Boothby wiped his perspiring hands and started firing. Later they were to read in the papers that Boswell set a new record for passes caught in a single game, and yardage made as a result. Now they were concerned only with Boothby and his passes. On the other side Hobey Hatch tried touchdown shot after touchdown shot. The Spartans went into a 6-2-2-1, preferring to take their chances

on a long pass rather than let the Georgia Ghost charge through another gap in their defense.

Once Mike Carter caught a long one out by himself but was run down from behind on the fourteen and there the threat ended. Red Burke wanted to try for a field goal and a tie score on fourth down but Hatch overruled him. So it was 21—17 with the final minutes ticking away and the Orioles growing desperate.

Then, on fourth and two, deep in their own territory, the blowup came. Burke wanted to kick but found Hatch objecting again. At Georgia the Ghost had always overruled the quarterback and he couldn't find it in his cocky spirit to let a field general have the complete say. Burke was indomitable this time and they lined up in a punt formation, Flanagan deep. The clock showed a minute left to play.

The center aimed the ball for Flanagan but it never got there; Hobey Hatch suddenly cut across in front of the punter and caught the pigskin. He headed out around right end alone. The Spartan left end charging in to block the kick, almost had him but he twisted clear, picked up speed again. The halfback charged up to nail him but Hobey pivoted away, a complete pivot at top speed, and stumbled through the arms of the left tackle, who had followed the halfback. Then the line-backer got a crack at him and also failed.

This was running for anybody's money. Four tacklers struck at him while he was covering ten yards and all of 'em hit the turf while he miraculously kept going.

The safety, charging up while the ball carrier was still off balance, might have got him except for one thing—Trigger Scott's quickness. Hobey's roommate cleared the way for him with a crashing block and Hobey picked up full speed in a stride. He was yards ahead of his only pursuit when he reached the goal line.

The stands were in an uproar until . . .

Back on the Oriole twenty-yard line an official stood waiting. The referee trotted back with the ball, conferred with the umpire, then called over Acting Captain Boswell. Red Burke went up to hear what the penalty was about.

"Five yards against the Orioles for

backfield in motion," the referee said. "You'll take the penalty, of course, Captain Boswell?"

"Of course," Captain Boswell said enthusiastically.

It was not in an Irishman's nature to accept such a costly penalty without an argument.

"Who was in motion?" demanded Burke.

"Hatch, of course," the umpire explained.

Red nodded and gloomily watched the referee step off the five yards that put the ball on the fifteen. It was fourth and seven down and only forty seconds of play left.

Burke went into the huddle and faced Hatch. "All right, master mind, what do we call now?" he demanded sarcastically.

Hobey flushed. "How was I to know I would be penalized?" he countered.

"The play called for Bobo to be in motion," Red explained wearily. "When you sprinted over, that made two men moving at the snap. That ain't allowed under the rules."

"Most guys who went to college know that," Mike Carter growled.

They passed. Hobey faded back, far back, and waited . . . waited . . . waited. No receiver was open and the Spartans bore down on him. He yielded ground, still watching for Carter or Bobo to break into the clear. They didn't. Perhaps they didn't half-try. Finally Hobey retreated to the end zone, and there the Spartans downed him.

All of the forty seconds had been consumed with this last desperate maneuver and the game was over. The Orioles had lost 23-17!

## V

CHARLEY BURKE, being both red-headed and Irish, was not one to be awed by either Hobey Hatch's reputation or the avalanche of praise which the newspaper boys bestowed upon the Georgia Ghost after that opening game. The following Monday he challenged Red Rufus in the dressing room. Hobey Hatch was not there yet but Burke did not know this;

he was so fighting mad he couldn't distinguish objects or faces around him.

"If this Hatch gets by with that kind of stuff," threatened Red after voicing all of his complaints in rapid-fire order, "you can take my nickel out. I don't mind a little showmanship, but this is a football team, not a vaudeville show. Or, at least, it *was*!"

Red Rufus sighed. "I expected that," he said tonelessly.

Then he looked up. They were around him waiting for his answer, all of 'em but Hobey. The Georgian was late to practice as usual.

"Well?" grated Burke.

"You guys oughta know the situation," big Rufe said slowly. "I'm broke and in debt. I salted away about a hundred grand out of my playing days, and all of you know damned good and well I earned every cent of it. Then I bought the Orioles and started dishing it out. You guys don't owe me a dime and you're worth every cent I paid you—probably more—but I've been carrying this team out of my savings for the past two seasons. The last of my dough went for a bonus to sign Hatch. I borrowed chips from the bank to get going, and I just got this season to pay off."

He hesitated, then went on, his big hands waving helplessly: "Maybe I ain't got the right to ask you guys to put up with Hatch," he said sadly. "Me, I get so gol-danged mad at him I'd like to punch his head off. But the fool kid has color and speed, and the folks up in the stands love him. We lost our first game all right, but we have an advance sale for next Sunday better than anything we ever had. Me, I can put up with Hatch until I pay off the bank and get some dough for another tail-back; then I'm gonna trade him so fast it'll make his head swim."

He didn't say any more; he looked around to see what they thought.

Red Burke squirmed. "That ain't right, Rufe," he complained. "We'd walk through fire for you and you know it. You ought not to put it up to us like that."

"I can't do anything else," Red Rufus said mildly. "I wouldn't blame you boys for lying down on Hatch; and if you do, I'll just take the rap."

"Aw, you won't take any rap," fumed

Burke. "We'll block for this damn prima donna and you know it. But take it from me, Rufe, that conceited little snob is going to get the living hell beat out of him as soon as you pay off the bank."

"Let me know when it's gonna happen," asked Rufe. "I want a ringside seat."

Just then Hobey Hatch came in the dressing room and their talk subsided into angry mutters. As Burke had said, they had to do it—for Red Rufus and for Ruth. But they wouldn't like a minute of it.

**R**UFE had drawn up a new set of plays for them in anticipation of their consent to become stooges for Hobey Hatch. All weekend he had pored over his charts, drawing, re-drawing. The scoffers who had charged Red Rufus with being unable to coach offensive football were wrong, dead wrong; the big redhead who couldn't figure up his income tax or make out his team's payroll knew the intricacies of every football system. He knew what made the T work, what was wrong with the Notre Dame system, what kept the Pittsburgh single-wing from functioning when an opposing line went into a 5-3-2-1 with line-backers and tackles alternating at charging through.

And he knew what system to use for Hobey Hatch. Not the Georgia formations; he drew them, studied them for hours, then discarded all of them except a double reverse which Georgia had used against California in the Rose Bowl. If it was going to be razzle-dazzle, Red Rufus knew where to turn for formations and assignments—the Southwest. He memorized the details of T. C. U.'s triple-wing system, got further details by telegraph, and had his boys working on it in Monday's session.

It is football's screwiest system. One tailback, three wingbacks, an unbalanced line. Linemen float rather than get down in the open field. Tackle and guard fade back to form a cup for the passer. No fading for the passer in the triple-wing; he stands right behind the big crouching tackle and the husky guard and fires, most of 'em short ones, just enough long ones to keep the halfbacks playing deep and wide. You could get to the passer by charg-

ing wide but, with Hobey Hatch in there, your heart would be broken by swift thrusts into the middle. There wasn't much chance for variety, but the only way to break it up, as Rufe figured it out, was to manhandle huskies like Curly Frambeau and "Little Hog" Howard. Every play started out to be a forward pass, but if rushed too hard Hatch could turn it into a run. And, if able to catch the opposition asleep and get by the line of scrimmage, there would be three backs and two ends down in the secondary to help him out.

The boys didn't like the formation, of course. They didn't like something else—Trigger Scott taking over a regular's job. They felt Jim Collins was the best front-back in the league. Rufe didn't protest against that opinion, but he did feel that Scott, with three years of subordinating his football to Hobey Hatch's whims, would be a better blocker for the Georgian than Collins, who ran 'em straight ahead and low.

They used the triple-wing against the Giants, the same Giants who had beaten them twice the year before, and went to town with it. On the first play Hatch shot through the confusion in the center of the line for thirty yards; then, as the Giant defense gathered itself in a 6-2-2-1, fired a touchdown pass to Mike Carter. It was the first touchdown the tall Texan had ever made in professional football. Flanagan converted and they were ahead 7—0.

The Giants depended on straightaway running and the Orioles could handle that. They threw back Patterson and Conway and took the ball on downs on their own forty. The punt had been purposely short and out-of-bounds, as Hatch's reputation was spreading. Red Burke, a curl of distaste on his thick lips, went into the triple-wing again; and this time Hatch reeled off two long sprints before the Giant secondary gave him a chance to use his right arm again. Trigger Scott caught this one, the dependable Flanagan chalked up the extra point, and there was a 14—0 lead before the Giants could figure out what kind of a formation cagy Red Rufus was throwing against them. The Giants got panicky and took to the air in a wild effort to make up the deficit. Theirs was no puzzling over-

head pattern and Hobeÿ Hatch gathered in a long wild throw and twisted back sixty-one yards to put the Orioles ahead 21—0 with only a few minutes of the second quarter gone.

With that safe a lead, Red Rufus pulled his star and the Orioles reverted to their old safety first measures. Mel Flanagan kicked the Giants away from their goal line for two quarters and a two-touchdown surge by the Giants in the final quarter, with Oriole reserves throughout the lineup, did no one any harm. The Orioles wrapped up that one 21—13.

Hobeÿ Hatch had plenty of tricks up his sleeve, and they were all new to professional football. Give a fast smart triple-threat back ten huskies who worry about nothing else but how to keep would-be tacklers off him and you have a football show, even against eleven big guys who are trying to down him. The Orioles knew their fundamentals, blocking and tackling, and Hatch knew his faking and passing. They breezed through the Spartans 27—14, the Cubs 24—0, the Lions 20—12 and found themselves tied for first place with the all-powerful Bears.

Of course the wise money still rode with the Bears and their T formation, but at least the Orioles were making a fight of it and fans were trooping through the turnstiles. Red Rufus, figuring his financial condition as feverishly as his triple-wing formation, could look ahead and see black ink staring him in the face at the end of the season if this continued. And black was Rufe's favorite color.

**D**AUGHTER RUTH, however, was about ready to decide in favor of the old debt-stricken days. Hobeÿ Hatch's attentions grew more and more demanding.

"I don't know whether I can put up with him another night or not," Ruth sighed as she returned from a telephone conversation with the Georgian and joined her father at the dinner table.

"What does he want now?"

"Dancing tonight at the College Inn," she grimaced. "Flowers, I guess. Champagne cocktails. And three hours of hearing how great Georgians are in general and one in particular."

"We gotta keep him happy, honey," Rufe said sorrowfully. "He's passing us right out of the red. One more month of this and we'll have the cash to buy a tail-back."

"Then I can slap Mr. Hatch's sassy face?" demanded Ruth.

"I'll do it for you," Rufe growled.

"Nobody," he decided, "can beat me out of that pleasure. I've worked hard for it."

Then, with another sigh, she got up from the dinner table and started dressing. Mister Great from Georgia liked for his dates to be dressed when he got there.

He had added several pounds during his pro football—his was that type of raw-boned lean body to pick up weight during hard training. He was twenty minutes late and Ruth was tapping her foot against the carpet when he showed up. But her resentment for his tardiness faded when he presented her with a dozen red rosebuds. And when, at the College Inn, he ordered champagne cocktails. One thing in his favor, he didn't mind spending money on a girl.

And Hobeÿ's line was sometimes amusing. He delivered poetical speeches in a half-serious, half-jesting manner.

"Did I ever tell you," he asked, "that the bloom in your cheeks is like the dawn peeping over the Catskills?"

"No," she laughed, "you never did. That's a new one."

"Sure is," he agreed amiably. "Just read it this afternoon."

They reached the center of the floor, the music stopped with a crash and the spotlight focused on them squarely.

"Ladies and gentlemen," the master of ceremonies announced impressively, "the former Georgia All-American football star, now the backfield mainstay of the Orioles, *Hobeÿ Hatch!*"

There was a round of applause, bored or enthusiastic, all according to the individual interest in things athletic. Ruth bit her lip. It would be nice to go *somewhere* and not find the management already advised in advance that Hobeÿ Hatch and his lady-love, the girl who lured him into professional football, were guests for the evening. Perhaps it was all Calvin Evans' idea but Hobeÿ was certainly co-operative. . . . *too* darned co-operative. As soon as

they got back to their table there would be a small rush for autographs and Hobeys would sign anything—programs, personal cards, napkins—with a graciousness that made her wonder if this didn't mean more to him than money or the fun of playing. He drank up applause as greedily as a kitten lapped milk.

But, after the first rush of admirers, even in dwindling numbers as he appeared in so many places that the sight of Hobeys Hatch wasn't a novelty any longer, she noticed a detached air about him, a slight frown to his forehead.

"What's worrying the glamor boy?" she chided.

Actually she didn't dislike Hobeys, that was just an act she put on for her father's benefit. His egotism was irksome at times but he had entertaining qualities—his good humor, his easy-going outlook on life, his childlike sparkle when in public and he knew people were looking at them.

"Matrimony," he said tersely.

It didn't occur to Ruth that he was on the point of proposing to her, else she would have parried the subject; she thought there was a girl back in Georgia, a college sweetheart.

"A great man like you should handle that play all right," she smiled. "Just grab the ball and start out."

"That," Hobeys Hatch chuckled, "is good advice."

Then, very deliberately, he reached out and took her hand. "Ruth, let's get married," he proposed.

"Me!" the astonished girl gasped.

"Who else?" he shrugged.

"I don't know," she said weakly, "but I didn't think you meant . . . me."

"There hasn't been anybody else but you since I walked out of the Phi Kappa Theta house and saw you standing on the porch," he said with an earnestness strange to him.

SHE studied him in amazement. He had talked of falling for her in his light jocular way, had tried to kiss her at every opportunity, had swamped her with candy and flowers; but it had never occurred to her that he was serious. She had just thought of herself as a blonde foil for his public appearances, a necessary adornment

to an All-Americans' arm. But he really meant it.

"I'm sorry, Hobeys," she said slowly, and uncomfortably. "I didn't have any idea you felt like that. For I don't."

"You don't!"

"No," was the firm answer.

Hobeys Hatch tapped on the table cloth with his fingers. "We've been together a lot," he murmured. "It seemed to me you wouldn't waste time on me if you weren't interested."

She couldn't tell him the reason, that she had helped the publicity campaign along, that she had used her company to keep him throwing passes and gaining yards for the Orioles. It would sound crude and cruel to put it into words.

"You didn't say you were serious, Hobeys," she pointed out in defense of herself. "I just didn't take you seriously."

He nodded. "I guess I'm not the type to take seriously," he said sorrowfully.

He waited a minute, then studied her face again.

"No hope, Ruth?"

"Not right now," she answered. That was the worst she could bear to tell him.

"Well," he said musingly after another silence, "you can't have everything, can you?"

"No, Hobeys."

"The reason I tried to rush you," he explained, "is . . . Well, my folks didn't want me to play pro football, Ruthie. They've been giving me hell by telephone calls and letters ever since I came up here. The old gentleman wants me to quit lugging the pigskin and come back and be vice-president or something. Gets nasty about it, too. Wants to be answered yes or no. I told him the last time he called to give me a week more to make up my mind. The week is up tonight."

Ruth's heart sank. Three days hence they played the Chicago Bears for the leadership of the league. Without Hobeys Hatch, without time to acquire another tailback . . . the Orioles would be doomed!

"Well," she said faintly, "that's one way to play."

"What do you mean?"

"Listen, when you take the ball and start around end and get thrown for a loss,

do you just walk off the field right there and give up football?"

Hobey smiled. "No, but if you keep getting thrown for a loss you either punt or shift to a passing game. Me, I'm punting on fourth down."

"It isn't fourth down," she insisted, a wild notion leaping into her brain.

"No?"

"No," she said firmly. "It's third down and goal to go, and time for the great Hatch to cut loose. I'm just like my father, football is my life and blood. You win this league championship for us and I'll change my answer."

"You wouldn't do that," he grinned. "They only do that in *Saturday Evening Post* stories."

"What makes you think I wouldn't?" she demanded.

He looked at her again. "I guess you would," he murmured. He thought a minute, then grinned and nodded.

"It isn't exactly the way I thought I'd win a wife," he sallied, "but it suits me. And, after all, why not? Football is life and blood for both of us isn't it?"

"Nothing else matters," she said faintly, thinking of Rufe Redmond.

"Then it's a deal," he agreed, holding out his hand.

She shook it, though conscious at the time that it was certainly a matter-of-fact way to seal such a romantic bargain.

## VI

THEY were grim grizzled veterans but they were as jittery as schoolkids as they pulled on their uniforms in the locker room. Even the play-for-play boys get worked up over the prospects of a championship, and, though the season was only half over, the Chicago Bears-Orioles game had the making of a pennant struggle.

The Bears had an edge on 'em in psychology . . . even if the Redskins had licked Chicago in the playoff they were still the Bears, the team they had never beaten.

"We gotta get the breaks," sighed Charley Burke. "Did any of you guys go to prayer meeting last night?"

Hobey Hatch stepped forward. "What about these Bears?" he demanded. "Are

they supermen or something? Don't they pull on their uniforms just like we do?"

Charley looked at the rookie sorrowfully. "Son, you're going to learn some football today," he said gloomily.

"And I may teach a little," Hatch shrugged.

"Something tells me this game is gonna do you good," Burke sneered. "If there is anybody who needs a good kicking-around, it's you."

"What makes you think the Bears can kick me around?"

"What makes you think they can't?" shot back Burke in lieu of a better answer.

"Nobody ever has," Hatch snapped. He wasn't boastful, just being truthful.

"Then you got a lot to learn," was the dispirited answer.

And Hobey Hatch *did* have a lot to learn. He had played against the T in college—after Stanford's march to the Rose Bowl a hundred or more college teams took it up—but Auburn, Florida and Tulane, he soon learned, had employed only a weak imitation of the formation; this was the real thing. Hobey couldn't follow the ball from his safety spot at all. First Hester would bob up with it, then Cleek. Or there would be Gordon throwing a forward pass. The Bears received the kickoff and marched sixty-five yards just like wading through duckpins. The Orioles could tackle with the best of 'em but they couldn't figure out this formation; there was a Bear ball-carrier in their secondary before they even had an idea where the ball was.

But on their twelve they stiffened and held for downs and there were just three points against them in this sustained drive. The Bears' Hub Rutledge kicked the field goal.

The Bears kicked out of bounds to the Orioles—for the last four games not a punt or a kickoff had come within Hobey Hatch's reach. All of 'em out of bounds, afraid to kick to him. That gave 'em the ball on their thirty-five and they went into their triple-wing.

Now for the fireworks.

Hobey looked over the Bear forward wall a moment before motioning for the pass from center. It was a big line all right,

over 200 pounds per man, but HobeY had seen too many big lines in college and pro games to be concerned by size. A bee, he was fond of telling the press, could chase a cow all over a ten-acre lot. He couldn't see that the Bears looked any different than had California, or Georgia Tech, or the Spartans.

But he saw the difference immediately the ball was snapped. The Bears were fast and smart. The Oriole tackle, guard and center formed their cup-shaped protection for his pass but the left line-bucker for the Bears charged through and, before he could get off his throw, nailed him for a five-yard loss.

He mentioned it to Burke in the huddle. "They're using a charging linebacker," he explained.

"Yeah," nodded Burke. "They use everything."

"Call it again," snapped HobeY. "I'll cross him up."

But, even before he called for the snap, he saw the futility. It was second and fifteen and the Bears varied their defense with each down; now they were in a 5-3-2-1 and their linemen floated instead of charging. HobeY started for tackle, saw that no hole could open against a line which simply gave and then quickly recovered; danced for a moment uncertainly, then tried to cut wide. A big hand caught him from behind and slung him to the turf. He looked up to recognize Curly Thomas, an All-American fullback from Alabama. He had played against Thomas two years before.

"Remember me?" grinned Thomas.

"Seems so," HobeY admitted.

"Get used to me," said Thomas. "The boss says to stick with you today. Everywhere you go, I go."

HobeY shrugged his shoulders. That, he was tempted to say, would be covering more ground than Mr. Thomas had ever covered before.

But he underestimated the gentleman from Alabama.

**C**URLY THOMAS was fast on his feet and, with no other assignment than to trail HobeY Hatch, he devoted himself wholeheartedly to the task. When

HobeY shot off to his left on a fake play and Ripper Murray plowed into the line with the ball, there was Thomas coming out to bump against him, leaving his line-backing job to a teammate.

Even on the fourth-down punt, which Mel Flanagan sent twisting down to the Bear twenty-one, Thomas covered Hatch like a blanket.

Mr. Thomas was also lent valuable assistance by his teammates. Once HobeY twisted away from the ex-Alabama star back of the line of scrimmage, reversed his field and tried to go wide. What the Bears did then surprised him, surprised him and distressed him. Instead of coming forward to attempt their tackles in a regulation manner, they simply floated with him, letting him penetrate the secondary, making him commit himself first. HobeY tried his favorite trick on the Bear right halfback. He stopped suddenly hoping to throw the tackler off with his change of pace. But the Bear halfback stopped, too. They stood looking at each other while the crowd laughed and the referee blew his whistle to indicate the ball carrier's forward motion had ceased and the ball was dead.

"What's the matter, big shot?" growled Burke in the huddle. "These Bears pull on their uniforms just like we do."

HobeY shrugged his shoulders. "I'll try 'em again," he snapped.

He did, but this time Thomas charged through and dived at him. Not a tackle—HobeY could twist away from any tackler in the world who came at him from an angle. But a block was different; he was staggered momentarily, long enough to let the Bear wingman down him for a loss.

Then the Bears began to rough him a little. Nothing dirty, nothing malicious, just thorough. Thomas kept hitting him at every opportunity and there was usually a teammate on hand to help out the Alabama boy, who really didn't need it. The Bears evidently figured the safe thing to do was to bust Hatch on every play without worrying much about who had the ball. Run, pass or punt, Thomas took a swipe at the Georgian. It began to tell.

It also began to get on his nerves. He accused the Orioles in the huddle of not

giving him any blocking. The substance of his charge was correct, he wasn't getting any blocking; but the sentiment was all wrong, the Orioles were trying. The Bears let everything else go to concentrate on Hatch. They let Mel Flanagan slide through guard for thirty-four yards and Red Burke slip around the weak side on a bootleg for seventeen.

The trouble was that Rufe Redmond had put all of his eggs in one basket, that out of the triple-wing there could be nothing but Hatch, Hatch, Hatch, and the Bears outnumbered Hobeys Hatch eleven to one.

Meanwhile the champions kept scoring. There was a long pass from Hawks to Tanner that Hobeys should have knocked down but, with his usual hell-for-leather defense play, he was far behind the pass receiver when Hawks, handling the ball from center on the T committed himself. That was 10—0.

Then, just before the half, the same Thomas churned right over big Frambeau for another touchdown. Wonder of wonders, Hub Rutledge missed the extra point and the margin was just 16—0 at intermission.

Hatch took up his harrangue again in the dressing room.

"Those guys are charging in on me without a hand being laid on them!" he complained bitterly to Rufe Redmond. "I can't beat 'em all by myself."

Rufe looked to Burke, his field captain, for an explanation. "They've outsmarted us, Red" Burke said unhappily. "If we could get a little co-operation from glamor pants, we might do something. But not like it is."

"What do you mean!" yelled Hatch. "You know damned good and well I'm playing my best."

"Yeah, but they're set for you," Red said wearily. "We gotta mix it up, Rufe. I got by 'em once and so did Flanagan, but Hatch ain't got a chance today. Mebbe you had better put Sully in there."

"Might be a good idea," agreed Rufe unhappily.

"Listen, Redmond," snapped Hatch. "You take me out of there and you can have my contract. I got a special reason for

wanting to win this game, a darned good reason. James can't play in the same league with me and you know it."

"Yeah, kid, but they're watching you and . . ."

"Just gimme some blocking," Hobeys said curtly. "Just get me by the line of scrimmage, that's all I ask."

Rufe waved his hands hopelessly.

**T**HE Bears, with a 16—0 lead, weren't showing much on the offense in the third quarter; they were saving their tricks for later on. This had been supposed to be their big game but so far it had turned out just like the rest; they did plenty of kicking and straight line plunging and concentrated on smothering Hobeys.

They did that with a vengeance. And, adding to the Georgian's helplessness, a drizzle began to fall midway in the third quarter. By the end of the period the field was slippery as glass.

Still Hobeys would not give up nor permit Red Burke to vary their style of play. They tried passes, end sweeps, cutbacks, line plunges. Several times Hobeys penetrated their territory with his passing but those were only flurries not sustained offensive drives. Mr. Great from Georgia was bottled up and firmly corked!

The rain finished it. Just as the period started Hobeys faded back to pass, saw an opportunity to run for it, tucked the ball under his arm and started out. He was able to elude the persistent Thomas, one of the few times he escaped his assigned escort, and got a break when the Bear tackle was neatly felled by Trigger Scott, who alone of the Orioles seemed able to carry out his blocking assignments. Trigger was used to cockeyed defenses; about all 'em in the books had been tried against Georgia.

Hobeys had an opening, his first chance of the day. The Bear wing was too wide, the Bear line-backer trapped. He faked for the sidelines to cinch the wingback, then cut sharply into the middle, where all was clear and inviting.

A cheer went up from the Oriole crowd as he cut loose. After three quarters, the Georgian was getting a chance!

Then a loud groan went up that swelled

into a wail of misery. Hobeys feet had slipped out from under him on the slippery turf and he had slid to the ground! He was up in a second untouched but a Bear tackler and the referee's whistle stopped him. The ball was downed where he had fallen.

Hobey stood holding the ball, looking at it as if he had never seen it before. For the first time in his football career the youngster was stopped. The slippery turf cinched it; a stop-and-go specialist didn't have a chance on footing like this.

The referee had to reach out and take the ball from him and Burke had to pull him back into the huddle. Hobey was stunned. He simply couldn't believe what he had to admit himself.

He looked at Burke and a tear popped out of his eyes.

"I'm going in," he choked. "I can't do any good out here. I'll send Sully out."

Burke nodded. The redhead understood. But the rest of the Orioles didn't. Nor the Bears, nor the crowd.

The rest of 'em just saw Hobey Hatch turn and walk off, seemingly unhurt. They saw him wave to the bench but go on straight to the dressing room. It was a new gesture to them, and they didn't understand it. They pumped at a logical conclusion.

"Too rough for you, Hatch?" sung out Thomas.

Jeers from the Bears supported the fullback's taunts. The stands began to murmur and finally a long, loud "boo" came from the sidelines. Hobey looked up and blinked. This was new for him. This was Hobey Hatch from Georgia and the stands worshipped him.

But that had been in victory; Hobey Hatch looked up and realized there was a difference between defeat and victory. What he didn't understand was that he had played right into their hands by walking off. They thought he couldn't take it, that he was just a fair-weather flower.

The booing swelled into an angry roar. Hobey lowered his head and walked on. He had meant just to go in, take a shower and try to shrug it off as one of those days, to work with Red Rufus on a more versatile attack, to start the very next day

pointing for their second game with the Bears.

But now it was different—after this. Hobey Hatch knew as he stepped off the playing field that he would leave his uniform in the locker room, and his pro football days with it.

## VII

RUFU broke the news to his daughter that night. "Your boy friend walked out on us," he said gloomily. "When he got bounced around a little, he couldn't take it."

Ruth Redmond didn't answer. She had repented of her wild insane bargain a thousand times, but still it hurt to have Hobey Hatch fail her so completely. Now that he had walked out, she realized that she had regarded him with some admiration, far more than she had believed possible. But that was gone, of course.

"Don't blame me," she finally said a note of irritation in her voice. "You were the one who insisted I go to Georgia to see him. If you'll remember I didn't approve of drafting him in the first place."

"Yeah, I remember," Rufe sighed.

He got out his account books, his scratch paper his pencils and fountain pen. Ruth regarded him unhappily.

"What are you going to do now?" she demanded.

"I gotta have a tailback don't I?" Red Rufus snapped. Then, in a more genial voice: "I can get Jim Bowden from the Eagles for thirty grand."

"You haven't got thirty grand, Rufe," his daughter said gently.

"No, I haven't," he growled. "But I can still borrow dough, can't I?"

"Rufe! Not when we were just seeing daylight for the first time in two years."

"I got to have a tailback" her father insisted doggedly.

She shrugged her shoulders and dropped the argument. There was no use trying to reason with Rufe Redmond when he took that tone.

Bright and early, even waiting for the bank to open, Red Rufus sought the loan of \$25,000 to spend for Jimmy Bowden, the Eagle triple-threat tailback. His banker

was anything but pleasant about it.

"Rufe you're in up to your neck now," frowned the vice-president. "We've given you plenty of rope and you haven't retired a bit of the principal in two years."

"I've kept up the interest, haven't I?" argued Red. "And this year crowds have been good. We've gotten a few grand ahead already and the big games are yet to come up. Think of what we can do if we get in the playoffs."

"Yes, *if*," parried the banker. "Do you think this Bowden is any better than Hobby Hatch?"

"As good—nearly," said Red weakly.

"Yet you couldn't beat the Bears *with* Hatch," was the triumphant retort. "No, Redmond, we can't do it. We have fifty thousand dollars invested in the Orioles already and with Hatch jumping his contract, I doubt if your club would bring much more than that on a quick market. They're old for this game. Next year, even if you squeezed by this season without defaulting on your payments, you would have to make some wholesale replacements. Burke and Frambeau and Mike Carter haven't long to go. Next year you would need more money and we would have to help you out to protect what we have invested. Sorry, Redmond, but the answer is no."

Rufe stood up, unhappiness written over his broad battered face. "That means I gotta see Prince de Lancey," he murmured.

The banker nodded. "Prince will steal you blind, but that's about your only chance. Prince can afford to gamble; he doesn't have to meet government inspection on his transactions."

So Red Rufus went to see de Lancey, a sportsman with rather an unsavory reputation. De Lancey had a wrestling arena, several bowling alleys, promoted prize fights (except when the state commission had him blacklisted) and was usually around when there were any profits in sight for athletic events. He had wanted the Oriole franchise for five years and had offered Redmond a small profit over the original investment for it.

Now, jingling a ring of keys, he wasn't so lenient.

"Why should I put up that much

dough?" he demanded. "You're behind the eight-ball, Red; you might stagger through another season but next year is an impossibility. You haven't the backing to swing the Orioles and the wise thing for you to do is sell out. Tell you what, I'll give you twenty grand for the club like it stands and hire you as coach and manager."

"I wouldn't work for you and you know it, de Lancey," Red said firmly. "And I don't think the directors would let you have a club in the league."

"The directors don't have to know everything," shrugged the promoter.

"Lend me twenty-five grand and I'll give you a second mortgage," proposed Red.

"What good is a second mortgage? I'd have to buy up the first from the bank and you owe them fifty thousand. That would make your club set me back seventy-five grand and it ain't worth it."

"It's worth it and you know it," Rufe insisted.

De Lancey hesitated. "Tell you what I'll do," he proposed. "I'll put up the twenty-five grand to buy Bowden—on one condition."

"What?"

"That you execute a mortgage to me for no longer than forty-five days," de Lancey said harshly.

Rufe figured swiftly; in the past few years he had become adept at figuring loans. "That would freeze me out unless we get in the playoff," he protested.

"Yes," de Lancey purred, "it would. You would have to beat the Chicago Bears to tie up the league then beat 'em again."

"Too risky," Red decided, standing up. "See you later, de Lancey."

"Sure" the promoter said genially. "Come in any time, Red."

**E**XACTLY one week later, Rufe Redmond returned. It was a Monday morning, the Monday after they had played the Spartans on Sunday with Sully James operating at the wingback. They had beaten the Spartans, by a margin of 7-6. The Orioles had trailed until the last minute when big Curly Frambeau had blocked a punt, Mike Carter had caught it wobbling in the air and, grabbed in his tracks, had

lateralled the ball wildly over his head. Red Burke snatched the pigskin and galloped fifty-five yards for the winning score. That kept them in second place only a game behind the Bears.

But Rufe knew he couldn't risk another Sunday afternoon without a triple-threat. The Orioles had been grand on defense but helpless when it came to manufacturing points. No use kidding himself; that touchdown had been a gift from Heaven.

And, with Hobe Hatch gone, the gate receipts had dropped off. The papers were riding Rufe for not replacing the Georgian. Rufe came back to see de Lancey.

"Okay, de Lancey, we'll sign the papers," he said wearily.

The promoter beamed from ear to ear; he already had visions of what he would do next season when he owned the Oriole franchise. "Fine, Rufe, fine. And be thinking over that job with me. You know football and I know business; the two of us would go to town."

"Yeah," Rufe said dryly. "But I ain't traveling with you. If I can't pay you off at the end of the season, I'll step out."

"Write your own ticket," de Lancey shrugged.

So Rufe bought Jim Bowden. He was a different sort of tailback from Hatch, not nearly as good in a broken field but better on the straightaway stuff. He was five feet eight and weighed one-ninety-five and could run the century in ten flat. He moved along like a rubber ball, head low and knees close to the ground. More of a line-plunger than a fancy Dan, but fast enough to keep the wings wide and a glutton for punishment. His passing wasn't as finished as Hobe's either, but he could throw the short ones like a bullet while running at top speed. Five years out of Duke, a grinning Irish boy who liked to mix it up, Bowden was just what the Orioles needed. The squad swore by him after a week and he picked up the triple-wing as if born to it.

The Orioles downed the Tigers 21-7, the Comets 17-10, the Pelicans 14-13. That kept 'em right behind the Bears, who mowed down everything in the league with machine-like precision.

The fans didn't flock through the turn-

stiles to see Jim Bowden go as they had Hobe Hatch, but a winning team brought increased attendance and Rufe could see that long-awaited black ink in his fountain pen if they could beat the Giants and then upset Chicago, throwing the Western half into a playoff, lick the Bears again to take Western honors, and go against the Washington Redskins for the league championship. Those two extra games would wipe out all indebtedness against the club and give him a fresh start. Next year as his banker had predicted, he would have to borrow more money to replace fading veterans like Burke and Carter, but, with a championship team, that would be a cinch.

In his day-dreaming Rufe forgot to take into account what every football veteran should realize immediately that a game isn't won until it's over. Just because the Giants had lost six straight games didn't hand a victory to the Orioles on a silver platter. Sometimes the sorriest teams in the league come up snarling. The Giants did.

**T**HEY pushed Rufe's team all over the field to take a 6-0 lead in the first quarter and held a 6-3 advantage at the half when all the Orioles could get out two sustained drives in the second period was a field goal by Mel Flanagan, even that a wow of a kick from the twenty-seven-yard stripe at a difficult angle.

The Giants were simply playing above their heads. They pushed aside Rufe's veteran line and smeared Jim Bowden all over the landscape and, when red-haired Charley Burke changed their offensive pattern and took the ball himself, there was nothing in front of him but a stone wall and he couldn't make a yard.

So in the third period Burke abandoned their triple-wing and fell back into their old "punt and pray" system. Mel Flanagan was never off kicking 'em, and he started shoving the Giants back with his powerful punts that he could put out of bounds on a dime. They had the Giants on kicking, ten yards on every exchange, sometimes more when Jim Bowden got his hands on a punt and could bring it back.

Those punts, and Bowden's returns, got 'em up to the twenty-nine as the period

ended. Bowden tried three passes and, when none of 'em were completed, Mel dropped back and sent one tumbling through the uprights for a tied score. Six-six.

That seemed to discourage the Giants. They did nothing with the ball and when Jim brought their punt back to mid-field, they seemed to wilt in the center of the line.

Cagy Charley Burke sensed it, and Bowden got to going. The stocky speed merchant wasn't an all-the-way threat but he could make yards with the best of 'em. Six, eight, four, twelve and they were down to the Giant twenty. The way they were going they looked like a cinch to push it over and Rufe relaxed on the bench for the first time that afternoon. A touchdown would sew up the ball game and throw them against the Bears with the chips down.

They went wide after four successful thrusts at the middle, and the tireless Bowden, running no higher than four feet off the ground, took it again. Trigger Scott cleared out the Giant end with a beautiful block and Bowden bore into the secondary like a cannon ball. A good broken-field man would have gone from there with nobody but the halfback to stop him and the whole width of the field to maneuver in, but Jim didn't like to dodge 'em, he wanted to bust into 'em. The halfback came up with a rush, knowing it was safe to charge, and the two of 'em crashed together on the ten. Red Rufus sighed and wished for a guy who didn't take a threatened tackle as a personal challenge but wasted only a second in regret; this was a first down on the ten and, with his blocking materializing, Bowden would go over from there.

Then Rufe left the bench in a wild leap. There was a figure stretched out on the turf, a blue-clad figure. Rufe went running out without the formality of signaling the officials. His worst fears were realized.

It was Jim Bowden! Stocky hard-hitting Jim was out cold!

Rufe picked him up as if the triple-threater was a mere infant and carried him to the sidelines. Their trainer worked feverishly and finally Jim came to with a groan. But it was more than just the

wind knocked out of him. There was an ankle already swollen to the size of a football.

The Orioles had called time, of course, and now Charley Burke talked with Mel Flanagan and Mike Carter in the huddle. They had four down to make ten yards but Bowden was out and Sully James was in, skinny little Sully who couldn't dent a sheet of tissue paper when he hit the line. They could run three plays and then, if they hadn't gotten anywhere, they could try a field goal. But, argued the cautious Burke, what if they lost the ball on a fumble? Time was running out only two minutes left.

Flanagan tried for the field goal on the first down. Rufe shut his eyes as he heard the thud of shoe against pigskin. A roar went up from the crowd and he opened them slowly, half-afraid to look at the scoreboard. But he got a glimpse of the numeral 9 and sighed. The flying boys said any landing a flyer could walk away from was a good landing. Then this was a good game.

It ended 9-6 and they were a game behind the Bears and would end their season in Chicago's big stadium the following Sunday. A victory would throw them into a tie and a playoff, and Rufe's bank account into the black.

But what chance did they have against the Bears without Jim Bowden!

Fate took another cruel swipe at Red Rufus that night. Mike Carter, the toughest end in the league, a sixty-minute player who shook off bruises and sprains and kept right on going, was driving home from the game that night and collided with a truck. He called Rufe from the hospital an hour later. Nothing serious, just a sprained shoulder. He would live and completely recover.

But not in six short days!

## VIII

**R**UFE wasn't an early riser, so the 'phone call at nine a. m. the next day seemed to him like the middle of the night.

"What is it?" he barked crossly. He was in no mood for conversation.

It was his banker. "Can you come down

to see me, Rufe? I have some news for you."

Rufe obeyed at his leisure. He couldn't conceive of the First National Bank having good news for him, not with that installment due in ten days.

But he was wrong. It was not only good news, it was unbelievable news.

"How would you like a tailback and an end?" smiled the banker.

"Don't talk like that," Rufe said weakly. "I'm in no mood for jokes."

The banker pursed his lips. "No joke," he said. "Jack Boswell will report to you this afternoon."

"Jack Boswell from the Spartans," gasped Rufe.

"Boswell," was the firm answer.

Rufe shook his shaggy head and sighed. If true, it was . . . but it couldn't be true! The Spartans wouldn't turn loose of Boswell for less than twenty grand.

"And," continued the banker, "there is a tailback reporting to you this afternoon."

"Who?"

"I'm not at liberty to announce that."

Rufe scratched his flaming thatch. "Who is paying for this?" he demanded. "It ain't de Lancey, not without me signing my life away."

"The bank is advancing you the money at usual interest," was the surprising answer.

"How come the change of heart?"

"You have better security now than you did two weeks ago," the banker told him. "We think you can beat the Bears, and thus clear up your indebtedness."

"How much does Boswell cost?"

"Twenty-two thousand."

"And the tailback?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing!" Rufe's eyes popped.

"Yes."

"I dunno," demurred Rufe. "I never heard of getting ball players for nothing."

The banker smiled again and pushed out a note for him to sign. "This is a loan for twenty-two thousand," he said smugly. "Care to sign it?"

Rufe hesitated. He still didn't believe it but, in his condition, what did one note more or less matter? He signed it.

But not until that afternoon was he con-

vinced that he was not being the victim of a practical joke. When he walked into his dressing room and saw Jack Boswell already half into a Oriole uniform, he began to believe it.

Then, a moment later, his new tailback came in . . . came in a little uncertainly, a scowl on his lean handsome face.

Red Burke saw him first.

"Hobey Hatch!" the quarterback gasped.

Rufe likewise gasped. This was the tailback who wouldn't cost him a dime!

**H**OBHEY walked over and looked down at Charley a challenging look on his face.

"You got any objections?" he demanded.

"Who, me?" answered Burke weakly.

"No," he added after a moment, "I guess not."

Hobey turned to face the startled squad. "Anybody else got anything to say?" he snapped.

"Yeah," shot back Curly Frambeau.

"We don't like quitters."

Hobey walked over to the big tackle and slapped his face. "You can finish this after practice," he growled.

He turned and surveyed the dressing room again. "I quit because you guys quit me," he said slowly. "I quit because it burned you up to have me come here just out of college and take a bunch of stablebums and make them into a championship contender. I quit because you are a pack of jealous saps who didn't have sense enough to see that I was making the dough for the club to pay your salaries."

He hesitated, took a breath, went on again:

"Maybe I should have stayed and kept carrying you. I didn't think so at the time. I was so fed up with you I wanted to get clear away from you. You and your talk of the Chicago Bears! They had you licked before you ever went on the field. Maybe we popped off at Georgia, Red Burke. Maybe we were cream puffs who liked publicity and make speeches to the press. But there was never a game came up that we weren't ready for, and we weren't licked until the final whistle was blown. We got to the Rose Bowl that way,

and we were out there playing football when the gun sounded."

He gave somebody a chance to talk but nobody wanted to. "You're tough guys, aren't you?" he sneered. "You don't like razzle-dazzle football. You're just a bunch of dray horses who've been slammed around so long you're punch-drunk."

He turned to Red Rufus. "Three guys can beat the Bears," he proclaimed. "Gimme Scott to block for me, Boswell to throw passes to and keep these bums of yours out of my way."

"A pretty big statement, Hatch," Rufe said dubiously. Red Rufus knew he should be angry but, surprisingly, amazingly, he was in a very good humor. He knew he should get up and throw this smart-alecky rookie out of the dressing room but he didn't want to do that either.

"Well, anyhow we won't hold post-mortems until the game is over!" shot back Hobey. "We don't think much of the Bears down in Georgia. We don't like any Yankees for that matter."

He turned from Rufe to the squad again. "Well, let's go to work," he barked. "Or is there any use of anybody but Scott, Boswell and me working out?"

They were dressed and ready when he was. He took over his old tailback's position without asking Rufe a word about it.

"And," he growled at Burke, "I'm calling signals. There isn't a single railsplitter in Georgia who doesn't know more about football than you do."

Burke shrugged his shoulders and offered no resistance.

It was a long workout, so long and so hard that the toughest of them were limping and groaning when finally Hobey Hatch called enough and started for the dressing room.

Just outside the field he met Ruth Redmond. He started by with just a nod but the girl caught his arm.

"Hobey, Dad told me what the bank said, that you had come back."

"Yes."

"You put up the money for Boswell, didn't you?"

"I stood good for it," he admitted.

"We'll never forget that, Hobey, either of us."

"You may as well," he said harshly. "I'm through being the monkey. I'm going to beat the Bears and then the Redskins for *my* sake, not yours. I started something and I'll finish it."

He started off, thought of something else and turned back: "And it isn't necessary to waste your time and your charm on me," he snapped. "Pick out another college star and go after him. Make *him* think you're in love with him. Perhaps football *is* that important."

Ruth Redmond, like her father and the Orioles, could think of nothing to say.

## IX

THE Bears kicked off and scorned to follow the practice of other league teams and kick out of bounds; they sent the ball tumbling right into Hobey's hands and came thundering down on top of him like a herd of Buffalo—big, fast, smart, sure of themselves. The Redskins had upset them the year before but nobody in their own division had beaten them in two years; no one was apt to.

Hatch took the ball juggled it momentarily, sized up the field and struck out wide. Two Bears dived at him on the twenty and slowed him up so Thomas, his old rival, could down him on the twenty-eight.

"So you're back," the ex-Alabama boy grinned. "Well, I'll see you around."

"Get the lead out," snapped Hobey. "I'm going to be hard to catch up with today."

They fell into the triple-wing and Hobey took the pass from center, waited until his cup-shaped protection had been thrown back in his face; then faded back, twisting and reversing his field. He and Jack Boswell had spent long hours talking over possible pass patterns; Boswell now was running down the left sideline, moving easily as if out for a morning's trot. Hobey slung the ball toward the center of the field. Boswell ambled along another step, then broke to his right as if fired out of a cannon. The Bear halfback was caught flat-footed; Boswell caught the pass as an outfielder scoops in an easy fly, let the Bear halfback slide past him, then barged down

to the thirty-five before the safety gathered him in.

Rufe Redmond had never believed they actually had a chance against the Bears until then. With headwork, passing and receiving like that, anything could happen.

Again the triple-wing, but Hobeys Hatch was charging forward with the snap; he took the ball on the dead run and crashed into the line like a locomotive. He wasn't a power runner but the Bear defense gave before his fast start, he broke into the secondary and went down to the twenty before the line-backer spun him to a stop and the halfback downed him.

But there the Bears stiffened. They had a great line from wing to wing and a back-field second to none; Thomas, assigned again to personally escort Hobeys all over the field, broke through and downed the Georgian for a five-yard loss when Hobeys attempted an end sweep. He fired two passes at Jack Boswell but the tall wingman was covered like a blanket. Burke wanted to try for a field goal but Hobeys refused; instead they used one of their best pass patterns with Boswell as the "bait" and the other wingman as the intended receiver. Boswell pulled two of the Bear secondary out of position but Jennings, the left end, dropped a perfect toss on the five. He was out in the clear and would have gone over.

**T**HE Bears struck again with their T. Hawks and Hester ripped through for good gains and Cleek threw a twenty-yard pass to Callahan. That put them up to midfield and Hobeys called time.

"Get on to those plays," he rallied at linebackers Burke and Murray. "The line can't do everything; you have to help them."

"Listen, son," Burke panted, "these guys are good with that stuff. You don't see who has the ball until they're past you."

"*Tu* back up the line," Hatch proposed impatiently. "Get back here at safety and see if you can figure out by the time they get this far."

Burke agreed meekly. Hobeys went up behind the line, watched the exchange of ball, detected a difference as Hawks mo-

tioned toward Cleek, charged through and stopped the wingback for a yard loss.

"What if they *are* the Bears?" he yelled out. "They're human; they fall when they're tackled."

The Bears didn't like it and they tried to high-low him on the next play. The line let him break through; Curly Thomas went at him low, Hawks high. But Hobeys sensed the rough stuff and spun off Curly's shoulder. By the wildest sort of luck he plummeted right into the ball carrier, Hester taking a double handoff and coming back through tackle on a double reverse. The ball carrier went down heavily and lay there for a few seconds before climbing to his feet.

"I'd skip that high-low stuff from now on," Hatch jeered. "One of you will get hurt for keeps in a minute."

The Bears jeered back but there were no more high-low plots. Hester went out to catch his breath and the Bears took to the air, Hawks firing a short one over center. Trigger Scott slapped it into the air, Hobeys darted over to grab it while it spun round and round and they had stopped the Chicago drive.

More of the triple-wing, that wild scramble by players on both teams. The Orioles fought frantically to protect their tailback but nobody could locate him but Trigger Scott; he bobbed all over the field, sometimes passing, sometimes running. There was no formation, no system; the center passed the ball to Hobeys; he faded back until he either sighted Boswell in the clear or saw an opening. The Bears fell into a five-man line, letting the line-backers charge and the wingman protect the flat against runs and passes alike. Red Burke pointed out in the huddle that the middle was wide open for short passes but Hobeys wouldn't listen. He was playing the game his own way.

There were plenty of threats. Twice he slipped by the rushing linemen and threaded his way among a small army of tacklers for long gains; three times he laid perfect passes right into Boswell's hands and the ex-Spartan went deep into Bear territory. But these were flurries soon wiped out by close defensive play and the quarter ended nothing-nothing.

Rufe Redmond stood up on the bench and dispatched eight new men into the game. Except for Hatch, Scott and Boswell, it was an entire new team.

"Have you gone crazy?" Red Burke demanded as soon as he reached the sidelines. "They can't hold the Bears."

"No use of you fellers wearing yourselves out trying to keep up with Hatch," Rufe pointed out. "He's playing the Bears by himself and he won't let you help."

Burke had to admit that was so. They dropped to the bench and watched their one-man team continue his single-handed fight, on both offensive and defensive.

They had to admit he was nothing short of phenomenal. The Bears' T didn't have him fooled for a minute, and twice he completely upset the Chicago system by diving through to hit the Hawks, the quarterback who took the passes from center, before the ball was handed off. Each time the pigskin went bounding crazily off for a fumble. Once Boswell covered for the Orioles on the Bear eighteen. Hobeey tried three touchdown passes and all of them were batted away; on the fourth down Mel Flanagan stood up on the bench and started to pull on his helmet without being called by Rufe.

Redmond stopped him. "Let the kid alone," he said curtly. "He's playing the game his own way. If he wants you, he'll send for you."

"But Rufe," protested Burke, "this makes twice we could . . ."

"Sit down, Flanagan," snapped the coach-owner.

A fourth-down pass was wild and incomplete and the chance to score was gone.

It was half-way in the second quarter now and the Bears got to moving. Hester went wide for twenty-two yards before Hobeey caught him from behind; Hawks executed a beautiful flip pass to Cleek and the wingback crashed down to the Oriole fifteen. Then Hawks handed the ball to Curly Thomas and the fullback plowed through to the ten.

Burke pleaded with Redmond to let the first-string line re-enter the game; after Thomas had smashed forward to the six, Rufe relented. They poured out, including a replacement for Boswell.

But it was too late.

THE Bears turned loose their power and picked up a first down on the three. Twice Hobeey Hatch stopped plays for no gain but on the third down Thomas drove through to the one and on the fourth Hawks slipped around the short side untouched. Rutledge converted the extra point and the Bears led 7-0.

It was that way at the end of the half.

They filed into the Oriole dressing room slowly. Hobeey flung himself onto the concrete floor and lay still for a long while. When he finally looked up he found Rufe Redmond staring at him.

"Well, Hatch?" big Rufus said inquiringly.

"Well, what?"

"You're playing your game," Rufe shrugged. "You're calling signals, you're running the team. But we're a touchdown behind. How come?"

"How come!" snarled the Georgian, climbing to his feet. "Listen, if it hadn't been for me, we'd be twenty points behind I've stopped their plays and had to make our yards by myself. Outside of Scott, not one man has done any blocking for me."

"They aren't mind readers, Hatch," Red Rufus said dryly. "You strike out on your own and nobody can keep up with you but Scott. How he knows where you're going is beyond me. If you would run plays the way they were supposed to be run they would give you some help."

"I'm running the plays okay," insisted Hobeey. "We nearly scored twice, didn't we?"

"If the boys had known what you were going to do, you *would* have scored," Rufe said quietly. "But it's up to you, Hatch. I'm not denying that you're making a ball game of it where we couldn't without you. I'd like to see you meet us half-way and stop this grandstanding, this one-man stuff, but that's up to you."

"We'll take 'em," snapped Hobeey, "my way."

Rufe shrugged his shoulders and walked off.

The Orioles second-string returned to the field with Trigger, Hobeey and Boswell.

Two long passes put them in scoring position again, down to the eighteen.

And this time on fourth down HobeY motioned to the bench. There had been no signal rehearsed but Mel Flanagan raced out without being told and kicked a honey right between the bars. That made it 7-3 and things looked rosier . . . until the Bears struck back.

They had too much power for the second-string Oriole line. HobeY could figure out their deception but he couldn't stop their bruising power, and they went through him, over and around him. Five, six yards at a clip moved the Bear juggernaut finally to the two with four downs to make it in. Thomas crashed over, the dependable Rutledge converted and it was 14-3.

HobeY called time and motioned for Pinky Carstairs, the second-string left end, to go to the bench.

"Tell Rufe to send out the first team," he panted. "I'm all in; this can't go on much longer."

Carstairs delivered his message. Rufe stood up and called to his regulars.

"Go give the kid a jump," he ordered curtly.

They didn't need to be told twice; they ran out, pulling on their helmets, without waiting to warm up. HobeY panted in the huddle to Red Burke:

"Take over, Burke," he said unhappily. "I give up."

"Give up, hell!" snapped Red. "We got 'em licked kid. You softened 'em up for us. Let's go."

**I**T was the triple-wing again but Red took the ball on a short pass from center and tore into the line. The sneak worked for seven yards.

"The wings are wide for you, kid," he told HobeY in the huddle. "We gotta bring 'em in close so our fancy stuff will work. Give 'em Number Forty-seven."

HobeY took the pass, raised the ball high as if intending to throw it, then spun in his tracks and tore for the center of the line. There was a hole he could have driven a wagon through, and he tore up to the forty with straightaway running before Curly Thomas nailed him.

Red Burke looked over the Bear defense

before calling the signal.

"Oh, they still won't come in," he murmured. "Okay, let's have Forty-four."

That was a double reverse; HobeY took the pass; handed it off to Burke; Burke slipped it to Ripper Murray; the Ripper hit the center. That same hole was there again and Ripper went to midfield before he was gathered in.

It was the triple wing again, but at Red's hike the left end and tailback shifted far out and Red himself cut over from the right side, in motion at the snap. Burke smeared the Bear tackle, who had broken through; Trigger Scott the short man in the formation, obliterated the wing and there was HobeY sprinting around the left side with Ripper Murray and Jack Boswell in front of him. The Bear halfback tried to break through and did slip away from Ripper but Boswell caught him with a side block and he did no more than touch HobeY's heels.

The Georgian just had the safety man between him and pay dirt. He cut across the field to his right, drawing Quarterback Hawks with him. Hawks played cagy football, giving ground rather than risk a charge and a possible change-of-pace. They reached the sidelines almost together; suddenly HobeY dug his cleats into the turf, stopped dead still. Hawks tried to pull up, too but slipped a step past, and HobeY spinning his body like a top tore through eagerly clutching fingers and kept going.

The ruse cost him his speed and Thomas came up from behind to pull him down on the ten.

"Oh we're rolling, kiddo," sang the red-head. "Number Sixty now and it ain't too far."

That was Ripper Murray's pet play a thrust at the weak side out of and unbalanced line to the right. Ripper lumbered up to the five before he was stopped.

"They don't like it," grinned Red. "Let's see about Fifty-eight."

That was HobeY's signal at right tackle, a simple smash. He hunched forward to the two for a three-yard gain.

"You can hit son," approved the jubilant redhead. "Now Twenty-one."

HobeY looked up inquiringly. "Signal check."

"Oh, Red knows what he's doing," said Burke happily. "Watch it work."

Third and two the Bear defense on the run. Their triple-wing was short to the right and the Bear linebackers edged closer to stop a certain running play. Hatch took the pass from center and fainted at the line then suddenly faded and whipped a bullet throw out into the left flat. Jack Boswell took it shoulder-high on the goal line and stepped across. Mel Flanagan converted and it was 14-10.

"I take it back," Hatch yelled into Burke's ear as they trotted back up the field. "You know your football."

There were eight minutes left and the Bears wanted to score again to sew up the ball game and the western championship. But the power they had used before wouldn't work against Curly Frambeau, Mutt Garcia and Heinie Morgan; they picked only four yards in three running plays and had to kick. Hobey, back at safety for the fourth down, twisted back into midfield with the ball.

"Don't give 'em any rest" sang out Burke. "Old Number Seventy-seven."

This was their touchdown play. Jack Boswell started maneuvering for the clear and the Orioles held the rushers off Hobey. He stuck in his cup until Curly Thomas circled Trigger and Burke and dived at him, then he tucked the ball under his arm and tore forward for five yards.

"Nice headwork, kiddo" approved Red. "Number Eighty-one this time."

Hobey fired this one out in the wide flat to Red the man in motion. Red eluded the halfback and got seven yards out of the play. Quickly Burke followed up the advantage of that gain. He cut out ahead of the snap again, starting wide as on the previous play; then broke sharply over the line of scrimmage, veering back to his right, and took a bullet throw just over tackle that netted them eight yards. They had reached the Bear thirty now.

Another pass, this one to Trigger. Scott just got his fingers on it and the ball caroomed off . . . right into the arms of Ken Hawks. The Bear safety man brought it back to the forty and they were stymied.

And the clock was ticking along. Only four minutes left!

"Get that ball!" yelled Burke.

THE Bears would trust nothing fancy now only the simplest handoffs. They could stall for time and hope to hold off this suddenly wild-eyed sensational club until the final gun. Hawks made a yard, Curly added two, Hawks went wide for three, Hawks punted. Hobey went back to safety for the fourth down but Hawks made sure no Oriole touched it; the punt went out of bounds on the twenty-two. Over a minute had ticked away less than three left.

They had to try the long ones now. Jack Boswell raced downfield as if his life depended on it and desperately tried to maneuver himself into the clear. Bears hung all over him every step he took and neither of Hobey's passes were anywhere near completed.

With third and ten Burke veered his tactics.

"We got to have a first down," he panted. "Number Forty-four."

Red was in motion again and the snap from center hit his hands while he was traveling at top speed. With less than two minutes left, with the goal line seventy-eight yards away, the Bears had weakened their line to strengthen their secondary; Red found a hole for twelve yards and the necessary yardage. But there was only a minute and fifteen seconds left.

Red took his time in the huddle. "No use trying passes" he muttered. "You gotta go with it, kiddo."

Hobey nodded.

Red cut across from his wingback spot, stopped for the snap, fainted to take the ball from Hobey and cut into the center of the line. But Red didn't have it; Hobey had the ball under his right arm speeding for the right wing, Trigger Scott in front of him, Ripper Murray cutting over toward him. The Bear wing moved out with him; Hobey slowed up to let Trigger take his block then leaped over the fallen pair and headed for the sidelines. The halfback bore up under him; Hobey caught a flash of a blue jersey to his rear and slowed down again. Ripper Murray shot forward like a cannonball and the Bear halfback tottered. Ripper didn't take him out of the

play entirely but, thrown off balance, the halfback had no chance against Hobey's sudden burst of speed.

The maneuver however, let the line-backer have a chance at the flying Georgian. Curly Thomas, wise to Hobey's pace; he slowed down too. Hobey tried his most successful ruse, reversing his field. He suddenly pivoted and was off in the opposite direction. Thomas sprinted at his heels but the Bear fullback could never catch up.

Hobey realized, however, that he had burned his bridges behind him with that deception. Curly thundered after him so close that he couldn't use a change of pace or reverse his field on the safety man. The two of them would pocket him at the sideline and there was no hope of getting away.

Then he heard a desperate yell: ".Hatch, Hatch. This way."

He looked over his shoulder. Red Burke was calling for him to reverse his field again, pick up blocking. Hobey thought swiftly. It would work if he could get by Curly Thomas. But how could he get by Curly, only two steps behind him?"

Hawks bore upon him, seeking to drive him out of bounds. A step away from the sidelines Hobey suddenly stopped. He had a split second; that was all he needed. He slung the ball in a underhand toss halfway across the field to where Red Burke was waiting, then lowered his shoulder to meet Hawk's charge.

Curly Thomas crashed into him from behind at the same instant and he went down heavily.

All went black before him and he didn't see Red Burke put one foot forward, then another, one foot forward, then another. Perhaps Rutledge the Bear end, could have run Burke down from behind had not Trigger Scott wiped out the wingman for the second time on the same play which was adding insult to injury.

And Red stepped daintily over while the players on the Oriole bench turned hand-springs, the Farrington Field crowd roared itself hoarse and Red Rufus Redmond stared straight out in front of him with a far-off look in his eyes.

Hobey had to be helped off the field and there was a breathless second until it was learned the wind had just been knocked out of him, then play was resumed. Flanagan converted and the score was 17-14 with only seconds left. Flanagan kicked out of bounds, Ripper Murray batted down a long pass and that was that.

Still Red Rufus hadn't moved, still he sat with shoulders hunched and a far-off look in his eyes. The years were rolling by before Rufe's eyes, the long weary years of fighting for a winner, first as a player and then as an owner, without ever before realizing the thrill of a pro championship. He came to his senses with a start with the gun sounded and tried to stand up, but he could make it; he sunk back to the bench with a smile and stared off into the distance again.

"Golly, golly, golly!" he murmured.

IT was a month later that Ruth announced at the dinner table that she was taking a trip.

"Where to, honey?" asked Rufe in surprise.

The girl hesitated. "South," she said tersely.

Rufe didn't say anything; he had learned long ago not to question his daughter's actions.

"If you must know," she snapped, "I'm going to find Hobey Hatch."

"A good idea," Rufe approved. "It's not too early to be thinking about next year's contracts."

Ruth hesitated. "I'm not thinking about a contract . . . that is, a football contract."

Rufe stopped eating and studied her with a smile. "Good luck," he said after a moment. Then, with a chuckle: "It's a shame you can't draft 'em in that league, too."

"Oh, can't you!" snapped his daughter.

Rufe learned a week later that you could. He got a telegram from Florida which read:

"Having wonderful time. Be home soon."

And it was signed: "Mrs. Great from Georgia."

# Kick For The Double-Cross

By TED ROEMER

When they said "buck" in this money-conscious factory league they meant "dollar" . . . quite confusing to an energetic, fresh-from-the-campus line-plunger.



**J**IM DEE TOOK A WEARY HITCH at the ill-fitting scrub pants they'd given him and settled again into the second-string fullback slot. This factory team was giving him the works and he knew it. Line smashes, off-tackle slants, center plunges, all were ramrodded toward him. Sam Russo, the quarterback, feared him; the rest distrusted him. They didn't like a college man who had dropped into their midst and could play fancy ball and say big words.

Sunlight filtered through the smoke of the towering stacks all around Matson Tools' practice gridiron. The smoke made their dark, young faces look tense and hard, and he wished he hadn't let drop that he'd played football in college.

His job here was to learn to run the business—from the ground up. His dad had wanted him to go into Superintendent Kane's office last July, but Jim wanted it

this way. He'd come only a week ago, during football season, and as plain Jim Dee.

"Hike!" Russo, the big quarterback across the line, shouted. The red-clad backs shifted. But Jim watched Sam Russo closely. Big, swarthy-faced, with a hawked nose and close-set greedy eyes, Jim had instantly recognized the man when he'd seen the football team practice.

Jim hadn't planned on going out for the team, but on seeing the big ex-pro, he'd changed his mind. This was the second year Matson Tools had had a team. Russo was the playing-coach, and everybody said this year Matson would beat the Butler Freighters for the championship. Didn't they have Pritt and Jackson back?

But on seeing Sam Russo, Jim knew otherwise. Out on the coast where Jim had played his college ball, Sam Russo, then known as Bats Tonner, had been thrown out of the Pacific Pro League. He'd been caught fixing games for the gamblers. Later he'd been caught in independent ball. Then he'd dropped from sight. And now he was here at Matson Tools. Jim smiled thinly.

"Forty-six, ninety-two, eighty-five . . ."

The ball shot to Russo. He slid it into Pritt's middle, and the fullback slashed for the scrub's weak center spot.

Jim threw his shoulders into the hole and stopped Pritt cold. It was the fifth play he'd stopped for no-gain.

Russo was furious. They were his pet plays. He snarled at the blond, one hundred and eighty-pound man in the scrub uniform. "Try and guess this one, smart-pants." Russo barked out a series of numbers. The firsts shifted. But at the last instant Russo wet his big forefinger.

"Pass!" Jim shouted to Curly Harris, his left halfback.

Russo grew beet-red. He called for the ball and the next moment rammed straight for Jim.

Jim lunged to plug the hole but the entire scrub line gave way. Jim launched himself for Russo. He hit. The shock traveled his body. By habit his cleats dug, and Russo went back and over. He hadn't gained an inch.

Then Jim felt four hard knuckles against his teeth. He flung the man from him and sprang to his feet. Russo gained his also. The entire squad saw the blood streaming from Jim's mouth.

Russo snarled. "I hit hard, don't I, college boy?"

"Yes," Jim said. "With your fists." And he made for Russo.

But Pritt, the hard-muscled first team fullback, jumped between.

"That stuff won't go here, Dee. If you can't take our he-man football here, get out. We've got three wins under our belts now and are championship bound. We don't want any college stuff busting up our team."

Jim halted. Pritt was a chunky fast man, a star on a local sand-lot eleven before coming to Matson Tools. Jim saw the men behind Pritt shove out jaws. So he shrugged and turned away.

"Some other time, Russo," he murmured. "Just you and I."

**K**NOTTING his tie beside Curly Harris in the locker room, Jim said from the side of his mouth.

"Did you talk to the fellows, Harris?"

The big, second-string halfback glanced down the room at Pritt and Russo and the varsity. He muttered, "I saw some I could trust on the second team—enough to make an eleven."

"Good," Jim said. "At the supply room, six sharp."

Harris moved away from the mirror and nodded to certain men in the room. Jim grinned. Harris was a good football man. Too good to be thrown off the first team because he had guts enough to talk up against some of the screwball plays Russo was giving them. Around Harris and himself, Jim thought, he might build a team to take over when he sprang his trap on Russo.

He knew Russo's plan. He'd worked it once on the coast after pro football and before coming east. Get in with a club, build up interest in a string of wins, then, with big dough riding on a crucial game—presto! Russo would see that the game was lost.

But as yet, Jim hadn't put the finger on Russo's accomplice. Somewhere in the factory Russo had a trigger man, a guy to take the bets, work up the local boys.

Jim went out of the dressing rooms and a man said,

"Superintendent Kane wants to see you in his office, Dee."

Kane was a tall, grey-haired man. He'd been with Matson twenty-six years. Now his face was lined with worry. "Dee," he said slowly, "all I hear from the football

team about you are bad reports. You're a trouble-maker, they say. You'll ruin the season. We've got a good start with three victories. I want you to turn in your suit."

Jim gulped. "But—"

"My factory is the best and most proficient of the entire Matson string. In a few years I will be retiring. I began this football team for factory morale. I want it to win a championship before I go. I don't want it to wreck our plant—through your whipper-snapper ways. That's all, Dee."

Jim swallowed. His cheeks were hot. He looked around. He saw Reed's stenographer pretending not to hear. She was a pretty girl. He saw his dad's picture on the wall. He saw various mottoes his dad had made up for his factory offices—they were all around him. One said: "If you're right—fight! Never give up!"

Jim looked back at the stern superintendent. He murmured, "If I quit the football team, James Dee would have to quit his job here. And I don't want to do that. But I'll think about it, Mr. Reed."

He turned and left the office, cussing softly. Russo was pulling his strings cutely, going to Kane about him.

**T**HERE were fifteen men at the west end of the Supply Station when Jim arrived. He looked them over and saw most of them were scrubs. Harris, alone, of the lot stood out as a football player.

Jim cocked his hat and spoke bluntly, "Fellows, Harris said I could trust you, so I'm hitting from the shoulder. In two weeks we meet the Butler Freighters' eleven. We're new to the Industrial League; they've been in it since it was begun. And most of the time they've been champions. They've got a good outfit this year. The papers say it's they or we."

"Cut the college talk," a black-jowled linesman growled. "We promised Harris to be here and shut up about what we heard, so don't beat around the bush, Dee."

"Okey, Manning. Here it is. I want to make a team of you, coach you in some solid football plays, so when Russo's so-called first-string outfit falls down, we can step in."

"And beat Butler?" Manning laughed.

"And how you going to manage this

substitution?" a giant red-headed man drawled. "You, who are so thick with Russo." Everybody laughed. It was a derisive laugh.

Jim checked his anger. He didn't want to tell these men who he was. He didn't even want to use that to get "his team" onto the field when the crucial time came unless necessary. He had thought there was some way he could work it out. Now he wasn't sure.

Harris saved the moment. "Listen to what Dee has to say, fellows, then pass judgment. None of you have any love for Russo, being kicked around like we've been. Go on, Dee."

Jim told his plan swiftly. They had a fair bunch of footballers here. A little practice on solid plays, and they'd be a team. Teamwork made good elevens. Practice at six o'clock every morning at the old Fenwick ball park.

"That's it, men," Jim concluded. "If you like football, you're a team, starting right now."

"You want us to buck tough men like Pritt, Russo and Jackson?" wailed a little sub. Another man shouted,

"What do you mean—a team? Running those screwy plays of Russo's? Hell, the first team, who *are* football men, hardly know them, and they've been practicing for two months."

"Wait a minute," Harris said, holding up his hand. "I don't know Dee's game or the idea behind this, but it looks as if he's all for winning games for Matson. If we can step in when the first stringers fall down, that's what we want. Dee says we can make a team, practicing plays he'll give us. I've seen how he handles himself on a football field. I'm willing to string with him. If you are, stand up."

The black-jowled man finally stood up, then the giant redhead, and then all of them were up. And Dee knew he had his team. He'd won the first round over Sam Russo.

"Okey, fellows. Tomorrow at Fenwick, six sharp. No suits. We're just practicing plays and timing. Mum's the word."

The men were streaming from the supply station when Jim touched Harris' arm. "Who's the thin cookie watching from

across the street?" The man had his hat pulled low; he was eyeing the fifteen men coming out of the alley.

Harris squinted. "Fellow by the name of Conn. Hangs around the taverns up here."

"Been here long?" Jim asked it sharply.

Harris was surprised at the vehemence. "A couple of months or so, I guess. Why?"

Jim didn't answer. It was as long as Russo had been here.

Jim was late in getting to regular practice that afternoon. A brown-haired girl had intercepted him at the corner of the main plant. She had given him a letter which had come in care of the office for "James Dee." It was from his brother, Tom, and Jim frowned. He'd told all of them not to write; he'd get along. And Tom didn't have anything important to say, except to chide him about playing football with a bunch of sand-lotters—Tom had seen it in the plant paper at the head office.

"At least," Jim muttered, "he had sense enough to use a plain envelope." He thanked the girl and hurried away. She had pretty eyes, he decided. Some day maybe—He laughed it away.

When he came onto the practice field he saw Russo, Pritt and Jackson ripping off huge gains against his hapless scrubs. Jim pulled on a helmet. "I'll go in, Russo."

Russo grinned. He'd been going good, as had his plays.

"Sure. Sure, college boy. You want to bleed some more?"

The big, red-shirted first-stringers also grinned. They were feeling pretty cocky.

"Welcome, Joe College. We were getting lonesome for you," Pritt, the blond speedster, said.

Jim said, "Just a minute," and he called his scrubs to a huddle. "If you fellows want to give Russo a little serious opposition, watch his hands, eyes and feet. He's tipping every play. And tipped off, we can bust those screwy laterals and delayed sweeps. Let's go."

They looked dubiously at him, some bleeding, all panting hard, but on the first play Russo licked that big forefinger, and Curly Harris crept forward and the scrubs became oddly alert.

They rushed the line. Russo clumsily palmed the lateral to Pritt. Pritt had no time to throw, and Curly Harris beat Jackson to the batted-up ball. Russo tried to tackle Harris, but Red Brown and Jim pinned a block onto him and Harris went for a touchdown.

The squad was electrified. One play with the college man in there and the scrubs had a touchdown!

Russo snarled, "Luck."

Jim said, "Maybe on that one, but it's the kind of smart football that will beat you when you play Butler Freighters."

Russo's wide neck swelled with anger. "We'll show you."

At the end of ten minutes the first stringers had made only thirty yards. Jim had read every play. He'd stopped fifty percent of the tries. And, best of all, the scrubs were tense, keen.

Pritt finally stopped the battle. Jerseys were ripped. There was black eyes and bleeding lips. Pritt swung, hard-eyed, to Jim. "You're playing our signals the way Russo calls them."

"He shouldn't tip his hand nor call his play series in routine. That's not our fault." Jim laughed shortly.

Jackson, a big, horse-faced man, shoved forward. "Wise guy now. Trying to bust up our team. I should give you one—right in the teeth."

Jim felt heat. "Go ahead. Try it."

"I'll close his smart mouth," Russo howled and started forward.

"Stop it! Stop it!" A new, hard voice broke behind them. They turned to see Superintendent Kane striding forward.

The Super swung to Jim. "Dee," he said, his bony jaw taut with anger, "I told you yesterday to *turn in your suit!* I don't want this team wrecked. We've done fine without you. We can get along without you the rest of the season. Now get out! And be glad I'm not taking your job away from you!"

He pointed a long, quivering finger off the field. Silence fell over varsity and scrubs alike. And in that silence Dee slowly took off his battered helmet and moved from the group. He wanted to say something, but he was choked up inside. He was afraid he might say something that he'd

later regret. He bit his lip.

He was knotting his tie before the mirror when the squad came in. Pritt's little blue eyes were bright with suspicion about something. He stopped before Harris' bench.

"Where did you and Bunt learn that reverse. You were supposed to be running Butler plays against us?"

"What do you mean?" Curly Harris asked innocently, catching Jim's eye. Jim listened, his heart lifting. The scrubs had done something then.

"Where'd the line learn to cross-block like that? You sprung three touchdowns through on that reverse because of it."

"By jingo, so we did," Harris drawled, frowning to remember. He winked surreptitiously at Jim.

Bunt, the one-twenty halfback, chirped up, "Hell, Pritt, our natural ability is just showing now. And then, of course, we've been watchin' Russo." But the kid wasn't laughing in the eyes; his eyes were brittle. Once Russo had back-handed the kid off the bench and told him to go home and play with dolls.

Jim waited for Harris. As they walked down the street, he said, "Maybe we overdid it, Curly. Pritt, Jackson and those boys are good football men. I want them eventually on our side."

"So is Russo a good football man—outside of his screwball plays. What have you got against Russo? I mean, more than the rest of us? I noticed you picked on him the first day. Who are you, Dee, and where do you come from? Hell, a college man shouldn't be working in Matson's supply department."

Jim said slowly, "I guess it makes no difference who I am, now that I'm out of football."

"You can keep coaching us? Shucks, look at what just one session did the kids. We haven't the weight and speed in all spots, but with your know-how and coaching, we can still go places."

Jim nodded, thoughtfully. "Okey, six tomorrow again at Fenwick." He saw the thin dapper man of yesterday across the street in the plant's parking lot. The man was watching them. Jim parted with Harris at the corner, then sauntered up the

alley and into the parking lot. But when he arrived the man called Conn was gone.

HE COACHED the scrubs three times at Fenwick Park, watched them three times in afternoon sessions, then sat in the wet stands Sunday afternoon along with a jammed crowd of Matson workers and townspeople and saw Russo's gang steamroll over hapless Texas Pipe. The orange-striped visitors just weren't in the ball game with Pritt, Jackson and Russo. A few scrubs got in for scattered minutes, but it was Russo's day.

The final was 33-13.

A Matson worker next to Jim said in a voice husky from continual shouting, "Now that's what I call a football team. We'll swamp those Butler hot-shots next Sunday. I got a hundred bucks to say we take 'em." He hooted with glee.

Jim winced. Already the fever had struck. Football fever. He recalled the long weak lateral, dubbed No. 16, on which Pritt had made a touchdown. A smart end would mop up the half on that play. He remembered Russo's pet nightmare—a criss-cross with Jackson dropping back, forward passing, then the end tossing a lateral out to Russo running wide, and without cover in case of an interception. He remembered others. All had worked this day, and the Matson mob had gone wild. But next Sunday against smart Butler—

Jim winced again. He asked cautiously, "Where do you get Butler money on these bets?"

"Not much showed up yet," the man said, as they moved out through the press of people. "Fellow down town last night had some but it was covered mighty fast, I can tell you." He laughed.

Jim perked up his ears. "Where can a fellow find him? What's his name?"

"I'm looking for him first, then I'll tell you. We'll have to give odds before it's over." The man laughed again, uproariously, and was lost in the crowd, and Jim knew the bleeding had just begun.

Jim had toyed with the idea of going to Pritt and Jackson and others of the first-string and asking them to tone down on the wild ball handling stuff against a smart

championship outfit like Butler Freighters, but the lop-sided victory over the Pipe Company was like heady wine to the first stringers. They strutted and preened their feathers and talked loudly around the plant, and everyone idolized them.

Kane, the Super, was at every practice, swinging his cane, smiling his bony smile. Hawk-faced Russo basked under his benevolence. Pritt and Jackson played great, slashing ball. Jim began to wonder if maybe *he* wasn't a little off the beam.

But Tuesday night Curly Harris said to him, "I hear some big Butler money hit town today."

"How much?"

"Better than ten grand."

"Is the betting even?"

"It was until the Butler money got short, then the Matson fellows got foolish. Gave 7-5 odds."

"Who's handling the books? That fellow named Conn?"

Harris shot him a surprised look. "Why, yeah? How did you guess?"

Jim said tightly, "Never mind. Have all the fellows at Fenwick tomorrow. I have something to tell them."

They were there, all fifteen of them. "Fellows," he said as they gathered around him in work clothes with jackets off. "You know all the plays you might need Sunday if we get in—"

"We?" Red Brown cut in. "How are you going to manage, Dee?"

"I've got an ace up my sleeve," Jim said unsmilingly. "I'm not telling you now, but I'm telling you something else. That game Sunday is fixed! Our team is to lose!"

Fifteen mouths dropped open. They stared.

Finally Harris said weakly, "Dee, you can't mean that. Who would—"

"Never mind who would. I'm getting proof from other games and deals in the past. My advice is to spread the word. Don't bet on the game. And discourage anybody you know from betting. If they ask from where you got the information—"

The sounds of a dozen feet behind him brought him around. Pritt, Jackson, almost the entire first string was bearing down upon them at a run. Pritt's little eyes

were aflame. Jackson was cursing audibly. Every man's jaw was clamped. They made for Jim.

At the last instant Harris and Red Brown jumped between.

"What do you mugs want?"

"We want to wring that traitor's neck," Pritt shouted. "Who's he for? Us or Butler? Why's he coaching you fellows up here? Splitting the team? Get him, Jackson."

Red Brown hit Jackson and the big full-back fell flat. Brown stood before Jim, fists clenched.

"Who's next?"

Somebody far back among the varsity men shouted, "He's a trouble-maker. Get Dee!"

Jim caught a glimpse of the man. Conn! "Hold it, Red," he shouted. "You, too, Pritt. I want to—"

But another voice, cold and final, broke behind all of them. Superintendent Kane's.

"I told you two weeks ago, Dee, that I wanted no trouble from you. I see you're still at it. You may get your time at the office." Kane looked deliberately at his wrist watch. "The rest of you men I'm giving five minutes to report to work, or you get the same medicine." The cane tapped three times then was still. And there was silence. Curly Harris and Red Brown looked agonized at Jim. Jim smiled whitely, "Go on, fellows." And the group broke up, Super Kane being the last to walk stiffly back to his car. The man had put the finisher on Jim's counter-plot.

"So Conn notified him too," Jim muttered bitterly. "Well, Mr. Conn, alias a dozen other names, I'll wire Bob Shannon and get a fistful of California proof against you and Sammy Russo. Damn'd if I'll use the old man's name to beat this thing. I'll still do it on my own."

His telegram to Bob Shannon of the *San Francisco Globe* brought quick results. An answering telegram flashed across the country: "AM SENDING PHOTOS FINGER PRINTS AND COMPLETE POLICE RECORDS STOP GO ALL OUT TO JAIL PAIR STOP FIVE GRAND REWARD STILL OFFERED BY COAST PRO LEAGUE LUCK FRAT BRO BOB"

In his room on Maple avenue Jim, with the telegram in his hand, thought a long time. Finally he arose, pulled into his jacket and went down town. He knew where Conn had set up his office.

"Hello, Silk," Jim walked into the inner room.

The man at the desk jerked up his head. "Who are you?"

Jim said, "You know I'm Jim Dee out at Matson's plant. The point is that I know you, Silk Owen, alias Conn."

The thin, pale-faced man didn't move a muscle. "What do you want?"

"I want you to get out. You can't call off the bets you've made, but we can still make it a square game. Call off future bets and make Russo disappear. Otherwise I'll do something about it."

Silk Conn narrowed his black eyes. "Just who the hell are you, Dee? What have you got in this?" His voice had grown loud.

"Never mind that. I want a clean football game Sunday or I'll—"

He didn't get any farther. He thought he heard a stealthy step behind him. Something crashed against his head. He went down.

**J**IM torturously lifted his left hand as the rubbed ropes finally parted. It was long since daylight, he knew, by the light filtering through the taped blind over his eyes. His gagged mouth was swollen from thirst. He had come to, to find himself bound to a bed. All night long wild, celebrating sounds had come to him so he knew he was in some downtown hotel in the tavern district when Conn worked best. He was on an iron bed he'd found out, and, by pulling, he'd gained some slack in his left arm and intermittently through the night he rubbed the rope on the iron bedstead.

Now he tore off the blindfold and the gag. The hotel room was bare. All around him was stillness. He wondered what time it was, and thought of the game. He staggered to his feet. The door was locked. There was no telephone. He pounded on the door.

Minutes later an unshaven man who seemed accustomed to such things let him out. "It's three o'clock. Telephone? Next

door in the tavern, but they're locked up. Gone to the ball game. You owe me two bucks for the room—"

But Jim was running down two flights of rickety stairs.

He had to give a cab driver his wrist watch to take him out to the plant football field. The dressing room was empty. He began putting on his football togs watching the dying moments of the first half. The score was 14-6 in favor of Butler, but Jim, watching, saw what the final might be. Matson's red team was disorganized. Russo, backed to his goal, was shouting and waving his arms. Pritt and Jackson were excited. While across the line, eleven smooth blue men from Butler Freighters shifted into a single wing-back; the ball was snapped. A Butler half rammed to the ten-yard line making five yards. Butler lined up smoothly, like clock-work. Another five yards.

Jim ducked into his torn, scrub jersey, cussing softly. Even their defense had crumbled. And Russo was making it look good.

Butler made the score, made the try for point. There was a kick-off, in which Russo tried to lateral and failed. The gun ended the half. Jim sat down on a bench, holding his helmet, and, with lips pressed thoughtfully, he waited for the Matson squad.

Russo entered first. His nose was bleeding, his swarthy face cut on one cheek. *Russo was making it look good, real good*, Jim thought and stood up. Then Russo saw him. He jolted to a halt.

Pritt, Jackson and the others shoved him in, then also halted. Jim said to Harris and Brown, whose uniforms showed they hadn't even been in the game. "There's a rope. Tie Russo up."

"What?" Pritt roared.

Russo gained courage. "Hit the guy. Smash him down!"

But Jim beat him to the punch. Jim stepped in and smashed Russo full on the button. Russo crashed over a bench and hit his black head against a locker. He lay still.

"Do as I say, Curly," Jim said. "Now I'm going to tell you fellows something. Get back, Pritt—"

"What goes on here?" roared a voice

from the ramp, and Superintendent Kane pushed through, his eyes breathing fire. He had seen Jim.

Jim said, "Kane, do you remember a letter you got last July saying there was a young fellow coming to work for you? Then the appointment was recalled? Think back."

The Superintendent's white brows knotted, then flared. He looked intently at Jim, and suddenly his voice was husky. He muttered, "By Jove, she was right."

Jim frowned at that, but he saw Kane understood. He turned his back on the man. "Fellows," he said. "That first half was Russo's; this second half will be mine—for me and the Matson second team, the men Russo never gave a chance. I saw there was something rotten in our football set-up. After the game I'll prove it. Get a cop in here, Mr. Kane."

He ordered Russo tied into a shower stall, picked up his helmet and said to the first-stringers. "You fellows take the bench for a while."

"Bench, hell," snarled Pritt. "We're quitting." They were battered and exhausted. They'd seen the fight, and now they were giving up, glad for the chance. Jim shrugged and led his little squad out. He hadn't expected that.

The Matson stands, silent those closing minutes of the first half, now awakened, but with a sound of dismay. Where was their team? Where was Pritt and Jackson and Russo? Who were these?

Jim smiled into the white faces of his kids. "We've got Curly Harris and Red Brown. Manning will give a good fight also. Get in there and do your damn'dest." He went back to quarterback under the goal posts. He, himself, wasn't in too good a shape to play much of a bang-up game, even for two quarters.

The blue visitors kicked off. It was a beauty, the ball coming tilting down like a rocking chair out of the blue toward him. Curly Harris shouted, "Grab it, Jim," and lined out for a blue jersey. Ken Brown roared. All the scrubs yelled. *It has been a long time*, Jim breathed. He hoped he had some of the old stuff, and he took the ball on his fingertips and he ran behind faded red jerseys. picking his spots, slowing,

speeding. He got across the twenty, stiff-armed a Butler linesman and got away in a beautifully executed falling-leaf.

At the thirty-five it looked as if he were hemmed in for good, and then he did something Industrial League football had never seen before. He stopped, drifted back, *toward his own goal*.

"Run! Run *forward!*" the Matson stands screamed. "Are you yella? You 'fraid of getting tackled?"

Jim drifted back, legs twinkling. He evaded another tackler, a third dove and slid on his face, a stiff-arm pushing him to the grass. And then Jim saw it—a slit of daylight between the red and blue, frenzied men. He carried the ball lightly and he ran.

He ran all the way and over the goal line.

The scrubs were electrified. They had scored! On Butler!

Jim, panting, tossed the ball to the ref and said to Harris, "Can you kick it over, Curly?"

Harris stared at him, still pale with astonishment. "I—I'll try."

Harris tried but kicked it into the line. He grew more pale. Jim laughed. The score was 21-12.

"What's one point when we need two touchdowns?"

Butler received. They went to work. They were a good Industrial eleven, Jim saw, and he took over fullback, plugging up the holes in his kid line. But the methodical blue jerseys kept hacking, going for yards and first downs. They marched into Matson territory on straight stuff, then made the mistake of attempting a pass on third and five to go on the twenty, and Jim, reading the play, tagged the wing back and intercepted.

He ran it back ten yards. "Let's go!" he shouted.

But the bloom was off his scrubs. And Butler was sharpened to this new team against them. Butler played close-in football; they were bigger men. They began pushing Jim's scrub-kids around on the line. Jim and Harris had to scoot to make yardage around the ends. They improvised new short passes. They got two firsts, the hard way, then Bunt, the one-twenty kid, fumbled.

Butler took over and smashed to the Matson ten. Bunt recovered a fumble and was knocked out on the play. Jim looked to the bench. Pritt, Jackson, none of them were there. Cursing he called in one of his subs, and he kicked the ball to mid-field. And the big boys from Butler rolled on and over them again.

**L**UCK again was with Jim's outfit. Red Brown busted through and recovered a fumble. Jim tried to run it. Three plays later and he was back fifteen yards. His line was leaking like a sieve. His ends were pounded back. His guards were blocked out.

Jim crawled to his feet. He was gone inside. His kids were just over-powered. He called time.

His scrubs looked up at him. They were panting. Some had bloody noses. Their aged scrub jerseys were torn; the creaky leather pads underneath showed limp and ragged. This game bunch of misfits had fought and held the champions scoreless. He had figured they'd be good for a quarter. But that quarter was over. From now on—

Cleat sounds behind him. He turned. Ten big men in nice red jerseys ran toward them. They bounced strongly on the sod. The low sun glistened from their burnished helmets. Jim stared. Russo's team!

Pritt, in the lead, said to the referee, "Pritt substituting for Adams." Jackson snapped, "Jackson for Bunt." Then the roll call came: "West for Tierson, Fleming for Haverstock, Burns for Hoehne."

As each first-stringer said his name, he gave a hand to the scrub he was replacing, helping him to his feet. Jim saw what was taking place. His throat knotted.

Then Pritt's square, blond face was before him grinning from the burnished helmet. "You're the only one we haven't got a sub for, Dee. How about it?"

Jim found his voice. "Wait a minute. Did Kane come back? Tell you fellows something?"

"Hell, no," Jackson said, grinning. "Unless you can call a first-rate tongue-blistering something."

Pritt grinned. "We were planning on

coming out before Kane came. We were watching you fellows. We don't know the deal on Russo, but we know you're for winning this game. Can you call them for us, Dee?"

Jim took a great, shivering breath. "I'll be your quarterback."

He called the plays—Russo's simpler plays—and Jackson and Pritt behind that first line made them work. They slashed and ripped down the field and scored six minutes later. They stopped Butler's famed attack cold. They hammered out another touchdown, and then Jim, to add insult to injury, tossed a forty yard pass to Pritt and that was the game.

Matson Tools 32—Butler Freighters 21.

**T**HE PLANT WORKERS ganged their team, but Jim ducked the wave of men and made for the sidelines. He saw Curly Harris and the scrubs looking for him but he slipped into the wooden ramp and hurried to the locker room. There, as expected, he found Superintendent Kane trying to get Russo to talk. Two cops were there and a plainclothes man.

Jim spoke curtly to the officers, describing the hotel and Conn, and they left. Russo glowered at him, but Jim turned his back, and faced Superintendent Kane.

"When I told you who I was, you muttered, 'By Jove, she was right.' Does somebody else know who I am?"

Kane said, "Last week my stenographer saw a letter addressed to 'James Dee' in care of the office. It was postmarked from the city where our headquarters are. Last July we received those letters about you coming and then not coming, and she put two and two together, and then along with your persistent interest in the team—"

The squad was coming up the ramp. Jim held up his hand. "Okey, she knows, but you speak to her about it. I like it here as Jim Dee. Get it?" Then he grinned. "No, I'll speak to her about it myself. Yes, I like that idea better." His grin widened. He'd have the five grand reward that needed some planning on how to spend it. New football uniforms, new car, maybe even a ring—who knows? He laughed and went to meet the fellows.



# PIGSKIN PIONEERS

By DOC McGEE

**Where do great plays come from? Do top-ranking coaches snatch them, like rabbits from a silk hat—or is there some secret system? A football expert has some ready answers.**

**Y**OU HAVE HEARD ABOUT the boy who stood on the burning deck, and the adolescent Dutchman who stopped the leak in the dyke, but how many know the name and fame of William Webb Ellis?

William Webb Ellis, a tow-headed English boy built on the general lines of Albie Booth, came into his hour of glory one hundred and twenty-six years ago. It happened on a crisp November day in 1823 at Rugby School, England, where a hundred lads of assorted sizes had gathered on the principal play-field. This field was called Old Bigside, and the game they played that day was also known as "Bigside"—a free-

for-all under rigger rules in which carrying the ball was prohibited. In the shuffle of running bodies the spindling form of William Webb Ellis was inconspicuous. The ball surged back and forth, kicked first by one side and then the other, and as the hour of five approached neither team has scored. In a few minutes the bell would peal, and the game would end a draw.

But suddenly a long sailing punt came down the field, and William Webb Ellis found himself under it. According to the rules he should have caught the ball, heeled the catch, and fallen back for a free kick that would put the enemy again on the defensive. Ellis knew that, but as the ball

settled into his arms a burst of inspiration came. He snatched the punt and clamped the ball under an elbow. His spindling legs flashed and weaved as he dashed through the amazed ranks of the opposition, to cross the goal just as the fatal bell tolled.

For a few days William Webb Ellis was in a tough spot. "That isn't done, you know" the others said; and there was talk of paddles being applied to the spot where they would do most good on the anatomy of young Ellis. At length, however, the school teachers saw that he had demonstrated the possibilities of a great innovation. They adopted the runback of a kick into the code, and later extended the principle of carrying the ball generally throughout the game.

That's how football was born.

#### FOUNDING THE GAME IN AMERICA

**T**HE GAME did not spring into being instantaneously, of course. Not until forty-five years later did its beginnings reach America. William S. Gunnere of Princeton, another youthful genius, conceived the idea of founding intercollegiate football here in 1868. He selected the "Association" code as his playing medium, and adapted from it a set of rules under which teams from Princeton and Rutgers—twenty-five players to a side—met on November 16th, 1869. Gunnere captained the Princeton team, and the lads from the banks of the Raritan were led by Bill Leggett. Rutgers came out on top by a score of 6 to 4.

For five years the Association game prevailed among the colleges that pioneered in the sport: Columbia, Princeton and Yale. In 1874 David Roger, captain of the Rugby fifteen at McGill University in Montreal, led his team against the sons of John Harvard at Cambridge. With customary aptitude Harvard played the Canadians to a scoreless draw and the success of their first venture into the intercollegiate game spurred the Cantabs to the immediate adoption of Rugby. Under rugby rules they played their first game against Yale in 1875.

By this time American players had already begun to add various improvements

to the game, but the result was not a happy one. There was too much confusion, and as a consequence too much bitterness. Even in the early days they took the game with intense seriousness, as many a broken nose will testify. To eliminate this confusion and resultant unpleasantness, Princeton—the leaders in the sport at that time—called a meeting at the old Massasoit House in Springfield, Mass. Columbia, Harvard, Yale and Princeton sent representatives, and when the table was cleared and the ale was flowing free they got down to business. Earle Dodge and Jotham Potter, of Princeton, suggested the formation of a football league to be known as the American Intercollegiate Football Association. They further suggested the adoption of the Rugby Union code of England in place of the varying codes represented among them.

This agenda—with one vital change—was swiftly enacted. The Rugby code called for a computation by the score of goals, either from the field or following a "try," which meant a touchdown. The Massasoit House assembly, however, tossed that rule out the window and substituted this regulation:

*"The score shall be determined by a majority of touchdowns; but in scoring, a goal shall be equal to four touchdowns."*

The Yale delegation—Eugene V. Baker and J. B. Atwater—entered an objection concerning the number of players on a side. For some years after the original Princeton-Rutgers game, twenty-five men was considered a team. When Yale entered the sport in 1872, they fixed the number of players at twenty; and Harvard, in the same year, decided that fifteen was enough. In 1873, however, a team from Eaton College, England, traveled to New Haven to engage the Elis. They presented eleven men on a side, and that number so impressed the Yale lads that no other would suit them.

"Eleven make a team!" the Yale delegates roared.

The rest of them said, "In your hat"—or the equivalent of the expression in that day, and insisted on fifteen.

There were no broken noses, but Yale

stuck to its guns. They refused to join the Association, and when they played Association teams in the following four years exacted a special rule that eleven—and only eleven!—should play on a side. It took them four years to convince the others, but in 1880 the Yale delegation under Walter Camp was able to make them see the light. Harvard and Princeton capitulated then, and the eleven-man principle was written into the rules.

This same year also saw the clarification of tactics in scrimmage. When the English game was taken over, the line-up and the process of putting the ball in play were united in a maneuver known then as "scrum." In scrum there was no deploying of players in a line, and no orderly possession of the ball by a side which had the right to put it in play. Consequently there were no prearranged plays or signals, since neither side could know in advance whether they would be attacking or defending. Our football pioneers instantly focused on the "scrum" as a section of the game which could be improved. After much experiment and study a rule was formulated that completely changed the English game and started a distinctive national sport on its new career.

*"A scrimmage takes place when the holder of the ball, being in the field of play puts it down on the ground in front of him and puts it in play while on side: first by kicking the ball; second, by snapping it back with his foot. The man who first receives the ball from the snapper-back shall be called the quarterback, and shall not rush forward with the ball under penalty of foul."*

This rule quickly brought on pre-arranged strategy, tactics, and plays—the most fascinating characteristic of the American game.

#### THE DOWNS AND YARDS TO GAIN

THERE WAS another rule that had to be booted out of the book, however, before the players could get down to brass tacks. This concerned the surrendering the ball. There was a rule in the 80's—

similar to that of the prize-ring—that the championship could not change hands on a draw. If no team showed an actual superiority on the field, the championship was awarded to the eleven which had won it the year before. A case in point was the Yale-Princeton game, played in New York on Thanksgiving Day, 1880.

The new scrimmage was working well that day, and the ball was changing hands with pleasing frequency. The pigskin zoomed back and forth, from toe to toe, without either team scoring. As the afternoon waned, however, the Elis began to exert more pressure. With only a few minutes remaining they had driven the Tiger back to the shadow of the Princeton goal. But Francis Loney, Princeton captain, had not served on the rules committee without avail. His team had won the championship the year previous, and he perceived that if he could hold the game to a draw, Princeton would again receive the award. He ordered his Bengal mates to cease kicking and hold the ball continually. The amazed men of Yale, hot for victory, saw their path blocked. Again and again Princeton put the ball in play, gaining a yard and losing a yard, but they did not relinquish the ball until the final whistle blew with the score 0-0.

This system caused an indignant uproar from the followers of the sport and the game was threatened with abolition—the first great attack of that character upon the sport. Accordingly, when the next Intercollegiate Convention met, the primary problem was the abolition of the "block" tactics. This the rule makers of that day, accomplished by the following rule:

*"If on three consecutive fairs and downs a team shall not have advanced the ball five yards or lost ten, they must give up the ball to the other side at the spot of the fourth down."*

#### INTERFERENCE AND SIGNALS

WITH THE FOUNDATION of the game well laid, our pigskin pioneers began to work on improved tactics for offense and defense. You hear them speak today of "modern" football, but a few realize the debt our present-day game owes

to the past. Sometime, when Frank Leahy's smashing off-tackle thrust rips through the line, or when Lou Little's end-around play lashes at the flanks, think back to Bland Ballard of Princeton who introduced the principle of interference to our national sport.

The English rule that forbade a player off-side—in advance of the ball, that is—was strictly enforced during the 70's. Bland Ballard, however, conceived the idea of sending a player along at each side of the ball-carrier, to make tackling more difficult. In the beginning this maneuver was called "guarding."

It first appeared in the Harvard-Princeton game of November 15th, 1879, played—believe it or not—in Hoboken. Walter Camp was the referee that day, and when the Princeton guardian escorte set out, Camp promptly called the play back and forbade the further use of such tactics. The theory was such a good one, though, that it continued in the ensuing years and became recognized as legal. Gradually the guarders advanced in front of the carrier, and the system became known under its present terminology. It was generally recognized as a fundamental characteristic of the game thenceforth. For some curious reason, however, the recognition of off-side interference as legal was not incorporated into the rules until 1914.

The honor of having invented signals is another feather in the cap of Walter Camp. In 1882 the Yale team captained by Ray Tompkins employed two signals, devised by Camp to give his team the advantage of the direction factor in their charge. These signals were sentences: "Look out—quick—Deac!" and "Play up—sharp—Charlie!" The whole or any part of the first sentence directed the man who secured the ball in scrimmage to run to the right side of the field. The other sentence indicated the left side. In time these sentences gave way to the first letter of the sentence; then came numbers.

#### THE WEDGE IS BORN

**N**O MANEUVER in football has played such a spectacular and eventful part in the drama of the sport as the

wedges. The story of their origin is dramatic, too, for the wedge was conceived in the heat of battle, born of desperation.

There was at Princeton, in the middle 80's, a brilliant player of high mental attainments by the name of Richard Hodge, endeared to serving followers of the game in the far-off period as "Dick" Hodge. He was the Red Grange, the Frank Carideo of his time—a deceptive runner and keen strategist, endowed with that spark called football genius. In the 1884 Princeton-Penn game, the Tigers were finding it tough going. They smashed at the line to no avail; tried slanting runs that ended with a loss of yardage. They couldn't score—couldn't even gain—and the players were weakening from their strenuous efforts.

After a lunge at the center that was stopped in its tracks, Dick Hodge, playing quarterback, called time. He gathered the others around, and instructed the wings of the line to leap back in the form of a V, or wedge, with the apex converging on the defensive center. This wedge, he told them, would be reinforced on the inside by the backs, and would pile-drive straight through the middle of the Penn line.

You can imagine the blank faces that stared at him as he outlined this revolutionary play, but Dick Hodge was a quarterback who ran his team with an iron hand. The play was called, and the triangle of moving bodies catapulted against the Penn center for a long gain.

Thus the V-trick came into being—the play that eventually became the start of every football offensive in the nation. Here too, unconsciously, was the origin of all the shifts. It was not adopted generally at once, however. Princeton used it that day, and then discarded the idea until 1888 when they secretly prepared it for use as the opening play against Yale, in place of the kick off. Somehow the secret leaked out, and rumors reached the New Haven campus that a mighty mechanism was being prepared at Tiger-town that would sweep the Bulldog off the field.

At that time there was a guard in the Yale line by the name of Walter Heffelfinger—immortalized now as the All-Time All-American guard of the sport. "This

rumor," Heffelfinger said long years afterward, "gave me considerable worry, for I had thrown my heart and soul into the game and desired to excel. So I conjured up a vague idea of what this mechanism must be—a mass formation of some kind. And I made up my mind to meet it by jumping on top of it and smashing it like a barrel."

When the day of the game came, Yale won the toss and took the ball, which made it necessary that Princeton defer the manoeuver until the opening of the second half. The Tiger waited. When the second half began Princeton formed its eleven players into a solid V, instead of spreading along the line for the kick-off. Heffelfinger, with the other two of the Yale center trio, waited ten yards away.

Bill George, Princeton center, put the ball in play by touching it to the ground and to his toe simultaneously—a technical kick-off without releasing the ball. Quickly he passed the pigskin to Jerry Black, half-back, who hunched down inside the mass of bodies. The Princeton juggernaut plowed forward, stepping in unison, held together by clamped arms. Straight toward Heffelfinger they came, and in their ranks were mighty football men of that day. In the front line were Yup Cook, House Jane-way and Bill George; Buck Irvine's arms were clasped around Hector Cowan's burly body. The other two defenders of the front line were bowled over, but Heffelfinger lunged forward and leaped high in the air. He completely cleared the heads of the men in front rank and came down upon the others in the middle, squashing the formation. He had stopped the wedge, even though Jerry Black squirmed out for a long gain before Billy Bull and Lee McClung dragged him down.

#### BOXING THE TACKLE

**T**HIS same momentous game of 1888 saw also the origin of another manoeuver. On the second play of the game Robert Elliott Spear, now head of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, but a long-haired slashing end for Princeton in those days, teamed up with his tackle, Yup Cook, to form a two-man box

around the pugnacious Billy Rhodes, Yale's right tackle. Simultaneously Snakes Ames and Jerry Black, Princeton backs, erased Lonnie Stagg, right end of Yale, from the picture. Hector Cowan came out from his tackle position in the Princeton line and took the ball. He snaked through the opening between tackle and end and ran to Yale's ten-yard line before Billy Bull laid him low.

The play was too revolutionary for Referee William A. Brooks of Harvard, however. He ruled it illegal, and gave the ball to Yale on the spot where the foul had occurred. Despite this decision, though, boxing the tackle and boxing all the other lineman has grown to be a fundamental element in the play of the offense.

#### MAN IN MOTION

**O**CCASIONALLY spectators are treated to a manoeuver in which a player on the offense starts moving before the ball is put in play, running diagonally and slightly backward across the field. Its purpose, ordinarily, is to divert at least one defensive player who must cover the man in motion. This principle is the last vestige of the most sensational, spectacular and momentous system of manoeuvres in the game—and flying wedge, flying interference, and various other flying plays.

Prior to 1894 there were no restrictions to prevent any or all of the players from grouping behind the line and starting the offensive move before the ball was put in play. For some strange reason, though, no football tactician recognized the possibilities this offered until 1892. As has been stated before, the V-Trick, or Princeton Wedge, became the formal opening play of the game from '88 to '92. In the early '90's, however, Loring F. Deland, famous in the social and business life of Boston, became interested in following the Harvard games. Not a player himself, Deland studied the game from the stands, fascinated by its opportunities for tactical innovations.

He saw the working of the Princeton Wedge in its heyday, and thought he could improve on it. So he went to the Harvard football leaders and suggested that they

start the wedge before the ball was put in play, and start it from a point thirty-five yards from the line of scrimmage. Thus the Harvard attack would be smashing down the field while the opponents would have to delay their counter-charge until the ball was snapped back. This would occur just as the flying wedge reached the line.

Captain Bernie Trafford of Harvard thought it a great idea, and the Cantabs began practicing it secretly in preparation for the game with Yale that was scheduled for Hampton Park, Springfield, on November 19th, 1892.

The Elis won the toss and opened the game with the familiar wedge. Up and down the field the teams battled, with little advantage on either side. When the second half opened the Yale men lined up, expecting the V-Trick again. To the amazement of Yale and the massed spectators, all the players in crimson fell back thirty-five yards and split into two sections. Trafford, the quarterback, crouched over the ball ten yards away from the goggle-eyed Yale line that could not charge until the pigskin was snapped.

Trafford waved his hand and the two Harvard sections leaped into motion, converging on the ball and forming a mighty flying wedge as they reached the center of the field. Just as the others reached him Trafford put the ball in play, handling it back to Charles Brewer within the moving wedge. Yale charged then, but the momentum of the swift-moving mass scattered Bull-dogs all over the field. It would have been a sure touchdown if Brewer had not stumbled over one of his own men on the 25-yard line so that Frank Butterworth could pull him down.

The play was an instant sensation. The press and the football world marveled over it for months, and by the next season the Flying Wedge had become the formal opening play for every team in the country. George Woodruff, coach of Pennsylvania, introduced the flying principle into all of Penn's scrimmage plays, and stupendous variations of it cropped up everywhere. Bones began to crack, muscles to sprain, and though the touchdown score mounted, the voice of reformers was too potent. The second great attack on the sport had begun.

Two factions arose—for and against the flying principle—and they battled it out until 1897 when the manoeuver was generally outlawed.

### THE WINGBACK ATTACK

PROBABLY the most conspicuous feature in modern tactics is the employment of the wingback, both single and double. The wingback, as almost every one knows, is the halfback stationed on offense outside of his own end and usually about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  yards behind the line. The use of this form of attack is associated with the name of Glenn Warner, the old Cornell player and coach of the Carlisle Indian, Cornell, Pittsburgh, Stanford and Temple University. In its modern dress, particularly in the double form, the formation undoubtedly is the invention of "Pop" Warner; but the principle of the wingback goes back to a far older day.

In 1890 Amos Stagg, familiarly and affectionately known to us as Lonnie coached Springfield, being one of the first pioneer coaches in the sport. While there Lonnie was the originator of many novel formations and plays. One of these was known as "ends back." In this formation the ends on offense dropped two and more yards behind their line becoming temporarily double wingbacks. These ends carried the ball and struck all points just as the double wingbacks do today. To Lonnie Stagg, who has celebrated his fifty years of football by beginning a new career at the age of 70, at Pacific College, belongs credit for the origination of the wingback idea.

### THE RUNNING GUARD

WHEN the guards pull out of the line, on offense, and swing swiftly into the interference, the memory of many a hale old spectator runs back to the Princeton-Yale game, at Eastern Park, Brooklyn, on Thanksgiving Day, 1890. A frozen crust covered the ground. The spectators had never heard of coon coats in those times but shivered in the wind with a temperature about 20 degrees above zero. To add to the memorableness of the day a

grandstand bearing 7000 spectators fell to the ground just before the game. When the officials called the captains together, Billy Rhodes of the Elis and Edgar Poe of Princeton, the latter whose nose had been broken a week before in the Penn game, caused consternation by wearing a frame over it. This was the first of four innovations presented in this game.

The officials proceeded cautiously to examine it—the original nose guard. This contrivance having passed examination, they noticed a wind bandage around the ears of Walter Heffelfinger, Yale's great guard, covering the side of his head and a part of his face, the fore-runner of the head gear or helmet. This, too, passed examination and the game began.

Shoe cleats, in this period, were not pegs but straight strips nailed diagonally across the soles of the shoe. When feet began to whirl Yale's showed the first peg-cleats. And they needed them, for so hard was the frozen ground that straight cleats scarcely could cut the surface.

Then came the fourth and greatest innovation of the day. Walter Heffelfinger, for the first time in the annals of the game pulled out of line on offense and headed the interference around the end. Fleet as Theseus, a giant six feet two and one half inches in height and with a blocking skill that has never been surpassed, Heff raged up and down the field, bowling down the Tiger tacklers and convoying Lee McClung. Yale's crack halfback time and again to Princeton's goal for a touchdown. The Elis piled up the record score of that time against Princeton: Yale 32, Princeton 0.

#### "THEY SHALL NOT PASS!"

**I**N THE CAPITOL of Pennsylvania 16 years ago, sat a grave young man, directing the public utilities of the state, and acting as confidential counsel to Governor Gifford Pinchot who in his time was freshman captain at Yale and later a varsity guard. Formerly he was a federal judge and later Attorney General of the State of Pennsylvania. Sixty-six years ago he was a stupendous guard and oarsman at Yale, the strongest athlete in college ranks.

In the early '90's he became football coach at Pennsylvania and instantly the game began to revolutionize. In came the quick kick, the augmented line, the augmented backs, backs formed right and backs formed left; the direct pass from center for a punt; and the mighty formation of "guards back." This man is George W. Woodruff, the foremost coach of America in his time. One of his great creations that still continues to flash, play after play, is the smashing-end defense, in which the defensive end, playing close, crashes into the opposing interference.

Prior to Woodruff's day the ends deployed far out, from five to seven yards. Their orders were to stay there and wait until the tackle or halfback broke the interference, whereupon they would down the carrier or turn him in. George Woodruff reversed this classic formula. His ends were coached to play close to their tackles on defense to charge across the line instantly and crash into the interference before it could get under way, forcing the carrier into the open, where the backs would run him to the sidelines or smash him down. Thus in the middle '90's there came into existence the two schools of defensive end play which still dominate the game.

The varied defensive formations of today are quite recent in origin. The "Box Defense," 7-2-2 or 6-2-1-2, or the "Diamond Defense," 7-1-2-1 or 6-1-3-1, were the inventions of Harvard's great coach of 36 years ago, Percy Haughton.

If this treatise has tended to belittle in any way the originality of our modern coaches, I hereby apologize. Such was not my intention. I wanted merely to point out that most of the plays in the repertoire of modern football have their beginnings in the public domain of the past. There has been a great deal of discussion in regards to the first man to employ the shift principle. As has already been pointed out, Dick Hodge, in 1884 led the parade. Six years later Lonnie Stagg used the idea in his ends-back play, and Phil King of Princeton borrowed from it to create the Revolving Tandem.

In 1909 Percy Haughton introduced his famous "wheel-shift" by which he reversed

the long or strong side of the Harvard line from left to right and return. In 1911 Harry Williams, famous Yale quarterback and Minnesota coach, devised the Minnesota shift of the end-out, creating a small "line divide" as used by Notre Dame, is a manoeuver so old that its origin is lost in antiquity. Rockne revived it and polished it up with perfect executive to make it a potent scoring weapon.

You will see these revivals, in a slightly different form, on every football field today. The "shoe-string play" for instance—sometimes called the "Injured man play"—was first used in the Yale-Princeton game of 1893. Phil King was the Tiger quarterback, and Dougal Ward, end, feigned injury at the side of the field as the others lined up. The Yale layers did not see him until he was catching King's lateral heave for a goodly gain.

The Statue of Liberty play is another old one. In this the fullback pretends to throw a forward pass, spreading the be-

fense, only to have his end skirt behind him and take the ball from his hands for a wide sweep behind delayed interference. This little gem first appeared in the Princeton-Harvard engagement of 1912, Tacks Hardwick, brilliant Harvard end, working it successfully with the cooperation of Charley Brickley.

It is true, of course, that the origin of any play is not as important to the fans of 1949 as is the perfect execution of its modern counterpart. The perfect timing and coordination of the Southern California end-around play is a thing of beauty in itself. The synchronized blocking of the Notre Dame line, and the studied deception of the West Point attack are sufficient unto themselves. Some of these bright Autumn days, though, when you see them clicking off the yards up the field you might think back for a moment to the pigskin pioneers of another day who blazed the bright path that these youngsters follow.

## AT YOUR WRIST

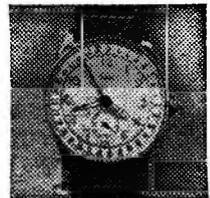
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# MONEY—ARM

By REYNOLDS PHILLIPS

**Western U.'s high-powered Loggers stormed onto the field, a horde of red-shirted giants who operated on the bruising power system of grinding cleats and gnarled fists. And who's the guy to stop them? Not Atom-Arm Lowery? Not the dude whose fancy pants hadn't touched the sod all season?**

**T**HE GAME WAS IN THE BAG. It was fourth quarter now and the Fremont Generals were on Sprague Tech's forty, rolling toward another touchdown they didn't really need.

But the show was not yet over. Not for Cort Lowery. Not so long as his passing arm continued to make sweet music and Wee Willie Weston, scout for the mighty, professional Tigers, sat up there and watched.

Lowery stepped into the Fremont huddle, two hundred pounds of lean meat and hard muscle, a good-looking guy with a nice straight nose and a stern sort of jaw that looked impressive on the sport pages. Elation ran through him like an electric current. It had been a good day.

"Ninety this time," he said. "You ends have been slowing down. Let's shake a leg on this one."

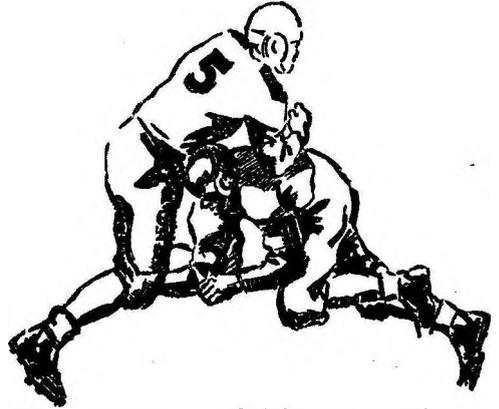
He was aware that Bronc Muller, the workhorse fullback, was eyeing him coolly.

"Sure" said the Bronc. "Shake a leg, boys, so the Atom Arm will complete another pass and maybe the Tigers will add another thousand to the contract they offer him."

Quick anger boiled up inside Lowery. He snapped, "You want to throw this pass, Muller? If you don't, then don't object if I throw it."

They broke up the huddle. Lowery crouched behind Murphin, the center. The electric current had quit purring inside him. He'd known, of course, that Muller and some of the rest resented him because he was the glamor boy while they did the rough work. He'd gotten used to the silence that set him apart from the others. But it hadn't broken into the open before.

He filched the ball from Murphin, spun and faked to Muller. He drifted back, hiding the ball. At the precise instant, he turned and surveyed the Tech secondary



with expert eyes. Calvin was cutting on the twenty-five. Lowery cocked his arm and let fly, and he knew from the feel that it was good, leading Calvin perfectly. The Fremont end stretched, gathered in the leather. The Tech safety dropped him on the nineteen.

The partisan crowd poured down its noise, music from forty thousand throats. They sensed a Big Twelve championship in the making today. One more win, the big one next week, would do it.

Big one? *Today's the big one*, thought Lowery. *Today Wee Willie Weston is in the stands.*

He hurried his team into the huddle, one eye on the clock. He called another pass.

"We got a running attack, don't forget," said Doc Meeves, the wing-footed halfback. "We been passing all afternoon."

"We've been making 'em, too," Lowery said. "Now let's go!"

Bronc Muller went into the line, head down, realistic as anything. Lowery stood waiting, hiding the ball against his leg. They gave him protection. Abruptly he went up on his toes and fired. Bogdanovich, the right end, gathered it in on the twelve. Joe Rocko, the blocking back, nudged one defender from his path, blasted another, and Boggie went all the way.

Old Amos Hemphill pulled him out then,

and he left the field with the thunder pounding down around him. The Fremont cheering section stood and roared his name. He had come a long way, he thought sharply, for a kid from brawling River Street.

Hemphill met him at the sideline, a tall man with gauntness in his cheeks and the frailty of years weighing down his sparse frame.

"You were great, Cort." A strange brightness lay in the old man's eyes. "Like Luckman and Baugh at their best."

"Don't get carried away," grinned Lowery, and trotted over and parked his still clean pants upon the bench.

The game ended and the Fremont band paraded on the field, and the students came down and grabbed Lowery and hoisted him to their shoulders. They carried him to the gym, while the rest of the players walked. He was their boy. He was the Atom Arm, a name some sportswriter had coined; a name that had caught on and spread the fame of Cort Lowery across the land.

In the locker room there were the usual remarks, bitterness camouflaged as humor. "Look, the Atom Arm's got dirt on his shirt." "Hey, is that sweat on Lowery's brow?"

He ignored them, as always, aloof from them behind the invisible wall he built around himself. It didn't really matter. Fremont U. was just one rung in the ladder he had set out to climb, a rung that would presently be behind him.

**O**LD AMOS HEMPHILL came in and made them a little speech.

"You're a marvelous team," he told them. The pride glowed in his eyes and a quiver ran in his voice. "I believe you'll beat Western next week. I really believe you'll do it. It would be nice to win a Big Twelve title."

His voice choked up and he turned and left the room.

Beside Lowery on a bench, Joe Rocko, the blocking back, shook his head slowly.

"Poor old guy," Rocko said. "Fifteen years at this school, and he's never won a championship."

"Yeah," Lowery said. "Fifteen years in the same rut. Seventy years old and he's still got the rah-rah spirit.."

"What's wrong with that?" Rocko's voice had an edge.

Lowery tossed a shoe into his locker. "You can't buy biscuits with a college cheer. Around here the tradition's so thick you can scoop it up with a shovel, but it won't even make vegetables grow. Not the kind of cabbage I want."

Rocko shook his head again. "You're a cold-blooded guy."

"I'm a business man," Lowery said. He looked at the halfback. "I play football for just one guy—Cort Lowery. And I don't care what anybody thinks."

He got up and went into the shower, surprised to find himself thinking of Amos Hemphill. He felt a curious sort of sympathy for the old guy. He had got to know the coach better, these past two years, than he had ever known the uncle and aunt who had raised him. Hemphill had taken him into his home; it was a theory Hemphill had, that coach and quarterback should work together like partners. Living together they had time to work out strategy together, solve team problems mutually.

It would be nice, thought Lowery, if the old man could win himself a Big Twelve title. He was about ready to be put out to pasture. A championship send off would give him something pleasant to think about while he sat in his rocking chair.

After dressing, Lowery waited for Hemphill and they drove home together. Out of a long silence, Hemphill said, "Western had a feeler from the Sugar Bowl yesterday."

Lowery shifted his hands on the wheel. "They'd better wait till Western plays us. We're as undefeated as they are."

"Nobody thinks we will be after next Saturday. They think Killer Kinnard will be too hot for us to handle." The old man paused. "What do you think, Cort? You played on the same River Street high school team with Kinnard."

"He'll give us more trouble than any two guys we've faced all year," Lowery said. The bitterness of past years, of River Street, crept up inside him. "If Kinnard hadn't been a great football man, he'd have gone to reform school instead of college. He's a gutter fighter. Typical of too many River Street kids."

"The kids you're trying to help out with your River Street Boys Club?" Hemphill asked.

Lowery didn't answer. He was self-conscious about the fact he was giving up his Sundays and some of his evenings to coach the kids over there. It was funny thing. Apart from his own career, the River Street kids were the only thing he felt deeply about. He'd been one himself. His kid brother was one now.

In the coach's living room they found a large man waiting. Lowery knew instantly it was Wee Willie Weston, the Tiger scout.

Hemphill introduced them, and they sat down. Weston lit a cigar. The scout had been a great tackle once, but now his muscles had run to fat and he overflowed the chair in which he sat. He looked half asleep sitting there. But Lowery was aware that the half-lidded eyes were studying him.

"You put on quite a show today, Lowery," Weston said. "You're as good a passer as I've seen."

"I don't waste time on anything else," Lowery said.

Weston contemplated his cigar. "Amos tells me you were quite a runner in high school. A better runner maybe than Kinnard."

"That was in high school," said Lowery.

Weston said nothing for a moment. Lowery felt vaguely annoyed. This was the thing he had waited for, and pointed for, through the long years of college toil—an interview with the pros. And the Tigers were the team he wanted, the big outfit with the biggest checkbook in professional football. But the interview was not going, somehow, quite as he had anticipated.

Weston's sleepy eyes regarded him. "You believe in specialization, eh?"

"This is the age of specialization," Lowery said. He thought, *This is the time to show him you think like a pro, not like a cheering undergraduate.* "In football, in everything. That's my philosophy, Weston. If I stick strictly to passing, I'll be that much better at it. And I'll be able to serve some ball club twice as long as any jack of all trades."

"And make twice as much money," Weston smiled.

Then the Tiger scout lumbered to his

feet. "It was nice meeting you, Lowery. I aim to stick around for the Western game and watch both you and Kinnard. After that, I'll probably be ready to talk business—with one of you."

Lowery turned and went upstairs to his room. It wasn't good, not at all. He'd known Weston had come out from the East to watch him today, and after his performance he'd expected the man to make him an offer. Now, apparently, he had only half a chance to catch on with the Tigers. Killer Kinnard had the other half. Or did Kinnard have more than that?

He thought about Kinnard and, as always, the thought put a bitter taste in his mouth. He and Kinnard had grown up together in the squalid suburb of River Street. They had fought, hard and often, rolling on dirty sidewalks, in the mud of vacant lots. In River Street there wasn't much for kids to do but roam the streets, and trouble came to them naturally.

The trouble between Lowery and Kinnard had started as kid stuff and had grown. Kinnard had laid it on the line in blunt words: "Lowery, you think you're too damn good for this neighborhood. You act like you was born wearin' a tux an' drivin' a Caddy."

It wasn't true. Not quite, anyway. It was just that Lowery hated the squalor and the things that went with it, the hard coating it gave kids like Kinnard and himself. He wanted something better, and right from the start he set his course in that direction. Somehow, too, there had grown inside him the urge to help take some of the curse off River Street for the kids who were there now.

ON SUNDAY he crossed the city to the River Street district. His boys' club was meeting Greenwood for the grid championship of the city Boys' League. Lowery sat on the bench, watching the team he had built. They were smooth; a heads-up bunch of kids in their mid-teens, and Lowery felt a touch of pride in the knowledge he had done a good job in the little spare time he'd been able to devote to coaching them.

But their skill was not quite a match for the heavier team from Greenwood,

even though Lowery's kid brother scored twice on long runs. They lost by a touchdown.

In the dressing room, they were almost bawling about it.

"We got no fight out there—no guts at all!" The lament came from Lowery's kid brother, Andy.

Lowery grinned, trying to dispel the gloom. "How many times do I have to tell you guys—you can't lick power and ability with fight alone? Football's no life and death matter anyhow. Forget it, guys."

Instantly he sensed an ugliness to the silence that hit the little room. A big red-headed kid made a disgusted motion with a freckled hand.

"You can't lick nothin' with fight, he says!" the redhead mocked. "What do you know about fight, Lowery?"

It startled Lowery, like a slap in the face. He thought about Kinnard, the dozens of other kids he'd fought along River Street. He'd left all that behind now, all but the harsh memories that had driven him to help build this club.

"Fight?" he said. "I know football, Red."

Another kid said, "I wish Killer Kinnard had stayed in town. He'd have made us a real coach. He'd have had us in there sluggin' those big guys today."

Lowery tried to find words and failed. He looked around the twenty or so kids and read what was in their faces. He saw disgust there. Just wrought up at losing, he told himself.

Then the redhead scoffed, "The great Cort Lowery, the Atom Arm! That don't cut any ice with me. You stand back and let the other guys do the fightin'. We're wise to you, Lowery—even if the sports-writers ain't."

There was a quick flurry of motion. Andy came off a bench like a striking snake, threw a punch that smashed the redhead back against the wall. Lowery moved in swiftly and pried them apart.

Andy looked up at him, tears oozing in his eyes. "I hadda slug him, Cort. You're my brother and he can't talk that way about you." He paused, then whispered hoarsely, "But he's right, Cort—awful right."

It shook Lowery. He turned and walked out, slowly, fighting the turmoil in his chest. On the street, he was surprised to find Amos Hemphill waiting for him.

"I came out to see your boys in action. Sort of a postman's holiday." Hemphill smiled. "You're a funny guy, Cort."

Lowery didn't feel funny. He told him so.

"I'm serious," Hemphill said. "You're supposed to be a thoroughly cold operator, a guy without emotion or sentiment. Every time you throw a pass, it's labeled 'Pay to the order of Cort Lowery'."

"That's right," Lowery said.

"Is it?" Hemphill fell into step beside him. "How about the Lowery that talked business men into getting behind this club, got the kids off the street? Even spent part of his summer's earnings to buy them football equipment."

"A waste of time and money," Lowery said bitterly. He told Hemphill what had happened, getting it off his chest.

They climbed into Hemphill's car and drove along River Street. Past the shabby houses and shabbier yards, and the business district with its frame buildings and ancient, forbidding brick. There were still too many kids on the street, hanging around a tavern entrance, darting into traffic.

"So they're disappointed in you," Hemphill said at last. "You can't help them much, unless they can look up to you."

"What do you expect me to do?" Lowery demanded. "I've done everything I know how. Everything but build them the new clubhouse they need—and I'd do that if I had the dough."

He thought about the kids. They weren't bad to start with; they simply lacked a means of employing their energy along proper channels. Like Andy, who was being raised by the same aunt and uncle who had brought up Cort. They meant all right, but they didn't pay much attention to a kid.

"Youngsters need an idol, someone they'd like to pattern themselves after," Hemphill said quietly. "That could be worth more than all the clubhouses and equipment you can buy."

"I'm no Dick Tracy," said Lowery.

"I'm nothing but a beat-out social worker, and a flop at that. I tried my damndest and I got kicked in the teeth. It's going to hurt, Amos."

It was still hurting when he arrived at the Fremont locker room Monday. The place was running high with talk of beating Western this week. Joe Rocko arrived at the locker next to Lowery's, grinning like a kid on Christmas morning.

Lowery scowled. "Somebody leave you a million bucks, Rocko?"

"Almost as good." Rocko looked around, lowered his voice. "Keep it under your hat, Lowery. Wee Willie Weston of the Tigers looked me up today and made me an offer. *Me*, a mere blocking guy nobody ever heard of!"

LOWERY sat down, a mixture of emotions churning in his chest. He had received no commitment from Weston, nothing more than a reception that had been cool at best. He looked at Rocko in amazement. Rocko, the workhorse he had never taken seriously.

"Oh, he didn't offer me the kind of gravy you and Kinnard 'll get," Rocko said. "But it was nice. A bonus for signing, too."

"Swell," Lowery said. "Very nice, Rocko. They must really want you, to offer a bonus."

But what did you have to do to make the Tigers really want you? he wondered. What more than he had done last Saturday?

Practice did not go well for Cort Lowery this week. His passing was off for the first time this season. Not much, just a shade; just enough to put the ball inches beyond the grasping fingers of receivers. He fought to get back the old coolness under fire that had been his hallmark.

At game time, Western was a 13-point favorite. The papers had dwelt less upon the fact that this one would decide the Big Twelve title and probably a Bowl bid, than upon its aspects as a battle between Killer Kinnard and Lowery the Atom Arm. Fremont Stadium was packed to the rim with fifty thousand people.

They ran signals, and today the nerves were jumping along Lowery's spine. It

had never been this way before. He wondered where Wee Willie Weston sat, up there in the sea of humanity. The Boys' Club team was up there, too; he had sent Andy tickets.

The Western Loggers came rampaging out of the tunnel, streaming onto the field like a horde of red-shirted giants. Lowery eyed them and was impressed. They had run roughshod over all opposition. They ran to bruising power on offense, and on defense were skilled in the use of hands to the head. Rough customers, these Loggers; the hospital lists of their opponents attested to that.

He caught sight of Killer Kinnard. The guy did not look impressive, even in shoulder pads. But he moved with the easy grace of a cat and he could explode into sudden action like a bomb. Runner, kicker, passer, and the best defensive back in the Big Twelve. *But in pro ball, he'll be tops at nothing*, thought Lowery. Then he remembered Weston's words: "I'll be ready to talk business—with one of you."

Old Amos Hemphill called his squad together at the sideline, just before the kickoff. He stood there facing them, with the sun bringing out the lines of age in his face.

"It's always a strange feeling to know you're doing a thing for the last time," he said. "I just wanted to tell you this is one of those things. It's the last time I'll ever stand here and send a team on the field."

*The older he gets, the cornier he gets*, Lowery thought impatiently. Then he did a double take on the old man's words.

"What do you mean—last time?" he asked.

"Just that," the old coach said. "The regents told me last night. The retirement age is seventy, and I find they mean it."

Lowery swallowed. He'd thought about this, talked about it. But down deep, he'd sort of believed old Amos would keep going forever. Hemphill had never won a title; till this year he'd never had the material. With him it was today or never.

Lowery had kept his attitude on football cold and impersonal. Now he wondered at the little tremor that ran through him. Lord, was he going soft all over?

Western won the toss and elected to re-

ceive. Lowery sat down on the bench. Hemphill did not have enough manpower to use the full platoon system, but Lowery had made it clear from the first that he was a specialist. There was no sense getting himself fagged out or mangled performing defensive tasks someone else could handle as well.

It was Kinnard who took the kickoff, standing squarely athwart his goal line. He loafed out to the ten, running loosely, easily. Calvin, the end, sifted neatly through. Kinnard exploded then, into a blur of swerving motion. A straight arm lashed out, flooring Calvin.

Kinnard cut for the sideline, reversed again, picked his way through tacklers and ran to the forty-five before Murphin dropped him. Deathly silence settled on the stands.

The Western drive carried on up field. Kinnard peeled off yardage in large chunks, working off a single wing, driving outside tackle, around end, cutting back through the middle.

On the twenty-two, Fremont held. Kinnard faked a fourth-down run, drifted back, and calmly dropped a pass into a receiver's arms on the ten. The receiver went the rest of the way. Kinnard kicked the point and it was 7 to 0.

Lowery picked up his helmet and ran onto the field.

Doc Meeves brought the kickoff back to the twenty. It was no spot for a pass but Lowery called one anyway. He faded back and pitched it to Bogdanovich. Kinnard smashed the Fremont end to the ground on the thirty-one. First down.

The old coolness was coming back to Lowery now. He was going to give Wee Willie Weston an eyeful today. The Tigers would need a passer next year to replace aging Slinger Coy.

The drive carried to midfield. Doc Meeves was running nicely, affording Lowery an opportunity to mix passes and runs into a baffling concoction. An outstanding passer and a top-flight runner, teamed together, added up to a more potent threat than a single jack of all trades, he told himself.

They had penetrated now to the Western forty-five. Lowery went back and looked

around for a receiver. Bogdanovich was breaking into the clear, twenty yards upfield. Lowery let fly, with the sweet sensation that the pass was perfect. In that instant, a red-jerseyed figure came storming out of nowhere, went high in the air with Bogdanovich. It was Kinnard, and he came down with the ball. He threaded his way back to the Fremont forty before Bronc Muller nailed him.

Lowery turned and trotted toward the sideline. He passed close to Kinnard and saw the grin on the man's pinched, dark face.

"If it ain't Fancy-Pants," Kinnard sneered. "Not leavin' just when the party's gettin' interesting, Lowery?"

Lowery stopped. "I'll be back, Kinnard. And I'll throw that ball right down your throat."

"Baloney," said Kinnard. "You can't take it when the going gets rough. You never could, Fancy-Pants."

**F**IVE MINUTES later Western scored again, and made the point. Lowery took a look at Hemphill. The old man was sitting these rigid as a plank, holding his shoulders back. Lowery cursed, feeling the coolness deserting him, the desperation creeping up inside and shaking him.

Midway in the second period, he got a march going again. He was hitting with the passes and they moved across midfield.

But the Western linemen were beginning to pour through now. Their power was beginning to tell. They smashed through Lowery's protective screen and swarmed around him. He jockeyed them, dodging, holding them off with a stiff arm. He'd never liked this sort of thing. He liked to keep his pants clean.

In the huddle he said, "Let's have a little more protection on those passes. I can't even see my receivers, there's so many of those guys piling in on me."

"Listen, Atom Arm, would you like to try blocking those babies awhile?" Muller asked.

Lowery scowled and called the play. He completed a pass to the Western thirty-eight.

On the next one he faked the pass,

and sent Doc Meeves for fifteen yard on a naked reverse.

He went back to pass again. Only Meeves was in the clear. Lowery feathered it to him, and Meeves caught it on the fifteen and ran. He eluded one tackler but he did not elude Kinnard.

The Western halfback caught him with a neck hold and stopped him as though he had run into a tight wire. Meeves hit the ground hard, Kinnard atop him, twisting deliberately at his neck. Meeves did not get up.

They brought a stretcher from the sideline. Lowery felt the anger flowing up through him. He looked at Kinnard and said, "You'll never get out of the gutter, will you?"

Killer Kinnard grinned and walked away.

Evers, who was not much of a runner, came in for Meeves. On the first play, he missed the hole and was smeared at the line.

Lowery went back to pass. Free of the threat of Meeves' tricky footwork, the Western forwards smashed in faster than ever. The secondary concentrated on covering all receivers. Lowery's pass was slapped down in the end zone.

Two plays later, Western took over on their own five-yard line. The first one looked like a running play but turned out to be a quick kick. Murphin, the Fremont center, stormed through and got his massive chest in the way. The leather went *thock* against it and tumbled into the end zone, where a Western back scooped it up and tried to run. Bogdanovich pulled him down.

A safety. Two points for the Generals. But it was small pickings beside Western's two touchdowns.

At halftime they got the bad news on Meeves. The scatback was out for the day. Bronc Muller looked up from the mattress on which he was sprawled and said bitterly, "Well, we've still got the Atom Arm! We never needed ball carriers anyway."

"Shut up," Lowery snapped.

**T**HE THIRD QUARTER was murder. Lowery could not get the attack rolling. Without Meeves to run that ball,

Hemphill's fine offensive machine became a bicycle with one wheel missing.

Evers tried but he was not fast, not shifty. Muller made some yardage through the line but Muller was no breakaway threat. The Western lineman stormed through Lowery's protection. They made little pretense of trying to block his passes and concentrated upon smashing him to the ground. It didn't matter that twice they drew penalties for roughing.

The minutes ran away and the play saw-sawed back and forth, with Western appearing content to hold their 14-2 lead.

Fremont was on its own thirty-five. Lowery threw to Evers, and Kinnard came over and drove Evers to the ground before the ball got there. The officials ruled interference, giving them a first down on their forty-two. Lowery saw Kinnard's dark grin and the anger seemed to turn suddenly cold inside him.

He looked up at the strangely silent stands and thought of the River Street kids up there. He could almost see the red-head's emotion-twisted face, hear his voice: "What do you know about fight, Lowery?" The memory jabbed at him. But what had he ever cared what anyone thought?

What was it Hemphill had said about an idol? Suppose those kids selected Kinnard for theirs? He thought, *Suppose Andy turns out to be like Kinnard?*

The huddle had formed and someone said, "Waiting for a street car, Lowery?"

He stepped into the huddle, thinking suddenly of Wee Willie Weston up there. As suddenly, he wiped Weston from his mind. *The devil with the Tigers*, something inside him said.

He was all anger and eagerness to get going now. "There's going to be some changes," he said, and enjoyed the surprise in their faces when he gave them the play.

He got the ball from Murphin. He feinted the handoff to Evers, fading back for a moment. Then, abruptly, he spun and knifed inside guard, leaving two astonished Western linemen grasping the air behind him.

His long legs carried him into the secondary. It was a strange feeling, lugging the leather again, somehow a good feeling, too. The Western fullback, Donnell,

loomed beside him and he cross-stepped and nearly got his feet tangled. He planted a hand in Donnell's face and pushed. He broke into the clear, running, with the blood singing in his veins.

At last somebody hit him from behind, someone faster than he, and he went down hard. There was a chalk mark beneath him. He looked at the marker and saw it was the Western forty.

He faked a sneak and sent Muller into the middle for five. On the next one he faded as though to pass, and he ran instead. He hustled off tackle with Rocko cutting a swath before him, and he went to the twenty-seven before they dropped him. On a quick-opener through the middle, Muller went for a first down.

From the sixteen-yard line, Lowery started to run, wide to the right. Bogdanovich broke into the clear, and he passed. Boggie got it on the nine and they hammered him out of bounds.

Fading for another pass, Lowery saw the Loggers had left their right flank open. He tucked the ball under his arm and ran that way. He cut back, spun away from one tackler, straight-armed another. Someone smashed into him and he clawed his way free. The bruising contact, which he had avoided for so long, was suddenly good. The tricks of the running trade were coming back to him; they were like swimming, once learned you didn't forget.

He saw the goal line and Kinnard driving in. From somewhere came the hurtling form of Joe Rocko. Rocko and Kinnard met with a resounding crash. Rocko, the workhorse, was all at once a wonderful guy to have around.

Muller kicked the point after touchdown, making the score 14-9, and the band struck up *Fight, Fremont, Fight*, as they trotted back to kick off. Cartwright, Lowery's defensive replacement, came running onto the field. Lowery waved him off.

"Don't tell me!" said Muller, but he was grinning now.

"Why not?" Lowery growled. "When we take it away from these guys, I want to be around."

But they did not take it away from the Loggers immediately. The big Western club came driving back, lashed by their

own anger, stung by a snarling Killer Kinnard.

Grudgingly, the Generals gave ground. They were weary and battered. Hemphill did not have the manpower of the Western club, the big platoons running smartly on and off the field. Hemphill had only a front-line outfit, bloody and bruised, battling grimly now to salvage the old man's last chance at a Big Twelve championship.

**T**HE WESTERN DRIVE reached the Fremont thirty. Bit by bit, Lowery had been edging in closer to the line, up where the action was. He knew, with a field general's knowledge, that presently the Loggers would discover that fact and send a pass receiver behind him.

Donnell smacked the middle, driving for four solid yards. They lined up again, and Lowery sensed the pass. At the snap, he feinted a move toward the scrimmage. He saw the red-shirted man heading his way, and pretended for an instant not to notice. The man was not an end. It was Kinnard.

Kinnard cut sharply toward the sideline. Lowery had thought he had the play figured to a fine point, giving them just enough room to lure them into passing. Now he discovered he had miscalculated. Something had happened to the speed in his legs; he had worked harder, run harder today than he was accustomed to. For an instant, panic gripped him.

Kinnard turned and took the pass. Lowery left his feet in a driving tackle, packing into it all the fury that had been powering him today, all his dislike for Killer Kinnard. He struck the man's rock-ribbed thighs. The shock ran through his body like a jolt of electricity. Blackness came and went. But there was a sweetness to it that surprised him.

He raised his head to see the ball rolling free. He yelled, but Rocko was already there, falling on it, cuddling it to him on the fifteen-yard line.

Lowery got up grinning. He sent his team into action swiftly, while the shock of the fumble was still on the Loggers. He sent Muller into the line—without the ball. He faked a shovel pass to Bogdanovich, coming around the end.

Then he turned and, ball under his arm, fought through the line. A hard shoulder jarred him, hands reached for him, clawing, and slipped away. He spun, fighting like a madman, and battled his way through a forest of crimson timber to the thirty-three. It was Kinnard who dropped him. Kinnard who dug an elbow into his middle, a forearm into his throat.

They were magnificent, his Generals. They kept the drive going, play by play. They blocked, and got up to block again. They fought for the yards, grimly, and the yards came hard. Lowery called plays with an eye on the clock.

He passed and he ran. The Loggers could not figure which he would do. The shirt was ripped half off his back, streaming out behind him like a tattered blue pennant when he ran. His lungs were on fire and his feet felt mired in mud.

They drove into Western territory, mixing the T with a single wing they had used more often in the past than lately. Lowery ripped off tackle and went for a first down on the thirty. It felt as though a hundred Western giants had piled atop him. He thought back on the cool guy who had once stood, aloof from the pain and the sweat of physical combat, and thrown his passes like barbs of lightning; the specialist, the kind of a guy the Tigers would have wanted. It seemed a long time ago.

In the huddle, Muller looked at Lowery. There was respect in his eyes now. He said wearily, "I dunno, Cort. You can't do it all. I wish you'd let me lug that apple."

"Good enough," Lowery said. "Sixty-five, optional lateral. I'll do the trailing, Bronc."

He got into the middle of the T, plucked the ball from Murphin. He spun, handed off to Muller. The hole opened at guard and Muller pounded through. Lowery trailed him, shouldering a tackler aside.

Muller stayed on his feet, driving. Two Western backs closed in on him.

"Now!" screamed Lowery.

He reached out a big hand and caught Muller's underhand flip. He crossed the twenty, running hard. He seemed to be getting nowhere, his feet were anchored. He cross-stepped and veered away from

one defender. Kinnard was sweeping in from the side like a fast freight. They would meet at the ten-yard stripe and there was no way Lowery could dodge it.

He was too tired to be clever. He simply pushed out a stiff arm, and he could almost hear the crunching noise as the heel of his hand met Kinnard's nose.

He saw Kinnard's fingers clawing the air. He felt them rake at his thighs, cling for an instant. Then they were gone and he was heading for the last white line. Someone hit him as he got there, but he fell forward, extending the ball. It was over. They were ahead now—15-14.

Hemphill pulled him out then, and he did not protest. He left the field slowly, not daring to run. The noise came down upon him like a hundred Niagaras.

Beside the locker room door a fat man took him by the arm and pulled him aside.

"I came out today expecting to talk business with Kinnard," Wee Willie Weston said. "I got the shock of my life. Would you be interested in signing with the Tigers after the bowl games are over, Lowery?"

Lowery was too tired to get the full impact of the words. He nodded dully. It hit him then, snapped his head up sharply. He was starting to grin when he heard the other players coming up the tunnel.

A shout drew his attention. He saw the kids breaking past the Fremont men, running toward him. Andy was leading them.

They swarmed around him, noisy, pounding his back. What had Hemphill said? *You can't help them much, unless they can look up to you.*

Grinning, he turned back to Weston.

"I'd want a bonus for signing," he said. "Ten thousand bucks, Weston."

Wee Willie Weston blinked his sleepy eyes. "Today, kid, I'd agree to anything. I seen a miracle out there." He paused. "But one thing you didn't change. Your first interest's always your pocketbook, ain't it, Lowery?"

Lowery nodded. "You can buy a lot of things with ten thousand clams, Wee Willie."

*Like a new clubhouse for a bunch of kids,* he thought.



*Miraculously, Crane eluded the Hawk tacklers. Brewster figured he was in the clear.*

# HOBO AT FULLBACK

By WM. R. COX

**This was the year of experimentation for the Pro Mastodons, after the most disastrous season in their history. And the slim hopes of coach Porky Maloney went riding on the big shoulders of a sandlot fullback known as the "Flying Hobo" . . . a mystery guy from out of the West.**

**H**E DROPPED off the freight well outside the limits of the town. It was August in Wisconsin and hot enough, but with a cool breeze to lift the damp hair from his forehead. He was a big young man, suntanned, muscular, quick. His face was serious and dark. He

the mocassin-type shoes and sauntered along the tracks, waiting for the local to come in. The freight had gone and when the passengers disembarked he joined the crowd from the regular train and found the hotel without trouble.

He registered, "Jack Brewster, Los



looked like any hobo just off the road.

The bag was battered but heavy. He counted his money—twenty dollars safe in in his fob pocket. He hefted the bag and walked down to the stream and washed. He took a clean shirt and a tie from the bag, changed trousers, shook the wrinkles out of a worn sports jacket. He dusted

Alimas, California." He took the key and went upstairs to the room and stripped. He took a shower for half an hour, then put on the clean underwear and the other things and went downstairs.

There were big men all over the place. He took a shower for half an hour, then dressed and went downstairs. of Porky Maloney.

Maloney sat apart from the others. He was rather stout, without being fat. He was a huge man, in his thirties. He had been a great tackle on the old Mastodons of the Professional Football League. Now he was the new manager, the man who had been brought in to clean house, to fire the deadwood, some of whom had been his pals. He was the boss of the New Mastodons, an unenviable job in the eyes of the football-wise. He looked up at Jack Brewster, scowling.

Jack said, "Nobody sent for me, but I'm a fullback."

"We got nine of 'em," said Maloney.

"You've got Ed Crane," said Jack. "You've got a lot of blocking backs and running backs and two good quarterbacks, but you've only got Ed Crane for fullback and he's pretty old."

"Crane's the best damned . . . say, you know a lot. Who and the hell are you?" Maloney glared.

Jack said, "I'm Brewster. That means nothing. Never played in college—just in the Army. And high school. All I want is a trial."

"You never played college ball and you got the nerve to come up here and try out for the Mastodons?" Maloney's jaw sagged.

"At my own expense," said Brewster. "Give me three days. If I don't work as Crane's sub, forget it."

Maloney said, "Crane's sub? Look, I got Avidon, I got Crater, I got Moldous . . ."

Jack Brewster said harshly, "You heard me. Are you going to say I can't work out?"

Maloney's ears reddened. He started to rise. Then he sat back, and a slow grin came onto his red face. "There haven't been many laughs at that. Mebbe this camp is too serious." He lifted his voice, "Hey, gang. Come here."

Jack braced himself. They came lounging over, all the giants.<sup>3</sup> None seemed to be in high humor. They stood and stared at Jack.

There was Freddy Hogarth, the second-year quarterback and Topper Hay the rookie who was All America signal-caller last year. There was Roger Kell and Con

Cobey, scat-back hopes. There was Buster Bailey and the others Maloney had mentioned. And there were the hopefuls for the line, wide men with legs like tree trunks; Bill Massey and Moe Levin, the veteran ends. There were a lot of others who would not be around when the season opened. This was the year of experimentation, after the most disastrous year in Mastodon history, the year Porky Maloney got his chance to be a Coach.

Maloney said, "Anybody ever see this character before?"

No one had, it seemed.

"He says he is a fullback. He allows he would like to try out for the job. No pro experience, no college experience."

Freddy Hogarth had an impudent, reckless face, a sharp, incisive voice. "At least he's got his nerve."

Ed Crane snorted. Crane had been around and was still tough. He had a craggy nose, a round jaw, wide-spaced eyes, high cheekbones. There was a swagger to his every move. He said, "Fullback, huh? Turn him a-loose, Coach. We'll see if he can fullback."

"A sand-lotter!" Buster Bailey snickered. "He'll be dead in five minutes. Let him scrimmage, Coach."

Maloney said cheerfully, "I aim to. Tomorrow is first scrimmage, Brewster. The boys are hot. Tell you what . . . get the signals from Hogarth tonight. Nothin' complicated about 'em, report at ten o'clock and be ready to scrimmage at eleven. Is that trial enough for you?"

**I**T WAS grossly unfair, of course. Some of the older men frowned. A man untrained and not in top shape could be badly injured in scrimmage with professionals out to beat each other for a job on the team. Jack Brewster shrugged. He said, "If it's good enough for you, it's okay with me. After all, Maloney, you're really on the spot. You've got to turn out a team or you'll be through. I can always get a job—I've never been anybody yet, so it's easier for me." He nodded pleasantly to the assembled footballers, shouldered his way through the circle and went toward the desk.

He found Freddy Hogarth right at his

side. The sharp-eyed quarterback said, "What is this, anyhow?"

"I'll take those signals," said Jack.

"You'll get killed, pal," said Hogarth.

"I'll need the signals to know where the spot marked X is going to be," Jack told him.

Hogarth said, "I came up fresh last year. I was a little overweight. First scrimmage nearly ruined me."

"I can come out there without the signals," said Jack pointedly.

Hogarth sighed. "A tough guy, huh? All right, come on up to my room. You'll make a fine-looking corpse anyway."

They rode the elevator up. Hogarth's eyes kept slanting to the tall, well-knit form of his companion. He let Jack walk ahead in the hallway, never relaxing his inquiring gaze. In the small room he tendered a sheaf of cards with numbers and diagrams jotted on them and said, "You weigh about two hundred, huh? You're in shape, too."

Jack said, "They always call you the smartest young quarterback in the game."

Hogarth said, "Don't go yet . . . I'll explain those plays . . . Last year the old-timers on this club gave me the works. I'll never forget it. They're mostly gone now . . . Ed Crane's here and Massey and Levin and a few more . . . But the others were finished anyway and Maloney fired them. We'll be running into them all season—other clubs will pick them up as reserves. The Mastodons are going to have a rough time this year again . . ." He seemed to be talking half to himself, in quick, jerky phrases. His peculiar voice had a hypnotic quality and Jack found himself listening closely—and learning much.

"This is a queer thing, this clean-up. They let out a couple men I thought we could use . . . Fordyce, Dolly Maguire . . . Fellows like that. Maloney brings in Cobey and Hay and all those others. Unproven. College stars don't always make pros . . . But anyway we're purged and we better be good. The funny thing is, Maloney's a good coach . . . Imaginative, game, smart . . . We might have a team, at that . . . He's against the two-team system . . . Believes every man should be all-around capable or he isn't a football player . . . I

dunno . . . The Hawks in the East ought to repeat . . . They have the same team and they got Fordyce and Maguire, too . . . Well, let me tell you about the plays. It's simple at first, you know . . . Never played in college, huh? Why not?" He shot the question at Jack.

"Didn't have time," shrugged Jack.

Hogarth waited, but Jack said no more, studying the cards in his big, well-shaped hands. The quarterback smiled. "Close-mouthed, huh? All right, Jack . . . I'll give you a shake if I can . . . I'll NEVER forget what they did to me when I came up . . . NEVER."

The two heads remained over the cards until eleven o'clock. Then Jack said, "You're all right, Freddy. You're fine. I can't thank you enough. I'll be there tomorrow."

"You will, at that," said Hogarth. He was thoughtful. "You sure know football. You may not be able to play it . . . But you understand the game. Lots of guys never do understand it, even after ten years at it."

They parted. Jack felt that he had made a friend. It was a thrilling experience. He had been a loner a long time. Now . . .

**T**HEY gave him a uniform and a good pair of shoes and he ran around to get the feel of the park. The Mastodons had been training up here for several seasons and the turf was in good shape. Jack dug in the cleats and loosened the muscles of his legs. He seemed lean, but his calves were heavy and his thighs muscled like ropes. He ran up and down, aware of covert glances and snickers from the others. Hogarth winked, but did not seek him out, as any display of favoritism on his part would react against the brash rookie.

Maloney's way was to whack the teams up as evenly as he could, with no regard for cliques or personalities. He was evidently anxious to get the fun over with first, for he called off one starting backfield, "Hogarth, Cobey, Bailey . . . and BREWSTER."

Someone clapped mockingly, but Maloney was putting Hay, Kell, Crane and Persons in the other backfield and arrang-

ing his lines. Massey and Levin were on the other team and Hogarth gave Jack a meaningful look. The two veterans were tough people.

Maloney said, "The two quarterbacks'll take over and run the teams . . . Hay, your crowd kick off. I want a game . . . I want to see who's who and what. Every job is wide open and I'm makin' substitutions to find out what I got to know. Okay . . . give 'em the whistle."

One of the assistant coaches was to referee. Jack walked downfield and took his place, as he had learned poring over the charts. Bob Turner, tackle, was going to tee off.

If he was nervous, Jack did not show it. He moved his legs up and down, watching the defensive club line up. He saw Crane wave an arm his way. Then Turner was booting.

The ball was coming to him. It was deliberate, of course. They meant to get him out of there quick. Hogarth could have stepped in and caught it, but Freddy let it come. He contented himself with moving into blocking position with great alacrity.

There was very little other blocking. A couple of rookies hastily formed in front of Jack. But the older men grinningly stepped aside and let the hatchet men come down to slay the fresh sand lot kid.

Jack reached up smoothly and gathered in the dropping ball. Freddy elbowed Massey as he crashed and Jack got into motion. He picked up a little speed and Freddy screened Turner, who was down amazingly fast. Forgione came in and Hogarth had to go down with the tough guard.

Jack had his speed up by then. He was running well as he crossed the fifteen yard line. They were all there, eagerly awaiting him.

He saw Crane's hard face, Service, Dillon, Moe Levin. They were pinching in.

He feinted left. Then he burst right, with a rookie blocker ahead. He released the trigger on his straight arm. He caught Levin in the face and the big end went sprawling.

He wheeled and ran straight at Crane. The fullback grabbed at him. Jack spun. He went ten yards all alone. Topper Hay threw himself in a magnificent flying tackle

and grabbed his knees.

Jack hit dirt, leaped and tried to crawl. They piled onto him, four of them, all knees, elbows and cleated shoes.

The whistle shrilled. A furious voice howled, "Hey! That's no good. Lay off that! Take him while he's on his feet, dammit!" That was Maloney. The Coach had seen the fastest big man his eyes had been fortunate to behold in years.

Freddy was on the ball, his clear, piercing voice calling the men to action. He glanced at Jack. The big mystery man's face was serene, showing no hint of pain from the pile-up. Freddy called a signal, the teams converged.

It was a fake to Bailey, a half-spin, a hand-off to Jack. Freddy tucked the ball into his belly. Jack hit between guard and tackle. There was a small hole. He enlarged it, bursting through. Crane came and met him.

The crash was very loud. Crane's head snapped back. Jack whirled and fought for three more yards as Pete Service, the great center, came over and helped Crane. That made a six yard gain.

Crane shouted furiously, "You punch me like that again and I'll kick your teeth out, rookie!"

"Can't take it, eh?" sneered Jack. He had not punched. He had used the heel of his hard hand, but he did not bother to alibi.

Crane said, "Send him in again . . . I'll kill him . . . Send him in . . ."

HOGARTH started the same play. Jack shot through. He hit Crane. But he did not have the ball. He blocked the fighting veteran out of the play and Freddy slipped through for eighteen yards.

There were dog fights all over the field, now. Men fighting for jobs were aroused; Freddy's team on the crest of the wave, the others trying to dam it up.

Freddy worked his system. He gave it to Con Cobey, who ran outside Massey with Bailey and Jack blocking and got four yards. He gave it to Jack again, and the fullback upstart crashed for a first down. Fists met him this time, and he was sure Crane kicked him in the rump.

He got up and laughed at them. He

walked into the huddle and Hogarth indicated him again. He slammed off tackle and got eight. Again they beat on him and again he laughed.

Maloney, rushing in, heard him. "You characters can't be so tough. Where I come from they don't have to use fists. They just naturally take you out, fair and square."

Maloney barked, "Get off the field, Brewster."

Jack whirled, anger blazing in his eyes. "Why, you . . ."

"Get off," snapped Maloney. "I got three, four dumb big fullbacks if these guys wanta wallop somebody. Get off before you get hurt. I wanta see you on defense while you're still yourself."

Jack's ire died. He said, "I can take all they can hand out, Coach. They haven't daunted me yet."

"Dammit, they're supposed to be on your side," shouted Malone. "Now cut the damn sluggin', you hear me? CUT IT. I want football, not pugilism out here." He grabbed Jack and roughly dragged him away. Another fullback, Avidon, went in.

On the sideline, Maloney muttered, "Avidon is good. I can make him a blockin' back, though . . . Now listen, kid, who the hell are you?"

Jack said, "I told you." Avidon made a three yard plunge, and seemed pretty fast.

"I got to know more," complained Maloney. "I can't sign a damn mystery guy with no past. Mebbe you learned this game in the pokey!"

"What of it?" asked Jack serenely.

"Nothin', except I got owners. Mr. Morton Hampton. Mr. Neil Neeley. Rich kids. Smart guys. They ask questions. They want to make money and they're scared of their . . . Well, never mind."

Jack said, "I just got back from Germany. Check with the Army. I was with General Clay—he ought to be good enough."

"You played in Germany?"

"On service teams, with no records, just for fun," said Jack. "I was in the army since 1944. I'm twenty-three. Figure it out."

Maloney figured it out. "What college

you go to?"

Jack sighed. "Hammerton. I worked my way and didn't play . . . Look, Freddy scored!"

"Okay. You go in when we receive. Back up the line. I don't want any part-time football players. I want guys who can stick in there while the team's goin' good. I want units, fightin' units on offense and defense. What I mostly want is spirit! Pro football's got to have it. Spirit's necessary in this damn game. It's a tough racket." Maloney was evidently on his favorite subject and Jack listened to him. Hogarth's team kicked off. Kell ran the ball back to the twenty-five and Jack trotted back on the field.

Cobey was deep defense, Hogarth on right wing. Jack went in close to help Service back up the line. Bailey was on left wing. Hay did not lose any time trying out the strength of the enemy line. He sent Crane in on the first play, shooting at the tackle.

Hay's team had slightly the better of it on the line, Jack saw. There was a hole and Crane, a fine, experienced ball carrier, ploughed through, essayed to criss-cross.

Jack met him at the exact moment he changed direction. The blocker missed Jack and he had a great chance. He got his shoulder low and took off and struck as hard as he could. Meeting Crane laterally he moved him back and down. The ground shuddered as they landed.

Crane was livid as he arose. He did not say a word. He stared at Jack for a long moment, then went back across the scrimmage line.

Jack stood straight, watching the lineup. They had only made a yard. Hay hesitated, then used Crane again, this time wider, on Jack's side. The tackle went in and got mouse-trapped. Crane and a blocker came wheeling.

Jack worked on the blocker. He got the man moving and shoved him under Crane's feet. The Mastodon regular fullback went into the air and came down on his head. Jack pinned him, then got up quickly and motioned to the sideline.

Maloney came running. Jack said, "I think Crane hurt himself when he fell."

Maloney roared, "He didn't fall, he was

pushed! Take the big dumb brute away, someone. Get another pair of fullbacks in here. Brewster, you come with me."

Hogarth said mildly, "You'd better sign him quick, Coach. If you don't he only has to take the train over to the Hawks and they'll give him a job. A green rookie, huh? Just a fresh kid! Whoops!"

Nobody else said anything. Some of the boys were round-eyed with staring as the overnight sensation of the Mastodon camp walked off to meet the reporters.

It was a good story and Maloney made the best of it. He wired the owners that he had made a great discovery and that Jack Brewster should receive top first year pay on his showing. The papers grabbed it. Neeley and Hamilton, in New York, said that they had implicit confidence in Maloney, that his judgement was impeccable, that Brewster would get everything coming to him. They said Crane was their fullback, but Brewster could win the starting job, and anyway the Mastodons were sparing no expense to field a winning team.

Jack read all these reports in the newspapers and chuckled.

There were 142 plays to learn during the training season. He mastered them, working with Hogarth. He became fairly friendly with Topper Hay, the other quarterback; with Bailey and Con Cobey, who remained in the backfield set-up with Freddy and Jack.

But the sullen veterans did not like him. Ed Crane saw to that. Massey, Levin, Kell.

Forgione and others would never be on his side. He was an upstart and he was a fresh one in their eyes. He had too many answers—and he had threatened the job of Ed Crane and the oldsters. They hung together. Maloney had fired some of them—the others were fearful.

They had the Service Fund game, an exhibition, to play against the champion Hawks in September and all the intervening weeks they worked like terriers. The Hawks were the best team in the East.

Jack Brewster went East with the team as a fullback on equal terms with the veteran, Crane.

THE HAWKS had a great line. They had Ike Acton and Mort Slade on the ends to catch passes and two brawny defensive wingmen named Massivan and Porcelain. They had Hal Crutch at quarterback and Throwin' Dolly Maguire, the league's best passer, and Pick Paxton who could block out a Mack truck any day, and Red Medill, the line buster from California. They had twenty good men and they were champs. Champs, Jack Brewster thought, always play better because they are champions and have proven it and mean to go on proving it.

He sat in a place known as Packy Pastor's Grill and Bar. He wore dark glasses and a sweater and managed to keep his bulk in the corner of a booth out of plain view. It was not such a place as he should have been seen in.

Packy Pastor was a smooth man whose right name was unknown. He wore a slick haircomb and sports clothing and talked of nothing but the coming fight, the football game of next week, the pennant chances of the Yankees and what horse was running in the 5th at Belmont. Packy was, one would gather, an inordinate sports fan. His bar and television, always focussed on an athletic event. Packy's words were expert pearls of wisdom regarding everything in the sports field.

Men listened, agreeing or disagreeing with great firmness. Everyone had an opinion on the Hawks-Mastodon game. Everyone could outguess Porky Malone on the chances of the new Mastodons. Packy Pastor said, "I dunno. This new guy, this Brewster. Who ever heard of Brewster? Is Porky nuts. He don't use Ed Crane and Avidon? Ed Crane's the best damn fullback in the business."

A customer said, "Brewster's a war hero, they say."

"Hero, shmeero," said Packy. "A Berlin hero, he was inna occupation forces. A green bum. Me, I like to see Crane in there. He was the whole backfield last year."

"Such a backfield," shrugged the customer. "Maguire, he threw passes, nobody caught them. Now he is with the Hawks

he is terrific, they say. Why did Maloney fire Maguire? You take Crane, I'll take Dolly. The Hawks should win by thirteen points yet."

Packy said, "I admit I got my dough riding they should win. But mebbe later inna season, mebbe Maloney's got some-thin'. You got a figure on them things." He nodded sagely. A large man in a conservative blue suit entered. Packy drifted to the back of the saloon.

The big man did not look right nor left. He followed Packy into the dimness of rear booths. Jack Brewster dropped his head and put one hand over his face. The big man sat down with Packy.

The customer was looking over at Jack. He said, "Whaddayou think, big boy? You think the Mastodons have got it?"

Jack mumbled, "I wouldn't know. I'm a stranger . . . ." He paid his tab and slipped out the side door. He walked rapidly to the corner. He jumped on a bus and went uptown to the modest hotel where he had a room with Freddy Hogarth.

The man who had entered Packy Pastor's was Ed Crane.

Freddy Hogarth came into the room. He said, "You should have seen the picture. Bogart and Bacall . . . what a combination . . . The Tough and the Tomato . . . You been out?"

"Took a walk," said Jack evasively. "What do you know about Crane? I mean, what kind of a guy is he, outside of the fact he doesn't like me?"

"Crane? Easy going . . . Tough as Bogart in pictures . . . Likes a beer now and then and whiskey once in a great while . . . Not a bad guy, not a good guy either, if you know what I mean . . . Why do you ask?"

"I like to understand people," shrugged Jack. "You can't judge a man very well if you don't know something about him."

Hogarth said slowly, "Ed never saved anything. I know he lost a packet of dough in real estate. I think he's broke right now. He's a worry wart, you know. Got a sick brother, I hear. Ed tries to make a stake and quit the game and always picks the wrong enterprise. This is mostly gossip, you know, locker room stuff. Don't

take it seriously. Ed'll be all right when he gets used to you. He's a terrific fighter, by the way, almost went in the ring once. Some character had a contract with him. Man named Pastor, I think, but Ed got smart and never did actually box for money."

"Pastor?" Jack gulped, spoke quickly. "Well, it doesn't matter, I guess. Crane's a good fullback. I'm lucky to share the job with him."

FREDDY said thoughtfully, "Ed's good. So was Dolly Maguire. Last year we had a lot of good players but nothing worked. Dolly, the best passer in the world, couldn't get off on the right wing, so to speak. Ed would shine in one game, louse up in another. I was a rookie and maybe I saw it different. But last year the Mastodons were a screwy bunch. Neeley and Hamilton were right to shake us up. And maybe they were right to bring in Porky. Anyway, we'll know when we go against the Hawks."

Jack said, "I suppose lots of people would like to know. There's a terrific amount of gambling on points-difference, isn't there?"

"Millions," yawned Hogarth. "Damn fools betting points against the sharp figure filberts! Ho-hum, let's go to bed."

"Yeah," said Jack. "Yeah . . . let's. He lay thinking hard thoughts for an hour or so, then dropped off and dreamed that Ed Crane, wearing boxing gloves, was beating him to death slowly. He could not raise his own hands to defend himself; they were not tied, merely too heavy to lift. Crane was enjoying himself and when Jack awoke he was sweating with his efforts to fight back.

Yet when they came down to the game against the Hawks, the charity game in New York, Ed Crane was rounding into wonderful playing shape. The big man had experience, poise, savvy, and he could hit into massed opposition as if he adored smacking crowds of people. Porky Maloney began to loosen his worried look. The team perked up all along the lineup. The veterans began to move. The rookies took heart.

Nevertheless, Jack Brewster learned, the

betting was that the Hawks would win by seven points. And there was heavy betting.

He put on his suit and went onto the field. The park was full. The charity game always drew a tremendous crowd. The Hawks looked like real champions, and they had Dolly Maguire, ex-Mastodon, in the starting halfback position.

Back in the dressing room after the warm-up Porky was quiet-voiced but terrifically earnest. "This is the club that beat out our brains last year. This is the game which is gonna tell the story whether we draw at the gate this year—whether a lotta us guys hold our jobs. I'm no better than the rest of you, just a hired hand. The gate's important to us cash and carry joes." He paused and then his voice was hoarse and driving, "But dammit, the idea is to play ball! Either we gotta team or we ain't and I wanta know it right now! Get out there and show me if you're Mastodons!"

The Hawks had won the toss and would receive. Maloney read off the starting line-up.

The fullback position came last on the list. Maloney looked straight at Crane. He said, "Fullback . . . Brewster."

Ed Crane flushed. His fists doubled. He opened his mouth, closed it again. Massey and Levin got up, walked slowly to the door, heads together. Forgione scowled at Jack. Then they were all out, running onto the field.

Bob Turner teed up the ball. Jack took his place in the rear as part of the second wave. He was thoughtful. Maloney had put him in on defense and he wondered why. Crane could back up a line . . . then he remembered Maloney's policy of leaving a man in until he had a reason for removing him—the "show-me" policy. Maloney was no fool.

In the owner's box sat Neil Neeley and Morton Hampten. They were middle-aged, tanned men, former athletes who had invested a considerable part of their money in the Mastodons.

Atop the grandstand were the sports writers, wise in the ways of the game, skeptical of the Mastodons' new set-up, watching every move, their eyes hard on

Jack Brewster, the mystery man from the West.

Bob Turner kicked hard against the leather. The ball went up, up, then turned over and tumbled down. Jack Brewster followed the swift early advance down-field. A man came through and hurtled at him. It was Ike Acton, a great end. Jack shoved him aside. Another Hawk came at him. Col Crutch had the ball and was coming up the funnel.

Forgione was out of it. The Hawks blocked like demons. Massey and Levin stayed outside, pinching in the play. Crutch could turn like a giant rabbit.

Jack cut over. Freddy Hogarth whooped and dove. Jack came in on the scissors and they clamped Crutch between them. But the ball was on the twenty-eight yard line, a nice run-back behind great interference.

Crutch had them lining up fast, too. The Hawks wore brilliant Blue and Gold uniforms which shone in the warm sun. Their bearing was arrogance itself. Crutch sent them from the T, with Red Medill carrying. They broke through Forgione and Jack met the big fullback almost head-on.

The resultant clash was tremendous. Medill went sideways, fighting. Jack's amazingly powerful arms held him, Jack's big legs drove him. Medill went down before Service could get loose to back up Brewster. The gain was two yards.

Service snapped, "That's nailin' him, rookie!"

Medill looked thoughtfully at Brewster, trotted to position. Crutch did not even look. He just shifted to single wing. He sent the works, all the Hawks power at Jack's side of the line. Medill carried.

Jack had to go in straight—there was no time for any other method. Maguire was in it, and Taylor, the guard. He met those two head on. He powered himself into them, shoving them as best he could. They got him between them and their hard bodies almost squeezed the breath out of him.

Service was over. He went atop, horse-collaring Medill. The Hawks fullback got another two yards.

Crutch stood with his hands on his hips,

back to the Mastodons. His voice, shrill and vituperative, uttered signals as though he was cursing the Hawks. They wheeled into the T.

Jack set himself for the plunge. Third down on the thirty-two; the quarterback manual says try the tackle. They were working on Jack.

It came, with Medill in the key spot. But there was something wrong with it. Jack was in the melee, being buffeted by Hawks when his sinking heart knew the truth.

Dolly Maguire had the ball. He was jumping and throwing. Ike Acton was in the flat. Hogarth had shot at him, but Acton side-stepped and sprinted, and then the blocking took over.

That, Jack realized grimly, was pro ball. He chased downfield, and Acton showed the cleanest pair of cleats he had ever seen, racing all the way to score a touchdown.

### III

ON THE BENCH in the last quarter, Jack rubbed his bruises and admitted that the Hawks were good. They were leading 21 to 7 right now. Maguire had thrown two more passes for touchdowns. He was personally making Maloney look bad for trading him.

Porky muttered, "I didn't want to let him go. Brewster, go back in there. Do whatever you can. This is murder."

Jack did not think it had been too bad. He waited out the play. It was first and ten, Mastodons' ball on their thirty. Con Cobey had toted it down and Crane had scored on a run. Buster Bailey, Cobey and Hogarth were the backfield with Crane. Hogarth called Crane off the tackle. The big man broke fast. There was a hole. Crane shot through. Swift for a big man, he passed the defensive wing. Blocking sprang up. Crane hit into a pocket of Hawks and split them. Forgione got in front of him and Service came over.

Crane ran past midfield. Jack crouched on the sidelines, watching. Crutch came dashing over. His hands shot out. He nipped Crane by the knee. It was barely a slap.

Crane went off-stride. Maguire came

tearing past Forgione and shouldered the fullback. Crane spun helplessly for a moment. Medill slid beneath him and two Hawks fell atop him.

Jack took a deep breath. He ran onto the field. Crane's face was hard and bitter. He gave Jack a nasty look, trotted off. Hogarth, scowling said, "Give us one, Jack."

They went from the T. Jack broke over right guard. Medill was ready to give him the treatment Jack had accorded earlier to the Hawk's fullback. They collided and Jack spun off. Crutch and Paxton hit him hard. He crawled and rolled and got four yards.

Hogarth said, "I can try it . . . Jack!"

From the T again Jack rammed through—without the ball. He jumped up to get over the heads of the Hawks and looked. Freddy heaved a sloppy basketball pass. Jack took it and ran.

He could really run, they knew. They had learned that he was a ten second two hundred pounder. They tried to cut him off,

Crutch and Maguire were the pair to beat. Jack sized them up. He knew Maguire was the slower. He cut toward Crutch. At the last possible second he swung back.

Maguire had long arms. He got them around Jack. His heave would have thrown a bull. Jack used the leverage of a forearm. He dug in his cleats. He threw Maguire away from him as though the ex-Mastodon were a sack of wheat, completely breaking the high tackle.

Then he was running alone. The mopping-up behind was gleefully undertaken by fighting Mastodons led by Hogarth. Jack ran over the goal line.

The fans came back to life. It was, when Bob Turner exercised his educated toe plate, Hawks 21, Mastodons 14. There were five minutes to play, the home team was talking it up, anything was more than likely to happen.

The Hawks received on their goal line and Paxton handed-off to Medill. The big fullback came tunneling up the center to the twenty-five. Crutch was barking at them. They hammered with the T. Jack went down under fighting mountains of

flesh, but somehow he got a hand on the ball runner again and again.

It became fourth and two on the thirty-three. Crutch had no choice, with a seven point lead, but to kick and stall. He put Maguire in the spot and the ex-Mastodon came through with a fifty-yard boot. It was high, however, and Con Cobey ran it back to the thirty-five.

Slim Fordyce, tallest guard in the business, a wiry veteran and another former member of the Mastodons, came on the field. He had a lean jaw and plenty of fight, Jack saw. Hogarth called the full-back plunge to set the strategy, with time running out.

**J**ACK took off through guard. A strong hand wrenched at his knee, twisting it. He used his spinning trick to haul away but the knee twinged. He saw Fordyce's angry face and kicked loose. Three men hit him and he only got three yards.

Hogarth masked the pass with the same formation. The Hawks expected him to throw but were defending rather deep. Freddy rifled a speedy, heavy one, to Massey, who fumbled it, then caught it on his fingertips. Jack was crossing over when he saw Fordyce pulled out and aiming for him. The Hawks had decided to get him. It would be clean enough, he knew, for the pros do not play dirty, but it would be rough. He slacked a moment. Fordyce came rushing. Jack ducked, slammed his body across the tall guard's in a fierce blocking maneuver. Fordyce spun around like a top. Jack laced over into Maguire, who was trying to catch Massey and took the halfback out.

Massey was caught by Crutch on the Hawks twenty-five. Freddy was already there, and the Hawks actually stalled until the referee took action.

Freddy said, "Hit 'em, Jack."

Brewster hit them. He seemed to have the power of a jet plane. He split the massed Hawks for three yards.

"Again!"

He shot from the close-up T formation. Forgione got half-taken-out and he bounced a little. Fordyce hit him hard, Medill backing up. He only got two yards.

He felt the strength of the Hawks, the

impossibility of splitting them by brute strength. He shook his head at Freddy, who was asking the time. Freddy's face was set with sorrow.

Jack said, "Time out!"

Freddy said in the huddle, "Only one play left. It'll have to be a pass."

"I could boot one, but what good?" moaned Turner. "They'll cover the pass."

"Seven points," Jack muttered. "The gambler's ideal!"

"We got to play to win," said Freddy. "We got to play like there are no gamblers. If we start that, it will lead to trouble."

Turner said, "I'd like to murder the ring."

It was the first time Jack had heard anyone mention the gambling element aloud. He shrugged and said, "You're okay, Turner . . . But Freddy's right."

"Ahhh," growled Forgione, "chuck one, Freddy. The hell with it."

Massey and Levin chimed in, "We'll get loose. Just chuck it."

Jack went to position. Hogarth chanted signals. Jack feinted into the line, but everyone and his sister knew it would be a pass. The Hawks were deep and spread, waiting, victory in their grasp.

Jack turned to watch the play. Massey and Levin were covered. Cobey and Bailey were smothered by Hawks. He saw Freddy's arm go back.

Then the ball was in his hands. Freddy's pass was perfection, low and hard. Jack took it and swung around. He aimed for the goal line, racing at top speed. He saw the ten yard marker out of the corner of his eye as fifty thousand people stood and howled.

Crutch hit him. Fordyce hit him. Crewe, the big center, pulled far back on the play, got into it. Jack fought like a tiger.

A gun went off. Jack lay prone under heaps of Hawks. He had thrust the ball forward. But it was an inch short of the last, fat, double barred line. He lay there and tasted the bitter flavor of defeat.

He walked into the dressing room with his head down. Another step, another heave, a wriggle, and he would have been over to give the Mastodons a chance for a tie when Turner converted. He felt him-

self seized and mumbled, "I'm sorry . . ."

Porky Maloney's eyes were blazing. "Sorry? For what? For showin' the world we got a football team? For damn near tyin' the champs? For fightin' the way nobody ever fought for the Mastodons since the old days? Kid, you got nothin' to be sorry for. Here's the press!"

The newspapermen fired questions at him. He was very careful with his answers. Finally he said, "I never played a pro game before today. But I love the game. It's in my blood somehow or other. I'm just a California guy who was a G.I. when I should have been in school. That's the story and nothing more to it. And no back is any good without a line in front of him and some characters to block. Don't forget to quote me on that!"

A reporter said, "You seem to know all the answers."

"Did you ever work for Uncle Sam in Berlin?" grinned Jack. "You get to know the answers or you get in a peck of trouble pal." He escaped into the showers. He had not bargained on all this. He had not thought he was starring in the game. Crane had played well, had scored a touchdown.

Crane was under the next shower. He turned off the water and emerged, dripping, scowling. He said, "So you're a hero! Well, I been a hero, too. Next you'll be a bum."

"You went good today," said Jack. "What are you beefing about? I thought you were a grown man, a real pro."

Crane said, "You're too smart to suit me."

"I don't have to suit you," Jack pointed out.

Crane said, "I ought to bust you inna nose right now. I just don't like you, Brewster. I never did, first minute I saw you. I think you're a fresh guy."

"Any time," sighed Jack. "I'm bustin' material, all right. Any time."

Crane said, "Bah!" and went out, toweling briskly. Jack took his shower. He was thinking about that run of Crane's when he had been thrown off-stride by a one-handed stab. He was thinking about the score at the time; about the seven points the gamblers had given. He was

thinking about a lot of things.

HE DID a lot of thinking, but the Mastodons did a lot of ball playing. They beat the Wolves, they beat the Elephants. They hammered the lowly Birds. They trounced the Bruins from the West in the intersectional game. They beat the Rollers and the Bisons.

They came down to the test with the Hawks on even terms with the champions. The Hawks had also been invincible, and they had improved, as the Mastodons had, with seasoning. Dolly Maguire was shining in his tenth year as he had in his first. Medill tore lines apart, Dolly Crutch used his fine backs behind a great line to crush all opposition by large scores.

Porky Maloney was a new man. Shrewdly alternating his backfield stars with the rugged reserves, playing his rookie linemen alongside the experienced men, he welded together a fighting unit which began to walk proudly, as Mastodons should,

He said to Freddy Hogarth and Jack Brewster, "I dunno. They may beat us. But I see the gamblers are only quotin' six points this time. And I hear the bettin' ain't all on points. They quote us one to two, but nobody's actually givin' odds like that. It's pretty near seven to five and take your pick. That means we're in there."

Jack said diffidently, "Porky, that's a hell of a way to rate us. That gambling business. There was trouble before, remember? I happen to know there's a ring operating." He bit his lip and fell silent.

Hogarth looked at him quizzically, "What's this? You've been acting funny lately, Jack. What do you know?"

"Nothing," said Jack. "I just heard . . ." He clammed up. He could not tell them all he knew.

That night he went to the grill and bar run by Packy Pastor. He wore his dark glasses and an overcoat which bulked large around him, and had a turned-up collar. He pulled the brim of his hat down over his eyes and sat in a booth away in the rear. He ordered whiskey and pulled out a bottle into which he could pour it. Below the table where no one could see. He had the waiter bring him six, then

left one before him, pillowing his head in his arms. On the table he left strewn change from a twenty dollar bill, knowing they would not bother him so long as he had money.

It was a long while before he heard the voices. Pastor was saying, "It's just a drunk and anyway he can't hear us. I'm tellin' you what to do, Ed. I don't want no arguments, I don't wanna see you inna river. It's too cold to be inna river this time of year. Specially is it too cold to be in there with concrete on your dogs. I'm tellin' you to get in there, somehow, anyhow, and see to it that them Mastodons don't go crazy. We know the game is inna bag, but we want six points in there. You know who's behind this. Now you do it, or you will be in very bad trouble."

Ed Crane said, "I could break your neck with my two index fingers, you crumb. Don't give me that river routine. I don't scare."

Packy said, "Ah, stop it, Ed. You'll do what I say and you know it."

"I know I ain't talkin' here any more. C'mon we'll finish this some place else. I don't even want drunks around."

The voices faded. Jack cautiously raised his head. The two men were gone. He got up, gathered his change, staggered convincingly out of the bar.

He walked back to the hotel. There was nothing to do now but wait. He had considered every alternative and knew he could not act. He did not know enough. He practised hard all week, working like a madman through scrimmages, soaking up lore from Porky and Freddy. He never could learn enough about the game, he found.

Ed Crane worked, too. Ed worked harder than he ever had. He was a very good fullback. Maloney's eyes glowed at the thought of having two alternating stars in that key position.

They had to travel to meet the Hawks. They went on Pullmans, a very earnest group of young giants. There was little horseplay. This team had come from the very rear of the parade to this chance against the champions for the Eastern title and they had no thought of blowing it.

Neil Neeley and Morton Hamilton were with the team. The two were realizing a nice profit, their team was in the race, they seemed satisfied. Still, Porky Maloney knew that failure now would change the entire set-up. The Hawks would still be on top, the Mastodons merely second, a good team which had tried and failed.

Packy Pastor was en route to the Hawks home city, too. There were several men with him. They were burly men and thin men, assorted, but they all had the slit-eyed, careful look in their eyes which presaged no good to anyone who crossed them. Jack had lingered to get a sight of this crew. There were six of them, all told.

It was quite a mob. Pastor was taking no chances on anything going wrong. Jack was extremely thoughtful all the way to Hawkstown.

#### IV

**T**HE DAY of the play-off dawned clear and cold. Porky Maloney was up at the peep of dawn looking as though he had never slept. Down at the field the team ran through plays and gauged wind currents. Bob Turner boomed placements from all over the park. The balls turned and tossed in the air, strained muscles were loosened, baked and bandaged. There had been few injuries among the first string of the Mastodons that season thanks to Porky's careful training methods.

Jack Brewster felt fine. When it came time for the last moment confabulation he sat relaxed, listening to Porky, watching Ed Crane. Porky was nervous. The big fullback seemed merely sullen, as usual.

Porky said, "With a gang of first year men and veterans we've come a long way. But not far enough. You know that. We GOT to win today. We came close to tyin' them last time. Today we got to beat 'em."

There was little more than that. Porky believed in his team's fight and spirit. He wouldn't try to whoop it up. He laid it on the line and sent them out there.

Jack was in the starting line-up, as usual. Slowly but surely he had gained the confidence of everyone on the squad.

He was big, tough and exceptionally swift, giving the Mastodons an extra halfback when he was afield. The veterans had grudgingly accepted him. All but Ed Crane.

The Hawks, at their full strength, were kicking off. Sam Johnson, All-League tackle, raised his hand. Freddy Hogarth, acting as Captain for the Mastodons, responded as thousands of cheering fans stood to watch.

It was a good boot. Jack watched it tumble. It was on Con Cobey's side. Freddy and Jack moved to protect the running back. Massevan and Porcelain, the defensive ends of the Hawks, were racing in. Jack took out Massevan.

Then Porcelain tangled Freddy, preventing him from screen-blocking and going on to further deeds. Taylor and Fordyce came in. Fordyce made a vicious high lunge at Cobey. Taylor hit the running back low.

The crunch could be heard by everyone on the field. Jack fought loose from Massevan and said, "Damn them! They've finished Con!"

Massevan said smugly, "You gotta take it in this game, bub!"

So it was to be like that. Jack knelt beside the unconscious Cobey. Roger Kell was already on the field. Kell was another slim running back, a speed boy like Con. He was a little pale around the gills now, watching them tote Con away on a stretcher.

The ball was on the twenty. Freddy Hogarth's penetrating accents bit at the Mastodons, "All right. Here we go. If that's what they want."

Jack took it. He smacked into the center of the line. Fordyce and Crewe were there. Jack struck at them with knee, elbow, head. He smashed them for three yards.

Crewe was slow getting up. Hogarth said, "Center again." He took it himself on the slow reverse and gained power enough to slam with everything he had in his stocky, powerful body. Jack hit Crewe with a mighty block. Hogarth made a first down on the thirty-one.

The keynote of the game had been quickly set. Pete Service rolled up his sleeves and glanced across significantly at Crewe, who

still was groggy. Fordyce took his stance with fists closed. The two lines locked in a struggle of titanic violence as the backs lurked behind, ready to take over the battle when called upon.

As always they paid plenty of attention to Jack. They had methods within the rules, of hurting wherever they hit. There was no penalty for roughness but there were bruises galore. Big men met chest to chest, glared into each other's eyes and fought.

Freddy was anxious to get the jump. He called a pass play on the thirty-eight, third down. He threw it carefully at Massey.

Dolly Maguire came from nowhere. It wasn't anyone's fault. Dolly simply fathomed the play and was there. He grabbed the ball.

There seemed to be fifteen or twenty Hawks blocking, instead of ten. Two forced Jack to the sidelines and dumped him. Dolly went racing by like a wild horse. On the goal line Kell took off and dove five yards trying to make a save.

Kell's outstretched hand met a flying cleat. Blood spurted. Dolly went over the goal line. Avidon came onto the field for Kell as Johnson kicked the conversion to make it 7 for the Hawks.

"There is our last halfback," said Hogarth grimly. "And Avidon is no speed boy in the clear. They really fixed us, now. It's power on the ground and pass plays for us."

Jack said, "It's knock 'em down and break their backs or we'll all be killed. They're out for blood *AND* the ball game."

Hogarth said, "What about that gambling ring, pal? What do you really know?"

"Not much," said Jack. "They're not in it. I know that. They're just playing football like they know how. Dolly and Fordyce want to show they shouldn't have been traded off. The rest want to get the play-off money."

Hogarth said, "But there's something screwy."

"Let's try to score," said Jack. "Let's even it up."

Avidon received the kick-off and went to the twenty-two. Jack began mauling

the line again. Hogarth was using the T and the single wing alternately, with Jack powering the ball. They got to the forty and then Fordyce led a defense which would not be penetrated by power.

Freddy had to go via air. He started it from the short punt, to get the defense and time to select his receiver. Jack was in the flat, tincanning, when Freddy threw the ball. He took it and ran to the Hawks forty before he was stopped by Crutch, Paxton and Massevan. They laid it to him and he almost passed out. He was plenty tough, but the Hawks knew how to dish it out.

The Hawks rose up, then. Jack got four, then was murdered at the line. Avidon got two. It was fourth down on the thirty-four.

Bob Turner came back, face tight and grim, a gallant figure. Hogarth held for him. Bob put his toe to the ball. It was one of the most beautiful things Jack had ever seen from beneath a linesman he had blocked. The leather split the goal posts in half. The Mastodons had three little points.

It looked as if that was all they would get. The half went away without them getting even close to scoring territory.

But the Hawks did no better. The Mastodon line had guts and brains, too. The game became a stalemate at 7 to 3 at the end of the second period.

**C**RANE was raving. "I haven't been in the game yet . . ." The big man's eyes were bloodshot. There were deep lines about his mouth. "You can't do this to me, Porky Maloney! I want in this game!"

Maloney was walking the floor. He paid no attention to Crane. "They've fixed our runnin' plays and know when we're gonna pass. Our deception's gone with Con and Kell." He paused and stared at Jack Brewster. Then he waved his arms for attention and got it. "Guys, this is what we got to do. Crane, you go in. Fullback. Brewster, you're as fast as any man on the squad. You stay in. You're half-back!"

Freddy said, "Porky, you're a flat genius! Jack knows the assignments.

We've worked them over on paper a thousand times!"

Jack was looking at Crane. The big back had never once worked on the field while Jack was playing. Crane's face was a study. Porky was going on excitedly about fight and how the Hawks were putting more into it than ever, and how only fight would win.

Jack eased over to Crane and said in a low voice, "How's your brother, Ed?"

"Not so good," mumbled Crane. Then he stared at Jack. "What you know about my brother, wise guy?"

"Enough," said Jack. "And how is Packy Pastor?"

Crane went livid. One fist came up, then stopped as Jack did not move nor change expression. The fullback said, "You been spyin', you dirty . . ."

"Dirty?" asked Jack, raising his brows.

Crane said, "I'm gonna show you a thing or two, wise guy. I'm goin' out on that field and show you something."

"There are six toughies who say you're not," Jack pointed out. "Where is your brother now?"

"In Mexico," blazed Crane. "Safe. Getting the sun. You wanta make anything out of it?"

Jack said, "That depends. There's the whistle. Let's go."

The halfback slot seemed strange, but only for a moment. He was a natural wingman. He went down under Turner's kick and Crutch had the ball. He went in and as an end half-stopped the Hawks quarterback he dove under and flattened Crutch on the Hawks twenty.

Crutch lined up his men in the T. He was after another score, of course. He gave them the complete treatment, with spinners, fakes, quick plunges by Maguire and Paxton and Medill. They gained, made a first down on the thirty-two. Jack backed up, scowling. Crane was charging too fast, missing the spots where Hawks could be stopped for no gain. He was hitting hard, but not squarely enough.

Then the Mastodon line got to serious work and the advance faltered. Maguire had to punt. It was a beauty, going over Jack's head despite his best efforts, rolling out on the Mastodon fifteen.

Hogarth was clapping his hands. "Let's go." He gave it to Crane at once, inside guard. Crane got one yard. He gave it to Jack on a short inside run from the single wing.

Crane's job was to block. He missed Massevan. The giant end slammed Jack for a loss.

Hogarth took it himself on a quarterback sneak and picked up six yards. Then he had to kick.

The Hawks took over at midfield. Crane stood up behind the line, fists clenched. His jaw was set like a bear trap. Jack watched him closely, hesitating, unsure of his thoughts.

Medill came straight through a big hole at center. He was travelling at top speed, a powerful figure of a man. Crane, doubling over, did not get a start, but met him head-on. Medill ran over Crane, but the Mastodon veteran grabbed a leg. Jack went into the play and hauled Medill down.

Crane struggled to his knees, staring about. He mumbled, "I can't get started. Dammit, Brewster, I can't get started!"

"You better," said Jack. "Maybe you're too tight. Maybe you have a yellow streak, Crane."

Again Crane's fist went back. Fire shot from his eyes. "I'll show you yellow! Damn you, then I'll see you in the clubhouse!"

"Show them," said Jack, gesturing toward the triumphant Hawks.

For a while it seemed Crane would show them, at that. He was in every play. The Hawks had to kick.

It was a brutal, deadly battle. The game was running out and still it went on, slog, drive and run. Neither team could score.

Maguire kicked over the goal line and the Mastodons took over on the twenty. The Hawks seemed strong as ever and the four-point margin they had not enjoyed now appeared safe as a pre-depression dollar.

Freddy called a time out. He said to the huddled, gasping, weary, bruised Mastodons, "They have my passes covered. It's been tough all the way . . . now it'll be tougher. Anybody wants out better get out for the good of the club. We're going over the ground. Jack . . . Crane!"

Buster Bailey said, "I'm set."

No one else spoke. The whistle blew and they lined up. From the T, Freddy sent Crane into the line.

The big man cradled the ball, seemed to hang fire a moment. Jack was flanking on the play. Then Crane shot ahead. He bulled into the Hawks. He got three and a half yards.

Freddy said, "Not enough . . . Jack!"

It was a tackle slant. Crane went a step ahead. Massevan came in. Crane hit him. Jack cut inside. Maguire was there and brought him down. Jack gained five yards.

Freddy said, "Crane!"

From T again, Crane plunged. Jack, drifting for deception, saw the play in its entirety. There was no hole. Fordyce reached to steal the ball as Crane bucked sideways.

Crane hit Fordyce with a straight-arm. He got one shoulder between two defenders. His legs jack-knifed.

Crane catapulted through. He dove and fought. He made the first down.

**J**ACK came back and whispered, "You're not yellow."

"Nuts, pay attention," snapped Crane. There was a wild look in his eye. The play started with Jack going inside guard. Crane hit Massevan on a mousetrap. Jack sprinted into a hole, reversed. With Freddy and Bailey blocking he fought to the forty before they dragged him down like hounds on a stag.

Crane was waiting. Freddy gave it to him. Crane got three. Freddy faked to Jack and gave it to Crane again. The fullback got four. Freddy feinted a pass and threw a shovel out to Jack on the flank. Jack ran to the Hawks thirty-eight behind beautiful blocking.

The Hawks took time out. The clock was running fast, as ground plays ate up the seconds. The Hawks patted each other for reassurance and two subs came in. Fordyce had a cut eye.

Crane said, "Let me have it. I'm fresh."

Time went in. Freddy gave it to him. The Hawks converged and piled onto Crane in droves. Crane made four yards right through them.

Freddy snapped his signals and the Mastodons leaped into position, fighting the clock. Freddy handed-off to Jack on a reverse.

Crane was up ahead. This suddenly became a crucial play. There was so little time, each running effort had to be good. The short gains would not do, not now.

Massevan was in. Crane took off and hit him. Crane yelled, "Outside, Brewster, damn you!"

Jack did a quick criss-cross. He brushed off a Hawk who was thrown out of balance by the maneuver. Crane was up and going. There was no other blocker. Hawks were coming in. Crane was shouldering them, faking them, screening them. It was magnificent blocking.

Jack followed it with care. Slowing to accommodate Crane's lesser speed, he kept watching the Hawks. He went down to the twenty and Crane was still doggedly on his feet. Jack sprinted. He hit the ten as two men slammed Crane to earth and Dolly Maguire made a shoe-string tackle to knock Jack up into the air and land him on the five-yard line and set the entire park into a frenzied uproar.

He came up, his head high, looking for Crane. The big man had blood on his face. Maguire was jawing at him and Crane was grinning.

Jack never remembered seeing the full-back smile before. He ran over and said, "Ed, that was the best damned blocking a man ever got."

Crane said, "I got more left in me. C'mon, Freddy, send it over."

From the five, against a team like the Hawks, it would be more than tough. Huge men dug in their cleats, smouldering, flexing brawny arms. Freddy snapped his signals.

Jack took it. He set sail for the tackle slot. Crane, blocking from up close in the single wing, hit two men. Three others merged to crush Jack beneath their weight. He got only two yards.

They faced each other again, titans of the gridiron, fighting almost to the death. Freddy intoned numbers. Jack feinted into the line, took a lateral, a short one, and leaped for the end. He turned it and saw Crane slaying Maguire on the goal

line. He swung in his cut-back. Medill and Massevan hit him on the two yard line.

Third down. The clock was almost finished with its day's performance now. Freddy looked at Jack.

Jack went close to him and muttered and Freddy said, "That's what I had in mind, pal."

The Mastodons lined up. Freddy chanted his signal. Jack started again for the outside, then cut back and Massevan was slashing.

Jack and Massevan came together. Lurking, holding the ball on his knee, concealed from sight, was Freddy Hogarth. Jack shot ahead.

Crane came from the right. He passed Freddy. He took the ball. He followed Jack into the maelstrom of fighting on the goal line. Men flew apart, came together again. Crane's shaggy head went down. He dove into a spot. Jack, a step ahead, smashed Hawks aside. Crane flew past him and was smothered.

But a man in a striped shirt was leaping and signalling. The gun sounded. The game was over. Crane had scored the winning touchdown for the Mastodons.

## V

PORKY MALONEY said, "Ed, you came through, boy. You and Jack. There'll be a bonus in this for you. We're into the play-offs, the club is outa the red. The gamblers took their beatin' today and I hear there's gonna be a shake up."

There were two tanned, happy gentlemen at the door. They came in and fraternized. Neeley and Hampton. They patted backs and slapped shoulders. Then Neeley, always the spokesman, drew Jack Brewster aside. He whispered, "What's the score, Brewster? Crane actually helped win the game."

"I did not say he would do otherwise," Jack snapped. "Crane is as honest as you are."

"Then what is this about Crane and Pastor? We're going to have Pastor and his boss, that politician, picked up in New York."

"Crane played a cagey game," said Jack.

"He tooled them along, all on his own."

"But we understood Crane had a sick brother and was taking money from them."

Jack said, "You brought me into it to learn if your dumb detectives were telling the truth. Well, they were making up half of it. Crane knew Pastor from his prize-ring fling. Pastor tried to threaten Crane, through his brother. Crane sent his brother to Mexico and defied them. Today he showed them a thing or two. At first he couldn't get started. He was nervous and over-anxious. Then he forgot his troubles and you know the result. Crane is one of the best men you have."

Neeley said, "You've done a swell job, Brewster."

"Thanks," said Jack. "All I want is another contract with the team. I never thought I'd be a pro footballer but it's better than investigation work. I quit that job to take another."

"You'll be taken care of but good," said Neeley enthusiastically.

Jack went to the showers. The others were still celebrating, but Crane was there and Freddy Hogarth. The latter said sharply, "Something makes, pal. I want in. Crane's knocking himself out to get through and out of here."

Jack soaped and rinsed. Crane was already dressing, fumbling with his clothing in his haste. Freddy, panting with the effort, was dressed as fast as Jack.

Crane slipped out the door during the excitement. Freddy said, "He didn't take his bag. What is this?"

It was early dusk. Crane was walking along the way beneath the concrete stands. Jack said, "Hurry, Freddy!"

They ran. Six men came out from the shadows. When Jack and Freddy got there Crane was not doing so bad. He

had Packy Pastor by the neck and was using him as a shield. Someone hit at him with a blackjack and caught Packy on the noggin. Jack said, "Oh, but GREAT!"

Then suddenly there were no attackers. Packy lay senseless in a corner. The others either were piled about or had taken to their heels. Freddy was blowing on a knuckle and saying, "Please, what's it all about?"

So Jack told them. Ed Crane listened, his eyes growing larger every minute. When Jack had finished with his story of espionage abroad and a job investigating the gambling rumors in pro football, he said, "But you never turned me in? You trusted me?"

Jack said, "You didn't seem like a sneaky guy to me. You were willing to fight. And the way you talked to Pastor in the bar . . . I got something in your voice. You weren't scared. I took a chance. I remembered that Fordyce had strong hands. He almost tore my leg off. I figured he got you off balance in that charity game and you couldn't track back. Sure, Ed, I trusted you."

They pulled up outside the dressing room.

The fun was still going on inside. They could hear Buster Bailey roar.

Ed Crane said, "Hell, I got nothin' to say. Hell, it's just like comin' home after a long journey. What can you say?" His hand gripped Freddy's shoulder, his other hand held Jack's arm. "It's been tough, alone, against that mob. This is . . . it's home-comin'."

Jack said, "Let's go in and raise hell, huh?"

The opening door threw a white light from within. They stepped into it, three big, happy guys.



# The Fumbling Phantom

By STEWART STERLING

**He was the Golden Stallions' pass-snaring demon who could whiz downfield like a scared coyote and go up in the air like a crazy kangaroo for the payoff pigskin . . . 'til old man Dollar Sign cramped his sight.**

“GOING IN AT RIGHT END, replacing Loftis,” droned the undergraduate spotter, “Number Eighty-one, Cady.”

Baldheaded Tim Murfree kept his eyes on the screen of the control set, but cupped his hand over the mike. “Who’s Yehudi?” he inquired out of the corner of his mouth. “Another of those scholarship sensations Snub Garret snagged by offering plenty of pocket moo?”

“Guess so.” The spotter shrugged. “Hope this Cady’s better’n the rest of those free-mealing footballers, though. He’s a soph. Transfer from Redlands. Dope on him in the program.”

Murf signaled his alternate announcer to take over, took his eyes off the black-and-white figures on the video screen to glance through the windows of the telebooth at the bright colors and hot shadows down there under the California sun.

Toward the group of Stallion players kneeling or lying face-down on the vividly green turf, loped a tall, rangy youngster with a cautious gliding gait.

The new wingman’s height was emphasized by his narrow shoulders, the startling effect of thinness was increased by the absence of any regulation shoulder-harness. Apparently there was no more padding under the golden jersey with the big white 81 than would ordinarily be sewn into a fifth grader’s ‘premium’ uniform.

*Guy doesn’t look as if he’d be able to keep his feet against a stiff wind, let alone the rough-em-up stuff of those USC line-men,* thought the sportcaster, flipping the pages of his program until he found the explanatory paragraph about Cady, Wm.

Murf’s eyes narrowed with surprise as he skimmed past the statistics to the wingman’s football background. He wigwagged to his alternate. When the com-

mercial was finished, Murf leaned close to the mike:

“While USC is taking time out, we’ll grab a few seconds to tell you something about this flankman Snub Garret’s sending in for his side.

“Bill Cady’s a tall stick of timber, as you can see . . . six-two-and-a-half. Weighs a solid one-eighty. Nineteen years old. A sophomore from Banning, down near Palm Springs. Last season he was on the freshman team at Redlands University, where he set up a pretty sweet mark as a pass receiver.”

*Pretty sweet, hell!* he said to himself. *If that isn’t a misprint—that 21 touchdowns—then it’s damn near incredible! That’s close to three scores a game for an eight game schedule. And the guy’s an end!*

The spotter said: “Here we go.”

Murf squinted at the screen, raised his voice to the shrill pitch of play-by-play:

“Time’s up. Stallions are bunching in the huddle. They may kick. It’s third and six, on their own forty-five, here in the closing minutes of the third period, and though Snub Garret’s outfit is still on the short end of that 14 to 7 score they may decide it’s safer to punt and pray for a break than to try and make headway against a line they haven’t been able to dent all afternoon. Now they’re in the T. The ball goes back . . .”

“Zomby”, grunted the spotter without taking the binoculars from his eyes.

“Zombroroski back. Punt formation.” Murf lifted his shrillness a notch higher. “He’s going to boot, takes two strides. No! It’s a pass . . . a long one . . . wa-a-a-y down the field . . . intended for Cady . . . but he’s nowhere near . . . WAIT! He got it!!! Cady GOT IT!!!”

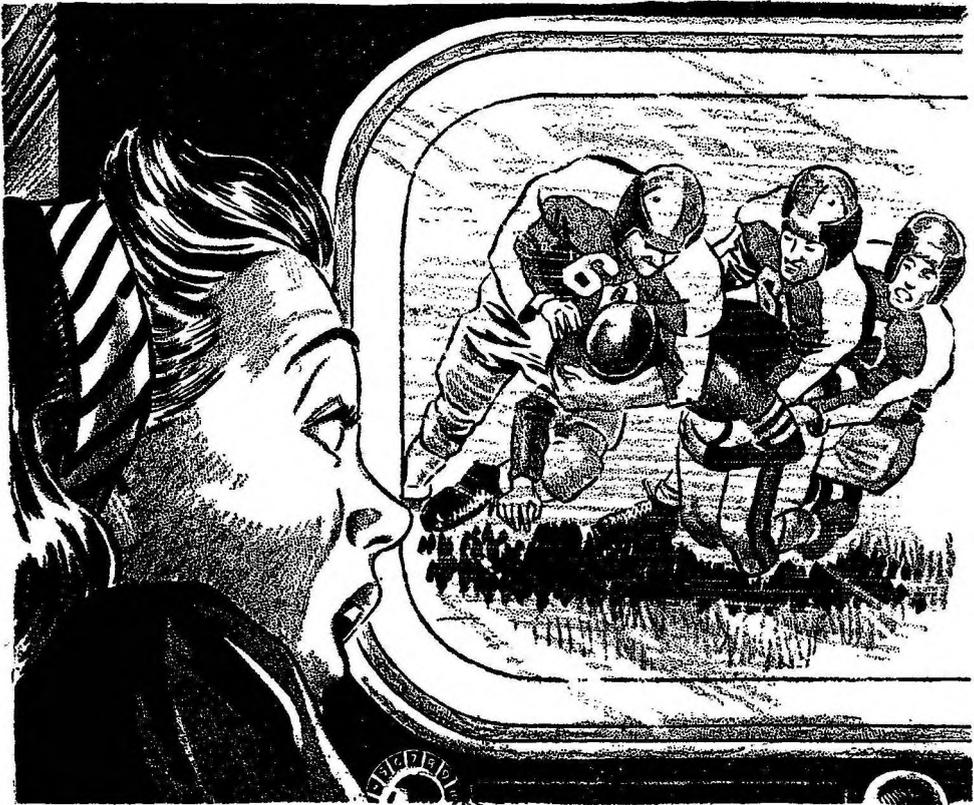
MURF shook his head in disbelief as he stared at the dancing images on the face of the bulb, as if he was unable to accept the action on the glass as having reproduced the events on the field faithfully. There was no need for artificial pitching of his voice now. Murf was as keyed up as any of the forty thousand howling spectators who sent up a thunderous roar to rattle the windows of the booth:

"If you didn't get that clearly on your set, we'll try to picture that play for you.

cleats. Somehow he got under that ball. Then Berry dropped him.

"So now it's first and ten again for the Golden Stallions . . . and for the first time in two periods, Snub Garret's Rampaging Remuda is close to the Trojan goal."

The spotter did a couple of jubilant tap steps. "What a deal! What a dilly of a deal! Most of these so-called 'stars' who're supposed to shine on athletic scholarships turn out to be very dim bulbs. But show me the joe who's going to squawk about putting out dough for this



It looked as if Cady, the new end Garret just rushed in, was going to miss that long looper by at least five yards.

"Zomborowski threw it 'way over Cady's head over toward the west sideline; it just didn't seem humanly possible for him to get that ball. Besides, the Trojan safety man, Chuck Berry, was between Cady and the rocketing leather.

"But this sub wingman zoomed past Berry like a motorcycle passing a trailer on a steep hill; he went up in the air as if he was wearing pogo sticks instead of

Cady kid!"

The cameraman on the west unit trailed Cady with his finder. On the screen in front of Murf the lanky wingman didn't seem winded by his spectacular effort.

Nor did his broad, amiable face, with the high, prominent cheekbones the bony, jutting nose and the wide, humorous mouth,—show any reaction to the wild thumpings on the back and slaps on the stern with which his teammates congratulated him. He remained perfectly expressionless.

*A smug lug, Murf decided, pretending a circus catch like that was no more'n what might be expected of him! Probably a one-shot wonder,—getting away with a down-the-field pass like that, the first time, because of its unexpectedness. Wait till he tries that again. Those Trojans will toss him up for grabs.*

A moment later Murf made a swift revision. On first down, Hustling Mike Agaro, the Stallion's bouncy little signal-caller, shot Dit Zombrorowski off right tackle on a tricky spinner.

**C**ADY was key lineman; he had to handle the Trojan left tackle single-handed while his own guard and tackle ganged up on the USC guard. With the passback, Cady drove fiercely into the bulky Trojan tackle, rode him out wide. Zombrorowski went for six.

"Begins to look as if the Stallions might stampede to a touchdown," Murf informed his audience, excitedly. "Up to a few minutes ago, it seemed as though Snub Garret's boys were merely battling to prevent the Trojans from piling up first downs and rolling along to more scores. But now all of a sudden, they've got some zing!"

*Resist that impulse to dramatize, he warned himself. Just because the Stallions started to go places soon's this new boy came in the lineup, it doesn't necessarily mean he's the spark that jolted the plug, does it? There are twenty-one other guys down there, doing their stuff, in addition to this comet, Cady!*

But there wasn't any doubt the Stallions were rearing to go now. A few minutes ago they hadn't had any more fire than a soggy cigarette. Murf called the shots with rising excitement.

Agaro stabbing through guard on a sneak, made the first down.

Zombrorowski, sledgehammered through for five on a deep reverse.

O'Doul, fumbling on a spinner, recovered for an eight-yard loss.

Third and thirteen. Murf called it as he saw it. "The Stallions' chances of a score are hanging in the balance here, on Agaro's next decision."

"Zomby," said the spotter,

Murf forgot the screen, stood up, shielding his eyes from the sun. The men at the video camera *might* miss this one. Murf couldn't take that chance.

"Agaro hands it off to Zombrowski. He's starting wide around right end. He's cutting back tossing a long lateral out to his left . . . to O'Doul . . . O'Doul juggles it, has it. He's shooting a high one, clear into the end zone. Cady's down there, but he can't—he'll never—Oh, oh! *It looks as if he stole that ball right smack out of Chuck Berry's hands!* It's hard to tell what's going on there. We may have to wait a few seconds for the officials to—"

He looked away from the tight cluster of players beside the goal posts, glanced at the telescreen. There it was. The north cameraman had it.

The picture was as clear as if Murf was peering over the referee's shoulder. Cady's figure was doubled over in the middle of a crush of surrounding white jerseys.

"It's Cady's ball! The ref flings his hands up over his head! It's a touchdown! **CADY DID IT AGAIN!!** Just listen to that crowd . . . go . . . *crazy!!*"

## II

**T**HE CLOCK SAID THREE MINUTES to go in the fourth stanza. The scoreboard said USC 14 VISITORS 20, ball on the USC 30, second and seven. In the huddle, Hustling Mike grunted, "They'll be laying for you if you try it again kid."

Cady deadpanned: "Okay. Let 'em lay. Gimme this one short, huh, Zomby? At my shoe-laces, huh?"

The quarter smacked his palms together. "A thirty-two to Cady! Take care that right half Bob! Ev'body blocks! Yet's go!"

Cady came up to the line; crouched; set his cleats.

Opposite him, the huge Trojan tackle growled:

"Here you go, Cady! Flat on your can!"

At Cady's left, Sam Hardin snarled at the Trojan, "Pull anything out of line, Humpty Dumpty, an' you know what it'll take to put you together again!"

Cady said tightly: "I can handle it, Sam."

Telfer rammed the ball back between his legs to Mike. Cady feinted a check-block, pulled the tackle off balance, side-stepped, drifted into the secondary with that deceptive loping stride.

The Trojan center flung himself in a desperate, rolling block. Cady went up and over him.

Out of the corner of his eye he saw the Trojan right end flatten O'Doul. There wouldn't be anyone down in time to take care of that right half, then.

Cady revved it up, sprinting parallel to the line of scrimmage. The halfback breathed down his neck. They raced side by side for a dozen yards. Like a photo finish, Cady grinned to himself. Only the winner wouldn't be the one in front.

The ball came whipping from Zomby's outflung arm. Cady took one extra long stride, braked, bounced back as if he'd hit an invisible clothesline, chest high and spun as he recoiled.

He dived back toward the melee of charging linemen, felt the oval smack his palms as the back of his fingers touched grass. He scooped up the leather, tucked it under his right arm, used the left to piston his hand into a Trojan helmet.

Arms grabbed his hips from behind. He kept his legs churning, twisting and turning, hobbling and hopping. The arms slipped to his knees, his ankles, and then were gone.

Chuck Berry raced across pinning him against the sidelines. Cady slowed, dodged, let the safety man come to him. The end did a conga hip-swing, slewed away.

Tacklers came at him out of the ground; he danced the tight rope along that sideline, fox-trotting down to the ten, the five—over.

His face showed nothing as he touched the ball down behind the goal. But there was a fierce surge of elation inside him that matched the tremendous tumult in the stadium.

In his heart, there'd never been any doubt he could make the grade here, with the Class A boys, as Snub Garret had predicted. Still he had his own very special reasons for getting a terrific kick out of

this mad pandemonium in the Stallion stands.

The screaming approval of twenty-five thousand frantic fans would have meant a lot to anybody, he knew that. But to William R. Cady, formerly of Banning High and more recently *ex* Redlands U, those cheers were going to mean a hell of a lot more than they would have to most members of the Stallion Squad.

They were eventually to mean figures in a nice, fat checking account. Dough in the sock. Bonds in the safe deposit.

He, Bill Cady would damn well see to it that the yells and cow-bells and the thumpings of the big bass drum *were* translated into cold, hard, spendable cash.

He'd had precisely that in mind ever since he discovered his peculiar ability to grab leather out of the air and hold onto it and jack-rabbit with it.

Plenty of other big-time pigskinners had traded line bucks for bucks in the bank. He could do it too . . . and he *meant* to do it, or bust a few guys trying.

He tossed the ball to the ref, trotted calmly back to the try-for-point huddle. He had an idea. A cockeyed idea, but one that might help along his private payoff program.

He told Hustling Mike about it:

"Just for laughs, huh, Mike? We're twelve points ahead and there's only a minute or two left."

THE QUARTERBACK scratched his nose dubiously. True they'd come from behind, and there couldn't be a living soul who'd deny this galloping beanpole had been responsible for two of the scores and for setting up the other one, still . . .

Zombrowski growled: "Go on, Mike. Give you three to two th' kid makes it!"

Mike nodded, barked signals, clapped his hands.

They snapped out of it into the kick formation. The ball came back to Mike, kneeling.

He poised it, faked a touch to the ground, flipped it backward. Zomby caught it shot it like a shortstop pegging to first. Cady drifting casually across the line, reached up, pulled the oval down.

Up in the telebooth Murf chattered:

"Call that grandstand stuff, if you want to. Say this new Catch-and-Carry-Kid Snub Garret's come up with is something of a show-off, making the conversion point the hard way. Still, the crowd ate it up."

There were only seconds left in the game.

Cady half expected Snub to pull him out of the lineup. It was customary to let a standout performer come off the field by himself wasn't it, so the crowd could have a chance to howl its head off?

He looked toward the bench. The white-haired coach was worrying the unlighted cigar from one side of his bear-trap mouth to the other, but he wasn't making any move to rush in a replacement.

So when the gun went off, fifteen seconds later, and Cady linked arms with the rest of the team to give the short yell for USC and jogged off to the sidelines. He wasn't in the best frame of mind for a quickie interview.

But the Number Three mobile unit was set up right beside the ramp leading down to the field house and Tim Murfree had hurried down from the control booth to make a request of the Lineman of the Hour:

"Hi, Cady . . . Hey, there,—Bill Cady . . ."

Cady said "Howdy".

Without Murf knowing it the control man up in the booth cut in the Number Three camera.

"How's it feel," Murf asked smilingly, "to score a couple times against a great team like the Trojans, your first time in a Stallion game?"

"Feels swell," Cady started to back down the ramp, unaware he was facing half a million people in bars, restaurants, clubs, homes and hotels all over Southern California. "Only don't forget it takes a man on both ends of a pass to make it click. That Zomby, now—"

"That's right." Murf caught the cameraman's signal; *Keep on, this is great.* "Say, Bill, how'd you like to come down to the studio some night and talk about forward passing on our Spotlight program?"

Cady blinked.

"What," he asked blandly, "is in it for me?"

For the first time in a dozen years of interviewing, Tim Murfree was stopped.

His jaw dropped. His mouth hung open foolishly. *What could you say to a creep like this, who asked you what he was going to get out of a radio appearance . . . when all you were trying to do was give him a great big hand?!*

"Why—uh—why, publicity," he blurted out finally. "That's all. Publicity. What did you expect?"

By then, the control man had recovered enough to switch to the Number One unit, which had its camera pointed at the crowd, pouring triumphantly out onto the field.

But it didn't make any difference. Because Bill Cady was giving Murf the cool brushoff anyway:

"Some other time maybe. I got a date tonight, anyhow. Call me up and we'll talk it over, huh?" He turned and clattered down the runway.

What Murf said wouldn't have been allowed on the air, in any case.

### III

**T**HE LOCKER-ROOM ECHOED to wild howls of victory and rocked with the deafening tempo beaten out by an extemporaneous be-bop band perched on the rubbing table.

Dit Zombrorowski ducked a helmet hurled by one of his celebrating teammates; glanced up at Bill Cady's sweaty torso:

"What the hell made you crack back at Old Murf like that, you bug brain!"

"The bird with the microphone?" Bill Cady peeled off a wet sock. "Asking him what was in it for me? Why shouldn't I, you horse's hacienda!"

"For one thing," the Stallions' All-Coast back retorted, "if you did take dough from those broadcast boys to go on a show, it'd wreck your amateur status . . . disqualify you for the team."

"I didn't expect him to wave a wad of bills in my puss. But they could always fix it so I'd win one of those new convertibles or a trip to Honolulu on one of these giveaway programs, couldn't they? Something I could swap for greenies afterwards?"

Zombie scowled. "Whatsamatter with you! All this yatada yatada about money! You in a jam with a dame or something? That why you need dough so bad?"

"Uh, uh!" Bill wagged his head vigorously. "Not me. Does a guy have to have some special reason around here for wanting to latch onto a quick buck?"

"There's a general supposition," the threatback laid the sarcasm on with a trowel, "that any member of this football team is here at the university for the primary purpose of collecting an education—not an annuity!"

"Horseshoes!" said Bill genially. "Show me one member of th' squad who'll refuse candy in the nice green wrappers when it's passed around. And then send him to have his head examined."

Zomby wrapped a towel around his navel. "Somebody oughta explain the facts of life to you, Buster. You go 'round shooting off your face like that an' some of these newspapermen'll hear you. Then there'll be a stink about the university subsidizing strong backs and overlooking weak minds. An' *that*, Snub Garret wouldn't like!"

"He could like it or lump it, far's I'm concerned." Bill padded along behind Zomby toward the shower. "I don't see why a coach should make twenty-five thou a year, while the guys who do all the work for him out on the field have to scrape along on a free meal-ticket and a pat on the back."

He edged past a couple of men by the shower-room door, found himself chest to chest with the head coach.

Under his shock of crisp, white hair, Johnny 'Snub' Garret had cold, blue eyes set in a pink glass face.

Bill couldn't tell from the cold eyes whether Garret had heard his question. Evidently the coach had caught the last part of it, at least, because the blue eyes glinted like ice cubes:

"You want a pat on the back? I'll give you a pat on the back." He did. "You looked good out there today, Cady."

*Is that all you got to say?* Bill remembered that Garret hadn't let him solo off the field, there at the end of the game, and the slow burn began to sting:

"Nothing to it, coach. Zomby pushed 'em in there so I couldn't miss."

"Sure." Garret nodded. "Only it takes a man on both ends of a pass to make it click." The ice-cube eyes held Bill's for a moment before the coach moved away to talk to Hustling Mike.

All right. So what? Suppose the coach *had* heard everything he said to Murf and to Zomby. Nothing wrong in that, was there?

Bill wouldn't be here at the University now, if Garret hadn't wanted him to come after watching him try out with the freshmen, if the coach hadn't okayed that athletic scholarship.

They weren't paying his board and tuition because they liked his profile; he was getting those checks because he could go downfield like a scared coyote and go up in the air like a kangaroo. Why make any bones about it? There wasn't any reason to be ashamed of it. Plainly, he was getting paid for his football skibility, and like any other good workman, he was entitled to as much as he could get, wasn't he?

He soaped up and joined Zomby under the needlespray.

"Snub answer your question, fella?" The threatback turned on the cold water before Bill was prepared for it.

"In a pig's whisker." He levered the handle back to 'Hot' and Zomby yelped. "He'd been talking to that Murf guy, I think."

"Let that be a lesson to you, Willyum. Never pass up a chance to give your coach a boost . . . especially on the radio."

"Ah . . ." Bill wiped the sweat out of his eyes, "I couldn't have gone to the studio tonight. I got a heavy deal on with the slickest chick this side of M.G.M. No kiddin' . . ."

"You could have taken her to the studio with you."

"Oh, yeah? Then nobody'd have paid any attention to me. You get one peek at this pretty, you'd see why."

Zomby nodded slowly, solemnly and skeptically. "You got a lock on her?"

"Huh? Oh, y'mean engaged?" Bill laughed. "Nah, nah. None of that starrv-eyed stuff. Lou Ann's strictly a knockout but it's just palsy-walsy with us."

ZOMBY smiled with superior wisdom. "That's what you think. Wait'll she makes up your mind for you, bud."

"Don't kid yourself. When I get married,—it's going to be to some chick with checks appeal. One of those five-hundred-a-week starlets,—somebody like that."

Zomby turned his head sideways and looked at Bill out of the corners of his eyes:

"You're really hellbent to get up there in the big bucks, aren't you, screwball?"

"Why not? Aren't you?"

The big halfback regarded him, thoughtfully. "Well, yes. I guess I am, in a way. But maybe not in the same way you are."

"Horseshoes," Bill grinned. "Unless you got a million bucks, already, or your old man has . . .?"

"My old man," Zomby said mildly, "is a big oil man. One of the biggest. He weighs close to three hundred . . . and he's about the best drill-rig man in the business. He'd be able to put me through the university in fine style, except mom's been sick for three years and what with the doc and the hospital an' all, I have to put myself through and send a few bills home every now and then out of what I make tutoring."

"Oh." Bill flushed with embarrassment; he hadn't meant to rib his team-mate about money matters; it was the last thing in the world he'd have wanted to do, because he knew how it was to be part of a family that was forever fighting the uphill battle of unpaid bills. "Well, then prob'ly you're like me, like everybody else . . . restless as a worm in hot ashes, trying to get a pile together."

Zombrorowski accepted the implied apology with a lightly hooked fist to Bill's short ribs. "I'd pick up a nickle if it was in a pile of manure. Still and all, there are some things I *wouldn't* do to make a dollar."

"Yeah," Bill agreed, uncomfortably. "That's about it. Say, you want a lift anywhere?"

"You got a car?"

"Not even a scooter. But Lou Ann has. She works in one of those swanky Beverly Hills stores. I guess she earns pretty good dough, to buy herself a convert like that.

She's meeting me outside the field house. Come on. Climb into those fancy pants. We'll drop you anywhere you want."

He wondered why Zomby looked at him so queerly, for such a long time, before accepting the offer.

#### IV

THE HORN OF THE MAROON convertible gave out with an *OH!* *oh!* The girl behind the wheel gave out with a "Hi, butch . . ." and a very slow grin.

Lou Ann Walch might not have been as photogenic as some of the film lovelies. Her nose might have been a fraction too short and her mouth a shade too wide for screen closeups. But in technicolor, Bill told himself for the hundredth time, she'd be fabulous.

Her hair was the palest, shiny, straw blonde, in startling contrast to the copper-bronze tan which glowed in the rays of the low-hanging sun as if there was some inner radiance beneath it which she could turn on or off at will. And her eyes—Bill had spent some earnest moments trying to find the word to describe her eyes. Gray, with just a touch of lilac in them; but that didn't do them justice. Nothing did them justice . . .

Bill slid in beside her. Zomby crowded in, shook hands.

"I'm tickled silly to see you," she included them both in her welcome, "but don't expect me to talk to you. I lost my voice back in that fourth period. That screeching like a wildcat gone lunatic—that was me."

Zomby offered frank admiration. "If I'd known, I'd have taken time out to look."

"That would have been a break for USC. Those guys would have let you two have the rest of the afternoon off, any time you'd asked for it. You really ruined 'em! You were *wonderful!*"

Bill draped an arm around her shoulders. "We had to work at it, shugie. Now you, you're wonderful without making any effort." He put a hand over hers, on the rim of the wheel. "Want to drive Zomby over to the Beverly Wilshire before he

throws me out of the car so he can have you all to himself?"

She crinkled up the corners of her eyes and made a face at him. "It can't be a new sensation to Mister Zombrorowski . . . being a football hero, I mean. But it must give you a kick, Billyum."

Zomby came through. "That was his game, Lou Ann,—and nobody else's,—and never let anybody tell you different. He stood out like a love seat in a locker room. I've been pitching leather to all kinds of assorted ends and backs for two seasons . . . and Bill's the best I've ever seen or hope to see."

Bill said: "Put that on record. Some time when I flub one we need real bad, I'll have you play it back to me."

They sped along the Million Dollar Mile, stopped at the big hotel.

Lou Ann said: "If it isn't a very special somebody you're going to see tonight, Mister Zombrorowski, why don't you call it off and come to dinner with us? I hate to be the cause of splitting up a pair the whole Trojan team couldn't break up all afternoon!"

Zomby took a deep breath, looking at her. Took his time about answering, too. Bill thought the threatback was going to take her up on it, but Zomby glanced swiftly at Bill, shook his head:

"Take a raincheck on that. Don't think I won't, now." He got out, waved at them, strode away.

"Great boy," said Bill.

"Nice boy." Lou Ann watched Zomby's big shoulders disappear in the crowd, before she pulled away from the curb.

"Where'll we tie on the feedbag, shugie?"

"Jose's?"

"Yup." That was another thing he liked about Lou Ann; when you asked her what she wanted to do, or where she wanted to go, she didn't stall around the way girls generally did. She just up and told you what she liked, *bang*. No nonsense about her. Being with Lou Ann was just like being with another guy . . . yet of course it was a hell of a lot better.

*If you had a flock of stocks and bonds, if you could afford to marry any dame you liked, you wouldn't wait a single minute*

*before asking her if she'd go to wed with you, now would you, Bill?*

LOU ANN was humming an old tune. He only remembered part of it . . .

*I'm no millionaire*

*But I'm not the type to care*

*'Cause I've got*

*A pocketful of dreams*

Dreams. Yeah. He had a barrellful of those. But the trouble was, they weren't even worth a dime a dozen. You couldn't pay a dinner check with them . . . or tip a waiter.

Else they'd be heading for *Bublichki* . . . or the *Players* or *The Mocambo* right now . . . one of those uppercrust spots along the Strip where you rubbed elbows with big shots, or sat at the next table to a famous movie star.

Plenty of places Bill would like to take Lou Ann. Maybe at some of those exclusive joints they'd even recognize Bill, from the goings-on at the stadium, might even snap those flash bulbs at him, sitting beside her. Dreams. Sure. About places he'd like to take her instead of to Jose's.

Jose's was all right. A fish house, close to the pier at Santa Monica. Red-checked tablecloths. Pink-shaded lamps. Grease-spotted menus.

They'd been there before at Lou Ann's suggestion. But a man ought to have enough jack to buy his girl the kind of dinner she deserved. It all came back to that old dollar sign, didn't it?

Over the crabmeat and the albacore steaks, they talked about the game. Lou Ann knew football; she had the keen eyes of a scout for strong line play and weak defensive formations, for strategy and timing. Mostly, though, she listened with shining eyes full of pride and possibly something more.

Bill had more sense than to brag to her. But he did let her see how tremendously much his first success with the Stallions meant to him:

"Course, it's only the first crack out of the box. I'll have to keep it up, if I'm going to build up the kind of rep that pays off."

"Pays off how, Billyum?"

"Renewal of scholarship, until I graduate. Maybe a coaching job, afterwards. Or broadcasting games. Pro ball, if they come up with a good enough contract."

She leaned back so her face was in the shadow, but he could see the little pucker of perplexity between her eyes.

"Which do you want?"

"I don't know, shugie."

"Don't you know what you intend to do when you leave the University?"

"Yeah," he grinned confidently. "Get rich."

She lit a cigarette. Smoke veiled her expression for a moment. "That's actually why you're interested in gridiron glory? Because it may lead to . . . to making a lot of money?"

"Why, sure." He was sufficiently sensitive to realize she was displeased, but he couldn't for the life of him understand why. "Can you think of a better reason?"

She ought to understand; a salesgirl who was earning her own living and had been for a year or so, as she'd told him. She ought to know what a dollar was worth. Maybe she wouldn't understand about his family; probably her people had never had to scrape along from one crop to the next, the way his had, though she'd never mentioned anything about her father or mother.

But surely she'd get the picture if he told her about his town:

"I guess the Cadys were just about the poorest people in Banning. It's a great little town. Cherry capitol of the Coast, they call it. Throw a big Cherry Festival there every year when the Bings are ripe. Parades, floats, fireworks, bands,—even a Cherry Queen." *What a Festival Queen Lou Ann would make!*

She propped her elbows on the checked tablecloth, cupped her chin in her hand . . . and listened, serious, bothered about something.

"But that fiesta stuff is just to whoop up roadside sales. The other side of cherry ranching is getting up at three o'clock in the morning to spray the trees before the sun warms the leaves too much.

"Pruning branches in the fall until your arms are ready to drop off . . . picking in

the spring until you wish they *had* dropped off. Digging irrigating ditches.

"Fighting beetles and bugs. Culling and packing until cherry juice gets sticky in your hair and runs out of your ears and your blind tired . . . and then seeing your crop go to the association for just enough to cover your loan at the bank."

"You've done all that, Bill." She didn't make it a question.

"Damn right. I've done it. And my father did it until it finished him. And I've seen my mother do it until it wore *her* out . . . and I'm damned if I ever want to do it again. It's all right for the boys with the big orchards and the mechanized equipment and lots of reserve to meet a bad dry spell or whatever. But me . . . I'm sick of being poor folks. Sick of big, beautiful, luscious Bing cherries. I aim to get my hands on a chunk of important money somehow . . . in a hurry."

"But still," she persisted, "you don't know *what* you want to do?"

He reached across the table, took her hand. "Yeah, boy. I sure do. I know what I want to do right now. But I can't kiss you in here. Let's go for a buzz in your buggy, huh?"

She smiled and nodded and the shining radiance was there in the lustrous eyes again.

But the little worried pucker remained on her forehead . . . and it took him a while, after the convertible had been parked on Malibu Drive, to erase it.

## V

**B**ILL SLOUCHED ON THE BACK of his spine, arm over the back of the folding chair. He was bored stiff. This was the third of these Monday afternoon skull sessions in the gym; he was fed up to here with Snub Garret's weekly de-pep talks.

The head coach was going into his act now, standing between the portable picture-screen and the blackboard with the orange chalk lettering: *You Can't Beat Washington With Press Clippings!*

"So now you've all spent the weekend reading how good you are, we can come down to earth and face it. We won a

game last Saturday that we might have lost a dozen times if the Trojans had taken advantage of our weaknesses. Next Saturday it'll be different." Snub got a hand signal from 'Jersey' Joslin, his keg-chested, bull-necked line coach, standing at the table behind the rows of chairs; the first reel was ready on the projector.

"Those Huskies are going to be hep to our weaknesses. Get that right. They've been scouting us. They'll have studied the prints of this same film we're going to look at now. They'll be tougher to whip than a pan of skim milk.

"Now, we've an attack to polish up; defense formations to patch up. We can't afford time to fidoodle around with men who muff fundamentals. So we're going to freeze the film here when we spot something that has to be corrected. After that, it'll be up to each man to drill himself on sloppy blocking or lousy timing or whatever it is he's been doing wrong. Spin her, Jersey."

Joslin switched off the overheads, cut in the projector.

A figure raced across the screen, the lens following its swift movement with a sweeping pan shot.

Bill recognized O'Doul, streaking downfield with that opening kickoff.

The camera picked up a Stallion tackle making a half-hearted block.

"Hardin," the head coach commented acidly, "blocks as if he's shoving a baby buggy. If you want to practice *that*, Sam, do it on your own time."

The squad sniggered.

Bill pulled up one corner of his mouth, scornfully. These caustic comments were a lot of mahaha, anyhow, a chance for the coach to demonstrate his superior football savvy, prove he was worth the big salary voted him by the Athletic Council.

But there wouldn't be much opportunity for Snub to exercise his talent for sarcasm at Bill's expense on the basis of what he'd done in those last two periods, *that* was a cinch!

And it was just as well, considering the black mood Bill was in. He was in no frame of mind to take any verbal dressing-down, not after those aggravating phone calls yesterday and today.

Not that Lou Ann had told him off, exactly. She just hadn't told him anything, when he'd asked her for the usual Sunday date. But for the first time since he'd met her, she hadn't agreed to spend the afternoon with him.

She hadn't explained why she wouldn't; hadn't in point of fact, explained anything.

He'd tried again today, calling her at the store right after she'd come back from lunch. No, she couldn't see him tonight. She was terribly sorry . . . and quite uncommunicative about what she did intend to do, tonight.

Would she see him later in the week? Oh, she supposed maybe. She hoped so. But it was difficult to make plans ahead . . .

He'd kept his temper, at any rate. All he'd said was that it was okay with him, if that was the way she wanted it . . . but he did tell her it seemed like sort of a crummy trick to put the chill on him that way without giving some *reason*.

Lou Ann had answered there wasn't any reason, because there wasn't any chill. She just had something else to do. After all, she was a working gal, with her own career to think about, he'd have to realize that.

THE FILM whirred on. The head coach's rapier thrusts pierced at Bill's consciousness hardly at all until he heard Snub saying:

"Any pass attack depends on deception. If you tip your opponents off to the eventual receiver, it cuts your chances of completion down by about seventy-five percent.

"Now Cady must be rehearsing to be an emcee on one of these giveaway programs, because he gives himself away three times on this next play."

*Ah! cut that bull! Bill retorted silently. You don't have to work on me, to keep me from getting the fat head. I'm not getting overconfident just because we shot the moon and got away with it!*

"First tipoff," Snub touched his pointer to the screen where Bill was crouching at right flank, "he cleans his cleats off, to make sure they aren't clogged with grass, every time his signal's been called."

*All right, a-l-l- right!* Bill glowered in the semi-darkness. *I wanted to make sure I wouldn't slip. If that told the Trojans anything, still they didn't stop me, did they?*

"Second," Snub went on, "he rubs his right hand on the leg of his pants, to wipe off the sweat. But Cady doesn't do it on every play, only when he knows the ball's going to come downfield to him.

"Third, he looks around to spot blockers coming through to clean up the secondary. If Washington gets wise to that habit of yours, Cady, we're liable to have a flock of interceptions Saturday."

"What you want me to do?" Bill blurted, "go down with my eyes shut?!" He hadn't meant to say it out loud,—it came without any premeditation whatever, and in the ten seconds of stony silence which followed, he swore savagely at himself for popping off like that.

"No," came Snub's frosty answer, "all we want you to do is get rid of those reflex habits that label you as the receiver, that notify the defense to forget about the decoys and concentrate on you."

The film flickered on. But the satisfaction Bill anticipated out of watching himself in action, had vanished.

He'd booped it up, no doubt about it. Probably Snub would retaliate by sticking him back in the second squad,—running Loftis in the *A* team.

He was wrong.

When they trooped out on the field, Jersey read off his name at right flank in the first string as unceremoniously as if Bill had kept his mouth clam-tight back there in the gym.

Nobody mentioned his having spoken out of turn,—or acted as if he had. By the time they'd run through deep reverses and off-tackle spinners a score of times and taken two around the track, Bill was convinced he'd built up his crackback at the coach to needless proportions; apparently it was just one of those dopey remarks to which nobody paid any serious attention.

But when they were getting dressed in the locker-room, Zomby brought it up. The big halfback watched Bill climb into a pair of sand-tone slacks.

"You want to sell those, keed? Or you givin' 'em away?"

Bill looked at Zomby's pants; crisp tweed and very doggy indeed. Then he caught on. "I get it. Think I'm getting too big for my britches?"

"You're a smart *hombre*. Too smart to chatter back to the coaching staff. You're off to one hell of a start with this team, an' let me be the first to predict you'll go a hell of a long way. But don't slow yourself down by letting well-meant advice get under your skin."

"Check, chum." Bill made light of it, with an effort. His first instinct had been to tell Zomby to stuff his own moose-heads, but the flamboyant new sport shirt the halfback was tucking into the top of the tweeds reminded Bill of the matter that really *was* getting under his skin. "Speakin' of britches, what are you getting so flossied up for? Big deal tonight?"

Zomby slipped on a checkerboard sports coat without looking at Bill. "Sort of . . . yeah."

"Who's the lucky mouse? Anybody I know?" Bill wondered whether the collar of the new sports shirt was a trifle too tight, or whether the halfback had another reason for getting red-necked as a turkey.

"Any time I have to get your okay on a babe before I take her out to dinner!" Zomby waved.

*He ducked*, Bill thought. *He wouldn't have, unless it was Lou Ann. That's why she wouldn't see me tonight! She's seeing him!* "Well, give her a slight snuggle for me." He managed a phoney grin.

"Yeah," Zomby stalked along the row of lockers without looking back. "I'll remember to do that."

## VI

**B**ILL SLID INTO HIS CLOTHES fast. He pulled on his camels-hair jacket as he ran up the stairs to the trophy hall. Through the plate glass doors he could see Zomby, across the street, climbing onto a Culver City bus.

The bus pulled away from the curb before Bill got out to the sidewalk. He flagged a cruising taxi.

"Chase that bus, bud," he told the

hackie, "but don't catch up with it. Guy on it . . . I want to see where he's heading."

The driver raised his eyebrows, pulled down the corners of his mouth. "Sherlock Holmes stuff?"

"Uh, uh. Nothing like that." Bill sat forward on the edge of the seat, so he could watch the bus at the stops.

It was ten minutes and three miles later when he saw Zomby hop out.

"Hold it." He paid off the taxi, kept his eyes on Zomby, hurrying toward a neon sign proclaiming:

## THE KITCHEN KEY

Bill had heard about this place, not exactly a club, just one of those super-dupe joints where there was no parking attendant and no doorman. You had to have a key to the door to even get in the restaurant. If you went there with other 'members' and the proprietor liked your looks, he might come around and ask if you would like a key.

If you did, you paid a buck, and from then on could get in whenever you wanted.

Bill was sure Zomby wouldn't have access to a setup like this. And when he got to the parking lot he saw Lou Ann's convertible, empty, he knew his hunch had been right. Zomby was inside there with her now!

Bill marched across the parking lot, pounded on the door. Nothing happened. Nobody came. Evidently the management prided itself on never *letting* anyone in.

He started to circle the building. A station wagon rolled up. A party of six spilled out, made for the locked door.

Bill sauntered over, joined the group. At an inquiring look from one of the men, Bill grinned:

"My gal's inside. I came out to see a man about a Saint Bernard and went through the wrong door."

They laughed; he went in with them.

A checkroom, but no attendant. A long, low grille room with bare oak tables scattered in a wide semicircle before a stone fireplace with logs blazing brightly under a gleaming brass kettle. At one of the



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tables . . . Lou Ann and Zomby.

He went over to their table:

"Hiya, you criss-crossin' louse."

Lou Ann said quietly: "Hello, Bill. Pull up a smile and sit down. We were just talking about you."

Bill eyed Zomby. "I bet you were! About how neatly you'd sidetracked me!"

Zomby said: "Don't be a fathead." He pushed out a chair; the gesture might have been taken as an invitation but it also put the chair between Bill and his teammate.

Lou Ann grabbed Bill's sleeve. "I asked Zomby to meet me here!"

"Sure," Bill said tightly. "That makes everything jake, I suppose!" He pulled away from her. "I'm asking him to step outside with me."

Zomby scowled. "Either sit down and talk sensible, or shut up, Bill."

Bill reached out, got his fingers into the cloth of the checkered sports jacket, yanked Zomby to his feet.

Lou Ann jumped up tried to get between them.

One of the women at the next table screamed.

Zomby struck at the hand holding his coat. Bill jabed a left. Zomby swung a right. Bill ducked, threw a fist at Zomby's chin.

They clinched, fell against the table, tipped it over. Glass shattered, crockery splintered on the hearth. A white-aproned waiter came running.

Men from other tables grabbed Bill. Knuckles banged at his mouth, his nose. Somebody tripped him.

"Bill! Bill!" That was Lou Ann, terrified. "Stop it!"

It was too late, now. Even if he'd wanted to, which he didn't. He felt a savage satisfaction in butting the top of his head at Zomby's face, even though he was taking more than a little punishment in return.

On one knee, he got his arms around two pairs of legs, straightened up, tottered toward a window. Something smashed him in the pit of the stomach, knocked the wind out of him. A blow caught him on the Adam's apple. He gasped convulsively for breath.

**B**LACK SPECKS gyrated in front of his eyes. The room tilted on edge. He felt himself being dragged, helplessly.

A hard voice said: "You want to come along nice, fella? Or do I have to put twisters on you?"

Dimly, Bill realized there must have been a cop out in the kitchen or some other part of the establishment; he was under arrest.

He tried to wrench around, in the policeman's grasp, to see if Lou Ann was all right. The officer jammed Bill's right wrist up in back of his neck until it felt as if the shoulder was going to jump right out of its socket.

He went quietly. To the corner call-box. To the station house at Culver City.

The sergeant studied him with a bored air:

"D and D"? he asked.

The officer shrugged. "He don't have any smell of liquor on him. Maybe he's drunk on miggles or some other kind of hop. Anyway, he was disorderly enough."

"Name?" inquired the sergeant.

"Zombrorowski," Bill answered, sourly.

The sergeant frowned. "Don't gimme no wise yoks, now. Spell it."

Bill did. If there was going to be anything in the papers, at least it wouldn't be about Bill Cady. He gave a phoney address but admitted he was a student at the university.

They put him in a four by six with a pine bunk and a lot of Kilroy scribbling on the walls.

He sat on the edge of the bunk and held his head in his hands.

He'd really cooked himself. With Lou Ann, certainly. With the University, too, because this would be all over the campus by morning . . . and *voom!*—his scholarship would be taken away. And for what? He banged his fist against the foot of the bunk.

They brought him supper on a paper plate; he passed it up.

At ten o'clock, a disinterested jailer came, unlocked the door: "You can go."

"Yeah?" Bill was stupefied. "When do I . . . when am I supposed to come back?"

"It'll be oke if we never see you again, bub."

"Mean I don't have to go to court . . . or anything?"

"Nah. Somebody came around and got the captain to squash the complaint. They squared up for the damage you did, over at that *Kitchen Key* . . . so you're not even on the blotter." The jailer squinted at him. "You want a little advice, go home an' sleep it off."

## VII

ALL NEXT MORNING, BILL waited for someone in the classrooms to mention the fracas at the *Key*. There hadn't been anything about it in the papers, as far as he could find out. Nobody seemed to be wise.

That meant Zomby had kept quiet; it didn't necessarily mean he'd let the whole thing drop, though. Maybe there'd be a flareup when Bill walked into the locker-room to dress for practice.

There wasn't a word. Zomby was already in uniform, when Bill got there. The big back looked up nonchalantly, grunted: "Hi, guy", and went on lacing up his shoes.

Bill drew a deep breath. "About that thing last night . . ."

Zomby glanced up guilelessly. "You have a big time last night? Where'd you go?"

"All right," Bill nodded. "Forgetsis. Except . . . I thought maybe I owed somebody something."

"Not me," Zomby stood up and stamped his cleats on the cement; there was a purplish mouse under his right eye, where Bill had socked him. "You don't owe me a thing. Maybe somebody else . . . not me."

That was all. No rehash. As far as Bill could tell, no resentment. Not on the field, certainly.

He and Zomby worked together on the long shots like Friedman-to-Oosterban. Everything clicked . . . yet things weren't as they had been. Bill missed the back-thumpings in the huddles, the rough-housing in the locker-room, after practice.

Of course there were other things he missed even more, but he'd resolutely put Lou Ann out of his mind. If she was

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that kind of a girl, if she'd two-time him once, he was well rid of her . . .

He told himself that a hundred times a day, but he never could seem to make it ring true . . . .

The squad noticed the new air of restraint between the star passer and the phenom end. Bill knew they noticed, and it began to get him down.

By the time they got on the train to go up to Washington. Bill was in the deep glooms.

Staring glumly out of the club car, as the streamliner zoomed through the big redwoods, he called himself a dirty name. It sort of balanced things up; all week the sport scribes had been pouring on the praise. Praise he felt as if he didn't deserve. Or wouldn't be able to justify.

The papers had run photos of him leaping high to spear a pass; cartoons showing him heaving a nag labeled Stallions over the heads of Trojans, White Indians and Huskies . . . smack into the Rose Bowl. Yet he didn't feel good about it.

He ought to feel like a million; he was riding the rainbow toward that pot of gold, wasn't he? Still, he gloomed down the car at his team-mates, and out the windows at the sequoias giving way to tiers of spruce and ponderosa climbing the foothills . . . and life seemed very nokay.

The steak he'd just put away in the dining-car had tasted like drippings from an umbrella stand. Bob O'Doul's imitation of Snub watching an opponent score on the Stallions had seemed too corny.

Being so upset over Lou Ann didn't make sense. But there it was . . . and he couldn't get rid of it. He was well on Westwood, but he'd never taken her home so badly . . . and still he was as dissatisfied as a skinny girl in a bathing suit.

He'd called her up at the store, to apologize, the day after that ruckus at *The Kitchen Key*, and they'd told him she'd quit her job. Hadn't said where she'd be going. Or left any forwarding address.

He knew she roomed somewhere in Westwood, but he'd never taken her home on account of her driving the convertible and always having dropped *him* off, after their dates.

The one time he'd asked her for her

home phone, Lou Ann had put him off by saying that she was staying with elderly people; it'd be better if he stuck to calling her at the store.

It was ridiculous, knowing a girl as well as he'd known Lou Ann, all right, as well as he'd *thought* he'd known her . . . and having her drop out of his life like this!

He was pretty sure she hadn't dropped out of Zomby's . . .

**H**E GAVE it up, climbed into his upper. Woke to find the Washington landscape veiled by a slanting rain, whipped against the car windows by a lashing wind.

That rain was bad. It would mean less passing, more dependence on power. And those Huskies had power to spare, with weight to back it.

By game time, the gridiron was practically awash. There were pools at midfield, in the end zones.

The rain had turned into a drizzling mist, but the wind gusting down from the high rim of the stadium drove Zomby's practice punts out of bounds after twenty yards.

Snub's briefing was brusque. Stay on the ground. Keep out of the air. Don't try to hold the ball inside the Stallion thirty. Kick on third up to midfield. Hammer the tackles.

Bill had to admit the wisdom of the tactics. A wet ball was tough to toss accurately. A soggy one was practically impossible to fling forty yards downfield for the long-gainers the Stallions had been perfecting all week.

Slippery pigskin was mean to hang onto, too. Still, if they were going to beat a team with as bone-crushing an offensive as this Washington outfit, they'd have to take some chances, overhead, wouldn't they?

Bill's ideas on the subject were beside the point, anyhow. Midway in the first quarter, with the Huskies sliding and skidding through the slime down to the Stallion thirty-five on straight bulldozer bucks, Snub sent Loftis in to replace him.

Loftis was a defensive wingman; there couldn't be any argument about the situ-

ation, out there in that sea of mire, being strictly defensive.

So Bill sat on the bench in a wet blanket, watched the Huskies punch out first downs, ram through to the ten, the six.

The Stallions reared up, fought for inches. Held one smash to a scant yard. Gave a half a yard of ground on a quarter-back knifethrough.

Washington gambled on a lateral, lost the ball when Zomby tackled the runner so hard he spattered slime for ten feet in every direction when he lit on the back of his neck. The ball skittered into a sheet of water, Telfer fell on it.

The Stallions started back upfield, got nowhere, booted. Zomby's kick only traveled twenty-five in the air, but the williewaw blew it out of the safety man's clutch. It roled almost to midfield before a Huskie slapped his belly pads on it.

Washington lost the greased pig on the first play. Loftis recovered.

Hustling Mike sent Zomby caroming off left tackle. The Stallion halfback slipped, lost his balance, staggered through the slot with nobody laying a flipper on him.

He recovered, stiffarmed the Huskie center, ran all the way to the fifteen before they smeared him.

O'Doul took it around right end for the score. Hustling Mike fozzled the pass for placement. Zomby's kick for conversion never got off the ground.

By half time the Stallion's 6 points looked as big as a blimp. The Huskies hadn't been able to get their powerhouse rolling.

In the Visitors locker-room, Snub didn't say much:

"They'll open up on you, this half. When they do, rush that passer. Tenth of a second can make a lot of difference to a man trying to get a throwing grip on a greasy egg."

Jersey Joslin said: "Don't try to get under those guards and tackles. They're too big. Let 'em skid around in their own mud puddles. Keep 'em off balance, that's all you got to do."

*You'll probably park your pants on that*



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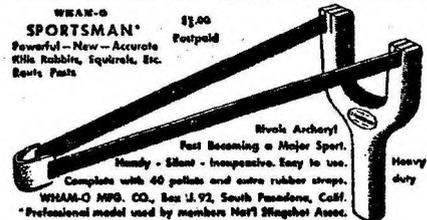
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*hardwood again all this half*, Bill noted sourly. *Fine way to grab yourself a hunk of headline!*

But Snub started him. Maybe Loftis was tiring. Or it might be Snub thought Bill would have a better chance to hurry the passer, on account of his height.

At any rate, he hadn't been sent in to snag long shots. Hustling Mike ran a couple of line smashes after receiving the kickoff, punted to the enemy forty.

Maybe Zomby had something to do with that decision. Once when the Huskie secondary was pulled in too close, Mike suggested a pass, but Zomby shook his head.

So Mike called for a punt.

Bill went down, tackled the Huskie right half. "Here's mud in your eye, bud," he growled.

**T**HE STANDS were full, in spite of the rain. These Washingtonians didn't let a little thing like weather stop them.

But it stopped the Huskies, for all of the third period and part of the fourth.

They tried spot passes, over-the-line quickies, buttonhooks out past the ends. They completed a few but by the time the receiver had his hands on the ball, the Stallions spread him horizontal.

Both long down-the-field tosses they attempted were incomplete. The second miscue gave the ball to the Stallions on downs on their own thirty.

Mike called for a smash at guard. Zomby got up to the line of scrimmage, got hit by the Huskie center. No gain.

Some Stallion fan who'd journeyed north to yell for the Rampaging Remuda, proceeded to do so in a voice reinforced by ample draughts of cough medicines:

"Cady . . . We wan' Cady!"

Mike grinned, looked at Bill, shook his head, said to Zomby: "Boot it, boy. Watcha blocks, ev'body."

Zomby got it away. High and short. Wobbling in the wind. Curving in the wind.

Bill was down under it fast. There were two Huskie receivers. Left half and quarter. One to block, one to catch.

The quarter circled ahead, under the ball, calling: "Got it, Andy . . ."

Bill drove at him racing in past the halfback.

The quarter struck out his left arm, scooped in the ball. Bill hit him at the knees. The safety man tossed the leather, underhand, backward. The half caught it on the dead run. He swung wide, lit out for the sideline, went scooting toward the Stallion goal, with nobody near him.

Bill let go of the quarterback, let out an expletive. He'd committed the flankman's unpardonable sin. Letting the ball-carrier get outside him!

Bob O'Doul caught the Huskie on the five, but the Washingtonian bulled and staggered and skidded over for six points.

It helped some that Bill, cursing himself with well-remembered GI obscenities, raged in at the snapback,—flung himself desperately at the place kicker,—blocked the extra point with his outstretched fingertips.

But it didn't help enough. Not from Bill's point of view. They hadn't lost. But they could have won . . . and didn't.

Nobody to blame but himself, he realized, trooping wearily off the field with the other wet rats at the final gun. He couldn't pin that on Zomby.

But the feeling persisted that it was the trouble over Lou Ann that had thrown him off stride. So when Zomby muttered, as he stripped off his muddy socks,—

"That was one dilly of a block, Buster,"—Bill didn't take it with good grace.

"Go climb a cactus," he snapped. "I played it as if I had my head under water!"

Zomby looked at him queerly without answering.

## VIII

**T**HE TRAIN-RIDE BACK TO LOS Angeles was a dismal business; the Sunday papers picked up at San Francisco on the way down dispelled none of the gloom.

*Stallions Stave Off Defeat* was the *Times* head. *Huskies Come From Behind To Tie* said the *Examiner*.

Tim Murfree started off his column in the *News*:

The flashy attack which the Stallions uncovered last week against USC seems to have been just a flash in the pan . . .

Bill slit the papers disgustedly, stuck the clippings in his pocket. There was scarcely a mention of him in any of the stories,—merely a reference to Cady's blocking the try for conversion.

Nobody'd dished out any blame to him, not even Jersey Joslin. But there was no ducking it;—an end who let a punt receiver get around him, to go for a score, was no bargain.

When he got back to his room and found the note from Lou Ann slipped under his door, he would have sold out very cheaply indeed. It was just addressed: *Bill*.

I expect you're thinking some pretty bitter things about me; I wouldn't blame you. I can't stop you from thinking what you want to,—but I'm just as sorry as I can be,—honestly, I am, deep-down sorry, Bill. Because I think you're such a swell guy . . . and I wouldn't want to hurt you, ever.

That's why I thought it would be better just to let things ride the way they were, before either of us did get hurt. Sooner or later, we both would have,—because,—though we do like a lot of the same things,—we don't really have the same ideas about which are the important things.

I'd never blame you for wanting to make a pile of money; I hope with all my heart you do. Most of all I hope, that when you do get it, it'll still be the thing that's most important to you.

To a lot of people it isn't. Among others, it isn't, to—

Lou Ann.

He started to tear the note up and chuck it in the wastebasket as something which was just what might have been expected from a dizzy dame. But the more he mulled it over, the sorer he got.

She was trying to put *him* in the wrong. Not a line about how she'd said goodbye for half an hour one night and treated him like a stranger the next morning and from then on! Never a word about taking up with Zomby!

He'd set her straight on a few things.

It took him a while to corner Zomby, over at the Beta Psi house. Zomby was

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down cellar at the ping pong table.

"Where's Lou Ann live?"

Zomby's lips tightened. "Somewhere in Westwood. Why?"

"Do I have to clout it out of you?"

"Think you can?"

For a few seconds they stood toe to toe, glaring. A couple of Zomby's fraternity brothers made elaborate pretense of not noticing anything.

Bill said: "I'm going to have a try at it, unless you tell me first."

"What you want to see her for?"

"I've got something I want to tell her. After I get it off my chest, that'll be all I want to see of *her*, don't worry."

Zomby shrugged. "Up to you, I guess. if that's how you feel. She lives at 29 Marview Terrace. You want her phone? It's not in the book."

"No. I want to see her."

"You might get a surprise."

Bill's forehead puckered. "Such as for instance?"

Zomby went to the ping pong table, picked up his paddle. "Skip it. Just ribbing. Have fun."

"Thanks. I'll leave that to you."

He went away, asked directions at the drugstore, walked the two miles to Marview Terrace.

**T**HE HOUSES here seemed to be bigger than those near the University, fancier, too. Set further apart, further back from the street. Bigger lawns. More elaborate shrubbery. High iron fences.

Queer place for a working girl to be living. Number 27 was a mansion of Moorish stucco that appeared to cover half a block; Number 29 wasn't quite as large, but it was solid gray stone with huge picture windows looking out over a rolling lawn that might have been part of a golf links.

Must be some mistake. Zomby'd given him a bum steer.

A couple of bobby-soxers strolled past. "Hey," he called, "who lives in the stone shanty?"

The girls chorused: "That's Mister Walch's place . . ."

"Walch?" he had to find out.

"Harrison Walch. Feller who owns all those snauzy Savile stores . . . whole chain of 'em . . . New York, Palm Beach. You know."

"Yeah," Bill nodded. He knew, all right.

The Savile Store in Beverly Hills was where Lou Ann was supposed to have been 'working' when he first met her! Where she'd pretended to 'quit' her job!

For Pete's sake, her old man really must be rolling in it. Bill took a long, slow burp at the recollection of telling her how he meant to get rich. No wonder money didn't mean so much to her; she'd probably never known what it was not to have all she wanted.

His first impulse was to walk on past. Why humiliate himself by going in there and letting her laugh at him? Then he realized that if she wanted to be amused, she'd had plenty of occasion long before this.

Zomby'd known all about this, obviously. Probably she'd invited Zomby over here. Well, Bill hadn't been invited, but he was going in, anyhow.

He marched up the winding walk, crossed a porch as wide as a street, used the bronze knocker.

A stout, moon-faced man in a monkey jacket opened the door.

"Miss Walch?"

"She's not at home, sir," the servant cocked his head on one side. "May I ask if she was expecting you?"

"No," Bill said. "Some other time . . ."

A tall, spare man with silver-white hair and a long, leathery face came out into the hall.

"Hello."

Bill backed away. "Howdy."

"You're Bill Cady, aren't you?"

Bill nodded.

"I'm Lou Ann's father."

"Glad to know you, sir." Bill felt his face getting red; he wished to hell he'd never come.

"Not quite sure whether I can say the same or not." Harrison Walch wasn't holding out his hand to take Bill's. He was indicating a chair on the porch. "My acquaintance with you began under fairly unpleasant circumstances."

Bill didn't know what to say. "Yeah? How was that?"

"I had the dubious pleasure of quashing a complaint against you over in the Culver City hoosegow, a week or so ago."

"Oh . . . it was you! I'm much obliged."

"No reason to be. I didn't do it on your account, I assure you. Purely to keep Lou Ann out of a mess." The tycoon sat on the stone ledge of the porch, examining Bill with sharp, bright eyes. "I know very little about you, Mister Cady,—except what I've seen on the football field."

"Oh!" Bill felt stupid, repeating that 'Oh!' every half minute, "You come to the games."

"As an interested alumus, "the eyes puckered at the corners, "and since I was honored with an appointment to the Alumni Council a few years ago, I haven't missed a game."

So her father was on the council which had awarded Bill his athletic scholarship!

Walch went on: "I've seen you in our home games,—and I'm frank to say I think you're outstanding . . . outstanding is the only word for it."

"Thanks."

"Tell me." The magnate leaned forward earnestly. "What do you think of our Head Coach? You may speak candidly. Whatever you tell me will go no further, I assure you."

"Snub? Mister Garret? He's great. He's strictly tops."

"Do you genuinely believe that?" Walch watched him narrowly. "I've heard there's a certain dissatisfaction among members of the squad. Been some talk of bringing in new blood, hasn't there . . .?"

Why, the old buzzard! Bill raged inwardly. He's one of these alumni bigshots who're always gunning for the Coach whenever the team doesn't wind up with a win? The snipers!

"Listen, Mister Walch," he forgot completely he was talking to Lou Ann's father. "far's I'm concerned Snub is the greatest coach in the game. Never was any better. Never will be. Just because we drop a game we should have won, some people blame him, when they should know better. I happen to know better, about that Wash-

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ington game Saturday. Snub would have come back with a win, instead of a tie, if it hadn't been for a dumb lineman . . . named Cady."

Walch raised one eyebrow, delicately. "Indeed?"

"Yes, indeed!" Bill stuck his head forward, belligerently. "And if you don't mind my saying so, or even if you do, I think it's a hell of a thing for Alumni Council members to go stirring up trouble for Snub behind his back! He has enough on his hands, without bucking you, too!" Bill turned away.

Walch called after him: "I'll tell Lou Ann you called."

Bill said: "Never mind," without turning his head.

He didn't have to have any weegie board to figure out what Lou Ann's father would tell her about him.

## IX

**T**HE MONDAY SKULL SESSION was omitted, after out-of-town games. Tuesday, Snub only sent them through light signal drills. Wednesday was the first scrimmage. On Wednesday Bill put on a show.

He ran wild against the B's, with Zomby pitching,—with Hustling Mike hurling 'em, long and short. Bill never missed a single completion.

He scored five times; twice, after the catch, weaving his way through a trio of second-string tacklers for twenty-five or better, to tote into pay territory.

Snub even went so far as to warn him:

"Don't know how much of that stuff you've got, Cady. But don't burn it all up. We'll need some of it against Idaho. They have a ram-jet overhead attack themselves."

Bill said, solemn-faced: "Plenty more where that came from, Coach."

Garret called the shot on Idaho; the Vandals came into the Stallion's stadium with a dazzling display of lateral-forwards from the double-wing, a brace of very slippery receivers and a passer who looked like Otto Graham when the Clevelander was at his hottest.

The Vandals scored, early in the second

period, to take a 7 point lead. But less than two minutes later Bill took a looping thirty-yarder from Hustling Mike at mid-field, outraced the Idaho safety man to the pay stripe.

The stadium began to whoop it up. The cheering section began unison chirping: "Cadydidit! . . . Cadydidit! . . . Cadydidit!"

He did it twice more in the second half. Once on a cross-over Thirty-two, with Zomby pitching,—once on an impossible interception that he couldn't ever have made without the freedom of movement allowed him by the absence of those cumbersome shoulder-pads.

It wound up a comparative walkover, 36-13 for the Stallions,—and next morning Bill's appetite for headlines began to be satisfied again.

The fat, black type with CADY CARRIES OVER TWICE and CADY-ZOMBOROWSKI COMBO HITS 8 OUT OF 11 began to appear in his clipping envelope more regularly.

The press notices didn't exactly compensate for some of the other things he was missing,—but they helped. Anyhow, he'd completely given up any idea of hearing from Lou Ann,—after that collision with Walch, senior.

Why her old man had taken the occasion of that single, brief, uninvited appearance Bill had made at Lou Ann's home to make such broad insinuations against Snub,—that Bill couldn't dope out. The old boy must be smart, to run all those ritzy shops and latch onto all that jack,—yet the way he'd come at Bill about Snub hadn't been smart at all.

If there was any undercurrent of dissatisfaction with the Stallion's Head Coach, it was kept far beneath the surface by the Vandal's defeat and the neat beating the Rampaging Remuda handed out to Montana's mighty eleven.

On his Intimate Interviews With Sports Stars, Murf made a veiled prediction that one of the contestants in the Pasadena Punch-Bowl on New Year's Day would be the wonder team that was horsing around with the Coast Conference competition.

A couple of sportscribes came right out flat and said the Stallions were as good

as in. After Bill and Zomby pulled the California game out of the fire with a fourth period rescue act that scored two TDs in nine minutes *via* five completions out of ten,—the campus really started to seeth.

Stanford was the big road-block the Stallions would have to hurdle. And Stanford, on the record, was terrific times two.

An irreverent soul daubed *Scalp Those Injuns* on the bronze statue of the University's famous founder. Co-eds clustered on sorority steps, chanting *One More River To Cross*,—with ribald lyrics referring to Palo Alto.

Thursday night, before the great Clash, as the papers were calling it, they held a giant rally in the Student's Union. The band lifted the roof, everybody sang, everybody cheered Snub and Jersey and the other coaches. Before Snub made his fight talk, the team trooped across the stage of the auditorium, one by one.

When the cheer-leader called out, over the P.A. system,—“Bill Cady, right end,”—when Bill walked the twenty feet from one side of the platform to the other and the crowd jam-packing the smoky hall roared and whistled and stamped and clapped . . . something in Bill's insides did nipups.

**H**IS HEART crawled up in his throat and stuck there. He couldn't have spoken a syllable if he'd been offered a thousand bucks a word. He couldn't see very well in all that smoke, somehow. He stumbled over Telfer's feet.

This queer, quivery sensation he couldn't understand at all. Butterflies in the belly before the whistle,—they were something you got used to at the start of a game when you were tauter than a fiddle-string. But this getting all choked up just because a bunch of the boys were shouting themselves hoarse to tell him they thought he was a great guy . . . it was downright disconcerting. Made him wonder whether there might be something that could give you a bigger belt than having your wallet swollen with big bills.

It disrupted his whole scheme of things. . . .

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## X

HE was still bothered about it on Friday afternoon when Snub stopped him on his way out of the gym.

"Doing anything special tonight, Bill?"

"Uh, uh." He wondered if Snub knew why he wasn't doing anything *most* evenings.

"Like to pick up a little extra change?"

"Yea-man."

The cold eyes smiled. "Gent's suckered me into writing a book. On how to play football. Needs photos to illustrate it. Player throwing a roll block, check block. Stuff like that. Need a couple boys to let a cameraman experiment with shots. If you'd drop around to the house after supper . . . we could chew it over."

Bill said he'd be on the deck. It would be kind of a relief to have something to do besides wondering how Lou Ann was spending the evening. Probably with Zombie,—though there'd been no mention of her in the restricted conversations he'd had with his passing-partner since that afternoon at the fraternity house.

When Bill got around to the Head Coach's house, he was astonished to find it wasn't much bigger than his folk's tenant-bungalow down in the cherry orchards of Banning.

No Spanish ranch-house magnificence or cut-stone grandeur here. Just a small, white stucco one-story. Not even a real patio.

A living-room not much larger than the one Bill had been brought up in,—though better furnished. Still,—no swank. Was this the way a top-notch coach had to live?

Bill, could have mentioned one member of the Athletic Counsel who came in that category, but he didn't bring up Walch's name.

Snub sensed the question, answered it indirectly. Mentioned that a football coach's salary isn't all velvet by a long shot. Man had to spend a lot on entertaining, on travel,—going to see tycoons with checkbooks that might open to provide scholarship funds. Old grads who always thought they knew 'what was wrong with the team.' Especially, Snub

added, during the week before the climax game.

Snub said: "Let you in on something that's no great secret. If we beat Stanford tomorrow, it means a whole big lot to me. Means we get the Rose Bowl bid . . . and I get a contract to coach here for another five years . . . at a two thousand increase. Not a fortune. About the same dough a guy could make running a fair-sized gas station. But . . . I could pay off part of the mortgage that's making the roof sag. On the other hand," he looked up at the ceiling, "if we lose, I'll be moving on to some other college. Have to sell this place.

"That's the tough part of making a business of football, Bill. Coach never knows from one season to the next how long he's going to be getting his salary. Have a good year, you're solid. Bad one the next season,—you're out on your tail. It's no way to make a living . . . but its still a swell way to live, providing you like football better than anything else except your wife."

Bill said: "We got a good chance to take Stanford."

"Sure. And the head coach at Palo Alto is probably saying the same thing, right about now." Snub smiled. "You clamp onto those Thirty-twos . . . I'll tackle the alumni quarterbacks."

The man who'd induced Snub to write the manual came in. He held out his hand to Bill.

"Still want to know what's in it for you, Cady?"

Bill shook hands with Tim Murfree. "See my agent." He pointed to Snub. "Makes all deals."

Murf caressed a couple of stray hairs on his billiard-ball skull. "Maybe I could make a deal to get you down to the studio tomorrow night, after the game. Special roundup program."

Snub asked: "What's the setup?"

The sportscaster made an extravagant gesture.

"In-tro-duc-ing the pair that beat the Stanford straight, Bill Cady, the West Coast's own Catch-and-Carry Kid . . . and the greatest of all Pass Masters, Dit Zombrorowski."

Snub Garrett smeared a hand over his face, wearily. "Better have an alternate wording . . . just in case."

XI

THE LOCKER ROOM WAS HOSPITAL-QUIET.

Snub walked back and forth in front of the rubbing tables a few times, while they waited and the tension grew until you could feel it on your face, like cobwebs.

Finally he stopped short. "Right here is the spot I'm supposed to hypnotize you or give you an injection of adrenalin or a whiff of oxygen to stimulate you to go out and do great deeds. I can't pull that stuff. I never have. I don't know how.

"But this I can do for you. I can tell you something you don't know. This: you're a great team. The greatest, I think, I've ever worked with. But you haven't hit your peak yet. You've never played as well as you could. Some of you, individually, in certain games, yes. All of you, in one game, no. Not yet.

"If you hit that peak all together, now, this afternoon,—you'll win a ball game. The Coast Title. The Bowl Bid. I know you can do it. What I want to know is, will you?"

They made the locker doors rattle with their "Yea-a-a-a!"

"Go on out and show me."

They piled up the ramp, out into the enormous bowl in the hot, bright sun.

Bill looked up at the sea of faces, searching for one. She'd be here for this game. Sure. And her eyes would be on Zomby, every minute, every yard.

He put her out of his mind. Stanford won the toss, elected to receive.

They lined up, strung out across the field. The White Indians looked bigger than any team the Stallions had faced. There were two All-Coast linemen in there. Their T-quarter Ettan was being compared to Johnny Lujack. The Thirty-two's might not go so easy . . .

They didn't. The first time Mike called for one Ettan intercepted. Bill didn't blame himself; he hadn't given the play away. Ettan was just too fast. Zomby



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would have to poosh 'em up a little further, to keep the ball away from that safety man.

They battled up and down between the thirties. Three tries at a first . . . a boot and start all over.

Halfway through the second period, Mike called the thirty-two again. "Long," Bill grunted. "Five feet beyond where you think I can get it."

They snapped out of the huddle, built up the T. O'Doul crept across, catlike. Telfer banged it back. Bill faked a check, shifted into high, floating into the secondary with that deceptive gliding gait that could so easily be misjudged.

He went to the Stanford forty before he turned,—and Ettan was a shadow at his side.

Bill took that extra, braking stride, but used it as a takeoff for a jump. Ettan went up after him. But the ball beat the safety man by inches. Bill touched, bobbed it, held it.

The stands began to boil. First and ten on the enemy 37.

Mike switched to spinners and deep reverses. The line caught fire, got that split-second timing into its blocks. O'Doul knifed through a door that slammed shut an instant later. Seven yards.

They marched to the twenty. They bogged down. Stanford bogged them down. But solid.

Hustling Mike begged them to make a thirty-four good just this one single time for gossake.

Thirty-four was the longie out of the lateral. Zomby to Bill.

Bill went toward the goal line like a sprint man closing in the hundred. He swerved, cut behind Ettan, leaped, and lunged hopelessly at an oval twelve feet above his head. That was the first really bad one Zomby'd chucked at him.

It flashed into his mind a few minutes later when Stanford punted out on the Stallion's thirty-five and Mike had pistoled a buttonhook to O'Doul on the forty. The quarter called for a thirty-two on the next play. "Low," Bill looked at Zomby. "Shorten this one."

It went sweet and sure. As Bill stopped on his dime and spun, the leather came

lancing in at waist level. All he had to do was scoop it in, stiffarm Ettan and set out for score-dirt. They murdered him on the Indian's fifteen, but the Stallion's were pounding at the gate.

They crashed the line, got nowhere in two plunges. Once more Mike pleaded with them to make the thirty-four good. And again, Zomby heaved the oval ten feet above Bill's head.

Back in the huddle, Zomby tried to explain: "That right tackle's coming through, hurrying me, Bill. I have to bang it down there before I can gauge your distance."

All Bill said was "Yeah?" But since he said it with a rising inflection and a question-mark at the end Zomby's neck reddened as it had that night Bill had first been suspicious of Lou Ann.

The half ended with no score on either side of the board.

**I**N THE FIELD-HOUSE, Snub confined his get-in-there-and-win talk to individuals. Bill noted the Head Coach spent quite a few minutes with Zomby, and when Snub got around to him, all he said was: "Don't put up your mitt and adjust your helmet every time you're supposed to take a pass. That quarterback of theirs is hep to the habit."

"Check, coach." So he *had* been giving away the plays. Maybe that had something to do with Zomby's overthrowing. If the halfback saw Ettan riding close herd on Bill, the pass might very well be too long, in an attempt to avoid interception!

Bill was on the point of going over to Zomby and admitting as much, but just then a thin, silver-haired individual sauntered into the locker room and waved languidly at Zomby. Walch! Bill gawked. He hadn't supposed anybody—even one of the Athletic Council big-wigs—was permitted in the locker-room between halves!

But there was Zomby, talking to the old geezer. Probably about Snub! Sure, that must have been the ticket. Lou Ann's father had met Zomby on the night of the shambles at the *Kitchen Key*. That would have been where the old boy picked up his gossip about dissatisfaction with Snub!

Walch only stayed a minute. He flicked that languid paw in Bill's direction before

he departed. Bill nodded curtly.

On the way up the ramp, he couldn't help needling Zomby: "Who was your pal?"

Zomby didn't smile. "He brought Lou Ann to the game."

"That what he was gabbing to you about? Little celebration after the game, in case we win?" Bill laid it on with a trowel.

Zomby fiddled with his chin strap. "You sure do see everything cockeyed, don't you? He was talking about what he should say of the program, tonight."

"What program?" Bill knew, before he asked.

"Television. Murf's show. You're on it, too, aren't you?"

"Yeah. But I didn't know *he* was gonna be on it. It complicated things. If Walch was going to be there, Lou Ann would be there also, probably. And with Zomby in the studio, there might be the makings of another fracas . . .

Maybe Zomby had the same notion, because he was saying, "I'd like to beat some sense into that bird-brain of yours."

"Any time."

"See what I mean. You've still got that one-track idea I'm trying to cross you up with Lou Ann. When all the time, the only damn reason she's wanted to see me at all, was to ask if I knew what really made you tick. You and your git-gat-giddle about dough, dough, dough! An' you're such a fat-headed stupe, you can't even . . ."

Snub called sharply, "Pour it on 'em fast now. They'll be figuring on getting the jump on you. Mike, you . . ."

Bill didn't hear the rest of it. He was concentrating on the seats near midfield on the Stallion's side, looking for a pale, straw blonde that would be sitting next a silver-white head of hair.

XII

HE PLAYED THE FIRST FEW minutes of that second half in a daze, too. A lot of memories came flooding back at him.

She *had* said she'd asked Zomby to

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dinner at the *Key*. That note that had made Bill so mad. It sort of backed up what Zomby'd just told him. Maybe he'd been wrong about her all this time. Maybe she wasn't just a two-timer after all.

But what difference did it make? He'd done practically everything he could do to insult her, embarrass her, antagonize her. And after that run-in with her old man, Bill would stand about as much chance of patching things up as a kid with a busted vase!

He came out of his fog when Stanford scored on a tricky bootleg pass that shook Ettan loose at the Stallions forty, let him thread his way down to the five before Mike murdered him. The Indians battered over on the next play. They converted. The score: 7-0!

Snub rushed in replacements. The Stallions received. They battled up from the fifteen to the Palo Alto twenty. Then lost the ball on an incomplete. It was Zomby to O'Doul, and it was overthrown as the others had been. And for the same reason; the passer was being hurried.

Stanford roared downfield. They lost possession on an interception by Telfer. The Rampaging Remuda hammered back, punted, went on the defensive again. Every time they got inside that Indian thirty, it was like working in hip-deep mud; they just couldn't get going.

Two minutes before the quarter ended, Mike gambled on third down, deep in their own territory. Called for the thirty-two.

Bill looked at Zomby. "Sideline it, keed. Shoot it for that bench."

Zomby smacked his hands together. "Wildo. Roger."

With the snap-back, Bill streaked straight downfield. He'd been careful not to wipe his hands on his pants, or monkey with his helmet, but Ettan was covering him like a blanket just the same.

Bill looked over his shoulder without slowing. Zomby's arm went back. The ball came up. Bill cut sharply to the left, threw Ettan off balance swerved to the right.

Zomby'd put too much steam in his throw. The leather was so high Bill would have to go out of bounds to get it. But he might! And he did! He went up,

snagged the ball, came down with his feet a foot inside the sideline.

Then Ettan hit him, from behind, knocked him over the white stripe, into a couple of Stanford substitutes. A sharp pain stabbed at Bill's left shoulder. He got his knees under him, feeling dizzy.

The Indian trainer ran over. "All right, Cady?"

Bill wiped sweat off his face with the jersey of his right arm. "Sure."

Probably was, at that. He'd cracked into one of those subs hard enough to loosen his back teeth. That red-hot knife jabbing into his shoulder was most likely a bone bruise.

He knew better, by the time he'd lined up on the Stanford forty-five. He rested his weight on his right arm, cringed involuntarily when Zomby pounded him on the back in congratulation. Something was busted up there. Shoulder-blade. Or collarbone.

Zomby noticed something was wrong. In the next huddle, he asked: "You hurt, keed?"

Bill thought fast. If he said 'Yes,' they'd take him out. If they took him out, they'd lose the threat of having a long pass go for a TD . . . and even if he wasn't going to be able to grab those long ones with that agony in his shoulder, still the ground attack would go better if the threat remained. He said, "No. I'm jake. Jarred me some, is all."

Zomby's forehead wrinkled in disbelief, but he let it go at that. On the play, he went through guard for seven. That fear of having Cady get loose for a long shot was opening up the secondary for those power smashes.

Bill finished the quarter in a haze. He walked slowly to the other end of the field remained standing on the enemy twenty-eight because it was less painful than to lie down and get up again.

Three plays after the fourth period began, Mike called for a thirty-four. Bill shook his head. "Gimme a breather. Got jolted up there a little."

Hustling Mike scowled. "Okay. Thirty-eight." He glanced toward the bench to see if Snub had noticed anything wrong with Bill. Snub gave no sign.

The thirty-eight was a wide pass to Mike himself, after a fake sweep. It went sweet and Mike zigged and zagged and hip-slipped down to the four before they rode him into the ground. Zomby smashed it over. Zomby booted it over, too, for the extra.

What's the difference who made the score? Bill gritted his teeth and forced himself to jog back to the kickoff as if nothing was the matter with him. What's the difference, long's we tied 'em?

But, though his mind was dazed with the effort of maintaining a normal appearance, he had a grim feeling there was a difference. *He might have taken that ball over, on a thirty-two.* They might have been yelling "Cadydidit! Cadydidit" now, instead of "Agaro! Agaro!"

Vaguely he realized that his chief regret was on account of Lou Ann, there in the stands somewhere. Not on account of the headlines, or what they might mean to his football future.

**H**E FOUGHT in a fog, while Mike stormed and raged at them to break up those Stanford off-tackle smashes. They went clear down to the Stallions' six, before Telfer batted down a fourth down pass.

In the first huddle, Zomby asked him again if he was okay.

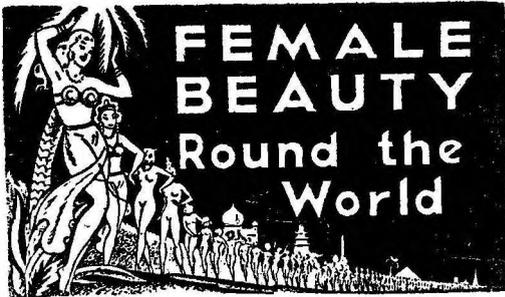
"Hell, yes," he snarled.

Mike called for a thirty-two on their own twenty-five, Bill bobbed his head. "Short," he told Zomby. "Shoelaces." That way he wouldn't have to run so hard, jolt himself with that final jump.

He doubted if he could make it anyway. But this was it, If he couldn't complete this, Snub would sense there was something wrong, and yank him for sure.

Not that Loftis couldn't hold up his end. But without the decoy value of Zombrorowski—to—Cady, Bill knew he wasn't kidding himself about it,—the Stallions scoring punch would be weakened.

He got off fast, let Ettan think he was loafing along in preparation for that final spurt. When the ball came, he pivoted,—and a cleaver cut at his shoulder. He took two steps back toward the line of scrim-



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mage and fell on his knees. He fell on his face, too, after he had the ball in his belly pads.

They picked up twenty good yards on that. O'Doul added four more. Mike sneaked through for a bare six and the first. Zomby slammed into guard for three.

"Thirty-four", barked Mike in the huddle. "Can do?"

The faces of the men in the huddle swam hazily before Bill's eyes. "Way down yonder, Zombo," his voice sounded faint and faraway in his own ears. It would have to be this time, or else. He wasn't going to be able to stick it out much longer. But maybe he could ring up one more before he closed up shop.

He got away with all the speed he could find, but he couldn't tell whether it was fast enough. He'd lost that fine edge of judging pace somewhere in the sea of racking pain. He came down to Ettan, and it seemed as if he had weights in his shoes. He glanced over his shoulder. Zomby was still retreating, still feinting.

Bill cut right, braked, came back a stride, and Ettan streaked in front of him, to intercept a low one. Bill spun, raced toward the Stanford goal. The ball loped up . . . high . . . a long, long shot. Five, maybe seven yards ahead.

Bill put the last sliver of effort into those next six steps. Ettan sprinted up beside him! They went in the air as if they'd been welded together.

Bill made a convulsive stab above him, not really seeing the ball, but feeling it. Feeling, too, a shattering, blasting shock.

That was all he did feel.

They had to pry the ball out of his fingers when they lifted him off the goal-line and slid him onto the stretcher.

### XIII

**T**HERE WERE FIFTY PEOPLE milling around the television studio. Bill let Snub steer him through the maze of cameras and reflectors so nobody would bang against the sling that held up his left arm.

Zomby saw him first. He plowed a path for Lou Ann and her father. "Ready



to look pretty for the people, Bill?"

Bill said: "Hi, shugie."

She touched the sling with her fingertips, "Hurt bad, Billyum?"

"Not now. Not any more. I've been looking for a nice nurse, though."

"I'm a nice nurse," Lou Ann said.

Walch, senior, held out a thin hand. "Unbelievable. Altogether incredible. That a man should play an entire quarter with a broken shoulder blade. And to top it off, catch a fifty-five yard pass for the touchdown that beat Stanford."

Bill bobbed his head at Snub. "Took more than one catch to win a Coast conference. There's the guy ought to take bows."

Lou Ann's father beamed. "Quite so, Cady. As a matter of fact he's going to take more than that, on Mister Murfree's program, here in a few minutes. He's going to take a new five year contract!"

Murf called, "Makeup, Mister Garret. You'll look like something they fished out of the sewer unless we doll you up."

Walch and Snub went toward the make-up man.

Bill slid an arm around Lou Ann. "Just shows. You never can tell. I had your old man figured out all wrong. Thought he was gunning for Snub's hide."

She laughed. "That business about dis-

satisfaction among the team? That was a put-up job, Billyum."

"Putup?" He felt foolish again.

"I'd told dad about you, and the way you felt about—well, money. He didn't want me to have anything to do with you, naturally,—because he assumed you were just interested in his money. I tried to tell him you didn't even know I was anything but a shop girl. He couldn't believe that. So he was trying you out. Trying to find out if there *was* anything you were more interested in than the pursuit of a buck." She grinned and wrinkled her nose at him. "He found out all right. I wish I'd been there to hear it."

Zomby cut in. "Where were you, anyway? I tried to get you on the phone, to warn you Bill was coming over with blood in his eye. Your father said you were down on your farm. I didn't even know you *had* a farm."

"Didn't I tell you?" She pretended surprise. "Oh, yes. I had a little money of my own saved up. I bought me a couple hundred acres of cherry orchard. Down near Banning."

"Banning?" Bill cursed himself for that parrot business again. "You bought a farm near Banning?"

"Sure," she grinned. "So I can learn something about fruit ranching before I get married and settle down to cherries as a business. If it is a business," she finished doubtfully. "Some people think it's not so hot . . ."

Bill pulled her close with his good arm. "Shugie," he said, "You might not make a million at it. But on you, it'll look swell."

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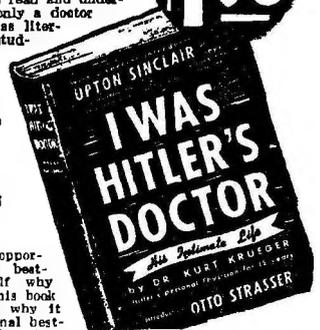
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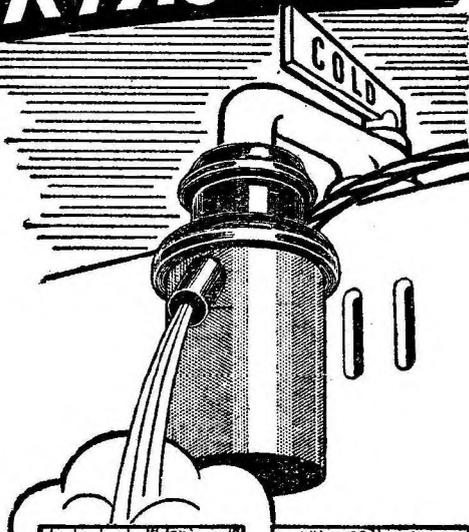
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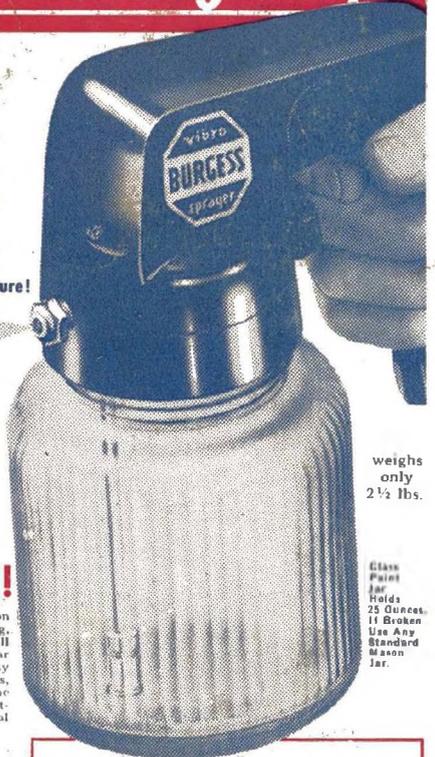
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