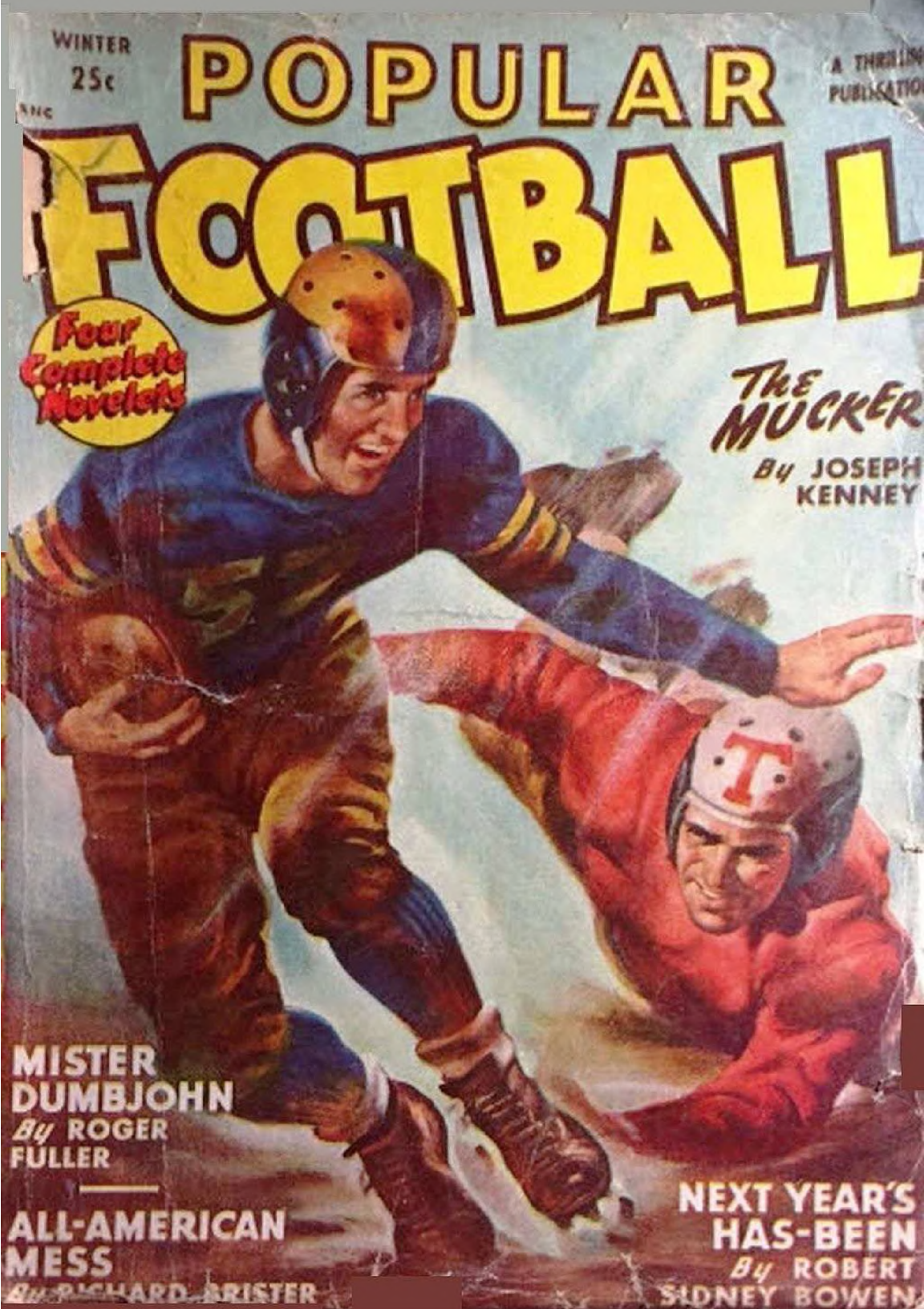
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MISTER DUMBJOHN

By ROGER FULLER

The label of the plebe clung to Midshipman Coley Sprague, until the shock of combat on the gridiron put him wise to his own worth as a Navy man!..... 11

SIX SHORT STORIES

FEATURES

Also see football fact features on Pages 79, 96 and 116

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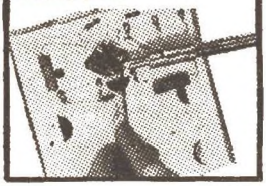

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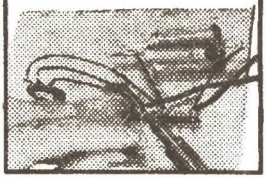

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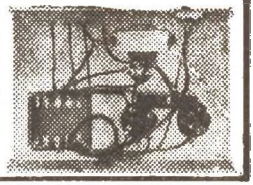

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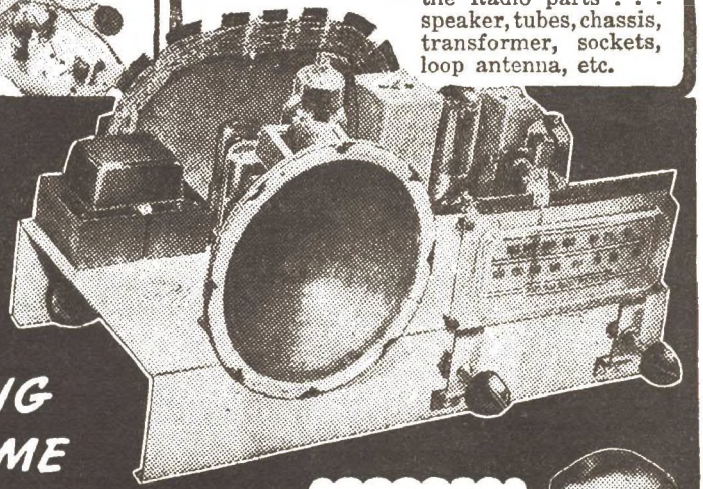

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COME November 6, 1949, and the great American autumn saturnalia of speed and sweat and pads and liniment and Monday morning quarterbacks and huge crowds and homecoming games and chrysanthemums and hot toddies and acrobatic cheer leaders and drum majors known as football will be four-fifths of a century old.

The opening contest, played according to tradition between Princeton and Rutgers at New Brunswick, New Jersey, bore little resemblance to a modern big-game. The ball was almost round, the players were allowed no time-outs or intermissions—they played 25 men to a side in skin-tight "uniforms" and all but outnumbered the spectators who watched from the sidelines on foot or from the eminence of fringe-topped surrey and carryall.

But within a very few years the game had spread and jelled with amazing speed from coast to coast in a form which, strategically and tactically if not in scoring system and all-around appearance, was remarkably similar to football as it is being played each weekend this season between school, college and professional elevens.

How Little It Has Changed!

In fact, the most remarkable thing about football is how little it really has changed, despite constant and radical alterations of the rules almost annually. A majority of the most highly touted new techniques of gridiron offensive play would be easily recognizable to, say, Pudge Heffelfinger of the 1888 Yales or Eddie Poe, shrewd Princeton play caller of a season later.

For instance, development of running guards—linemen who pull out of position to head the interference—is nothing more than a hyped-up revisal of the old Walter Camp—Eli guards-back system, which wreaked havoc on all and sundry among the opposition until it was declared unstoppable and the rulemakers insisted that the attacking team must have a minimum of seven men on the line of scrimmage when the ball was snapped.

For several decades this ruling kept the linemen up on the line throughout offensive plays. But then some astute tactician evolved the theory of pulling out selected linemen to add extra punch to the interference. If it left a wide-open alley for the defensive man opposite, another lineman was pulled out from a less vulnerable spot to wipe out the would-be tackler from the flank. It was the old story of the better mousetrap and, suitably amended and approved, appears to have a permanent spot in the game.

But between the abolition of the lethal old guards and tackles back plays and their re-emergence in the form of running-guard plays the coaches were not letting their brains lie fallow—not when their jobs depended upon coming up with sufficient Saturday wins to keep the alumni happy.

The Flying Wedge

A Harvard genius, back in the nineties, cooked up the so-called "flying wedge,"

(Continued on page 8)

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THE FIFTY-YARD LINE

(Continued from page 6)

which proved equally lethal and caused the old guards-back controversy to be all but forgotten as obsolete. The flying wedge was simple and most effective—operating for the team that kicked off.

All the kicker did was to nudge the ball with his toe, then moving past it to form the apex of a V-formation with four teammates coming in on each side to complete it.

The ball carrier, picking up the pigskin, simply stayed in the angle, which moved irresistibly toward the opposing goal while the final member of the team protected his rear from pincer movements.

By the time a defense of sorts had been evolved for this maneuver, resourceful offensive tacticians had evolved the "revolving wedge" and other more complex and unstoppable forms of the play.

Finally, thanks to a run of onfield fatalities developing out of these bone-crushers President Roosevelt (Theodore) stepped in with a loud blast that caused the rulemakers to mend their fences.

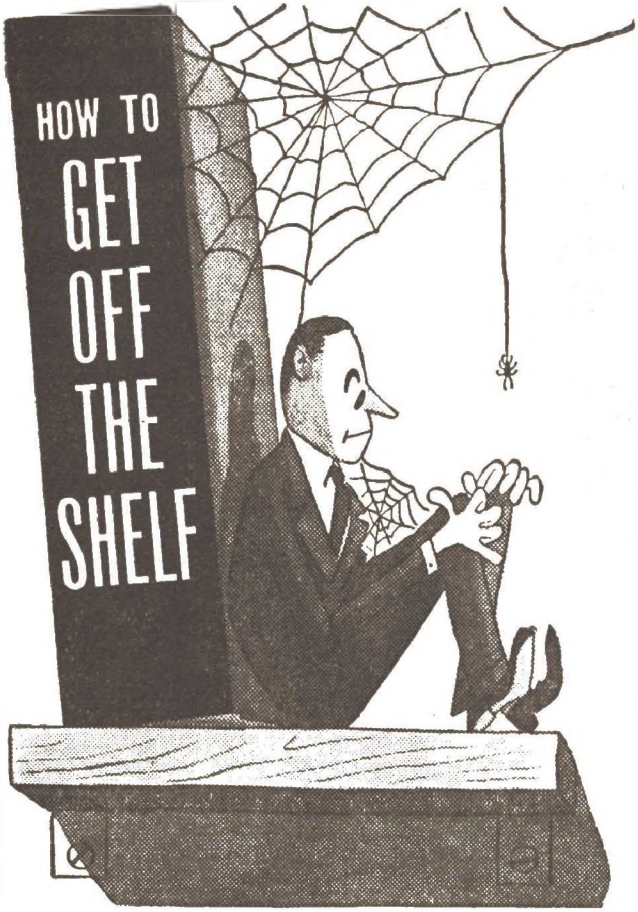
Revived in Reverse

So the wedge was abolished by the on-side kick rule, which forced the kicker-offer to boot it at least ten yards before he or his teammates could pick it up. However, it was revived in reverse some twenty years ago with the receivers forming a similar formation on the dead run (in the early days it was played at a trot) and once again it proved close to irresistible—and much too deadly.

Again public indignation, early in the 1930s, rose in a mounting crescendo and again the rulemakers had to break it up. This they did by forcing the receiving team to keep at least three plays within ten yards of the kicker, thus obviating the formation of any fatal flying-geese setups.

But in between the two flying wedge periods the ever-busy tacticians came up with another version of the almost-as-deadly guards-back system, generally entitled the "Minnesota Shift." This involved the lining up of guards and

(Continued on page 143)



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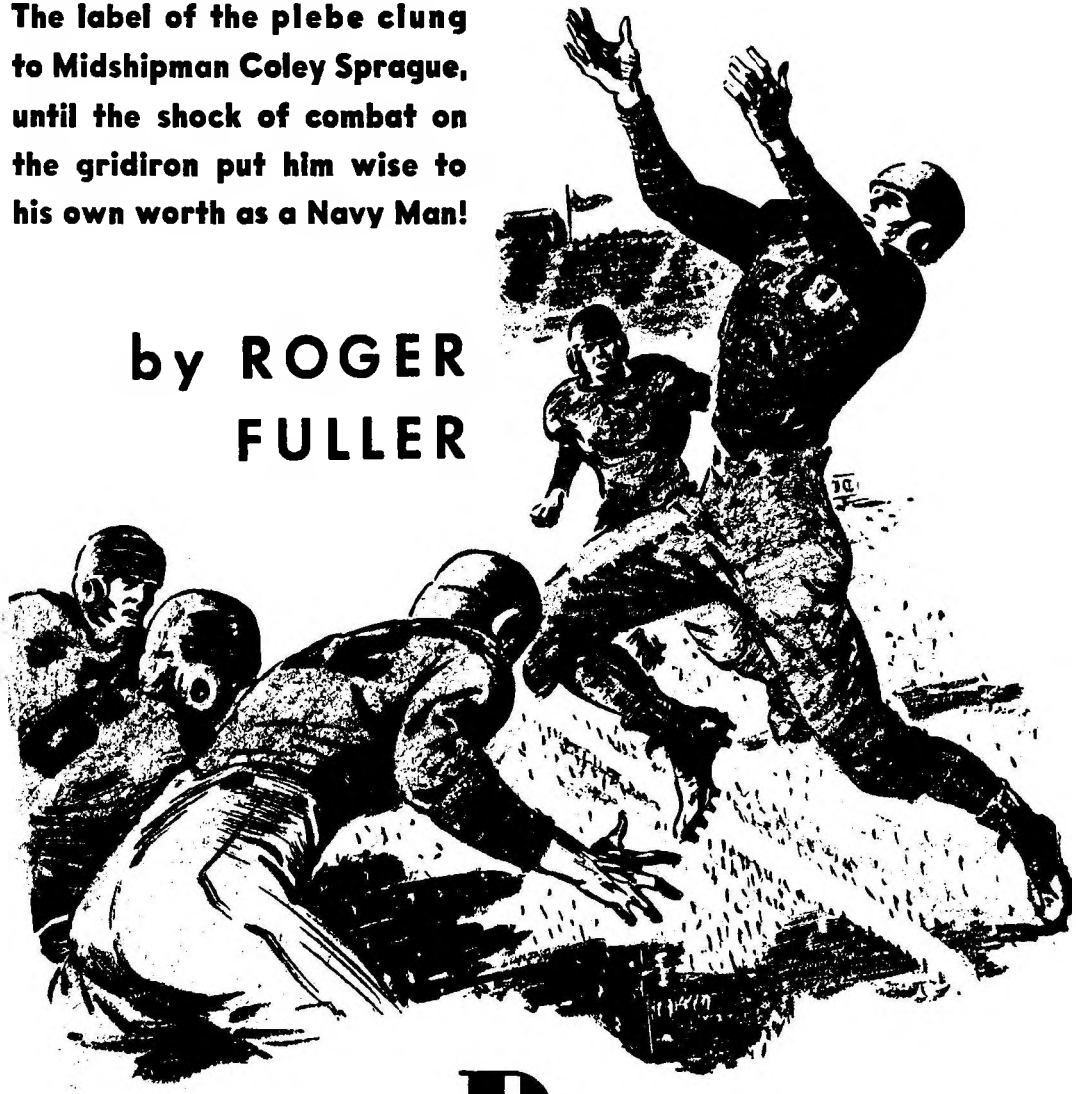
The label of the plebe clung to Midshipman Coley Sprague, until the shock of combat on the gridiron put him wise to his own worth as a Navy Man!

by ROGER FULLER



MISTER DUMBJOHN

a football novelet

CHAPTER I

First Game

COLEY SPRAGUE was probably the only Naval Academy midshipman who ever carried the title Mister Dumbjohn past his plebe year.

Mister Dumbjohn is the name that upperclassmen at Annapolis automatically apply to every trembling neophyte who walks through the gates in the high brick and stucco wall that separates the Academy from the rest of Crabtown-on-the-Chesapeake. During his first year, your Academy plebe is never addressed by his name by any third, second or first-year man. It is Mister Dumbjohn this, and Mister Dumbjohn that, until the following June Week, when one class moves into the ranks of En-

signs, U.S.N., and the plebe class steps up a notch to become "youngsters" and makes ready to "Dumbjohn" the incoming beginners to a fare-thee-well.

Coley Sprague had taken it for granted, of course, that he would drop the hated plebe title when his turn came to move up to the class that corresponds to the Sophomore class in civilian schools. But Coley reckoned without Arch Benedict.

It was Arch who kept the dumbjohn title alive in Coley's case. Arch was everything Sprague was not. Arch was battalion commander in his second year at Annapolis. Arch never had to throw

An awful fear struck Coley's heart—was he heading for the right goal?

pennies at the weatherbeaten statue of old Tecumseh when he marched past on his way to a tough exam, praying for a 2.5. Arch had the looks and manner of a man who should be lounging around some exclusive fraternity house on some exclusive campus, instead of playing ramrod at the Naval Academy. Even as a plebe, Arch Benedict had a speaking acquaintance with practically everybody in the Academy, including some fourth year men who were revered by the other future admirals.

Arch captained the plebe football team during his first year at Annapolis, and it was on the trampled practice field, where the plebes met their high and prep school rivals and the Jayvee squads of other colleges that Arch found reason, in his own mind, to label Coley Sprague Mister Dumbjohn permanently.

The plebes were playing the University of Virginia Jayvee squad and they were finding the going tough. The Virginia youngsters had a light, fast club that year and they had begun fill-

ing the air with footballs at the opening whistle. The plebes' pass defense was not a thing of beauty at that stage of the season and the boys from Charlottesville romped up and down the striped turf almost at will while the midshipmen in the stands groaned and wailed, and the plebe coach wore his molars down sev-

Coley Sprague was one of the substitute backs that the coach threw into the game, more in desperation than anything else. Coley was not an imposing looking candidate for the team. He was on the thin side and gawky, with a large adam's apple set in a long neck. He had washed-out blond hair and washed-out blue eyes and since his arrival at Annapolis he never had been able to break himself of the bad habit of saluting C.P.O.'s and

eral fractions of an inch by grinding his teeth.

The plebe coach that year was a three-striper, a Commander who had played a lot of football for the Academy in his day. He was no Tom Hamilton, nor yet a Jonas Ingram, but he knew the rudiments of football at least, and enough to know that his team was doing everything wrong that it could. To a Commander just off the bridge of a destroyer, this smacked of insubordination, and the plebe coach was scathingly bitter in his comments to the drooping wretches who came off the field to make room for substitutes.

passing up gentlemen who carried a great deal of scrambled eggs on their caps and a corresponding amount of gold braid on their sleeves.

THEY tell the story of Coley Sprague passing Admiral Nimitz on the Quad one day before Nimitz retired—but that's another yarn.

On this day when the Virginia Jayvees were happily engaged in scuttling the plebe team, the harassed plebe coach ran his eye up and down the bench and fixed that piercing gaze on Coley. The score then was Virginia, 28; U.S.N.A. Plebes, 0, and the coach figured that

nothing could worsen the humiliation of his team, not even sending Sprague into the game.

"Get in there for 19, Number 21," the officer snapped, "and see if you can remember which direction we're trying to move that ball."

Which might have been a mistake on the Commander's part, in view of later events.

FOR all his unprepossessing appearance, Coley Sprague was a better than fair country backfield man. He had played football at a midwestern high school that attracted bigger crowds than many colleges in that area and he had been well grounded in the whys and wherefores of the gridiron game during his formative years. His long legs could cover a lot of ground, his splayed hands could hang onto hard-flung passes and he had a shifty, twisting gallop that had proved elusive in a broken field.

Now he loped out onto the field after grabbing up the first helmet he reached for from the line in front of the bench. It was unfortunate that he happened to pick up a headgear that was a size too small for him. By the time he discovered that fact, he was at the referee's elbow, reporting in, and it was too late for him to make a change. The undersized helmet sat on top of his long, narrow head like an acorn on a cucumber and the result was slightly ludicrous.

Arch Benedict was running the plebe squad and providing practically all the decent football that the plebes were exhibiting that afternoon. He stood with his hands on his hips, a straight, powerful figure, as Coley finished his report to the ref and ambled over to join his colleagues. It was Navy's ball on their own fifteen, fourth and eleven, and Arch went back to punt. He got off a fair kick against a stiff wind that blew in from the Chesapeake and Coley went down-field after throwing a half-block at an inrushing Virginia end. He got spilled by a Charlottesville man before he could lay hands on the Old Dominion receiver, but somebody else made a shoestring tackle on the Virginia forty-one.

Virginia was feeling very gay about the whole thing. Practically every bit of razzle-dazzle the Jayvees had uncovered had worked as the plebes floundered around the field, playing a dismal game of defense. For that reason, the Virginia quarterback asked for a three-way pass out of a single-wing. It was a play that Notre Dame, in her best football days, would have hesitated in using.

The ball went to the tail-back who faded, then lateralled to a wing man who cut back toward the passer, turned and flipped a forward in the direction from whence he had come, where another back was supposed to be waiting. It was one of those plays that look so marvelous on a blackboard, where the crosses and squares move obediently to the sweeps of the chalk, without allowing for the least margin of error. In practice, it was something else again. Requiring split-second timing, it was dangerously open to interception—as the Virginians found out.

Coley, playing on the left of the secondary in a six-one-three-one defense, went in at the first pass, checked himself when the Virginia back cut toward the other side, went forward again as the ball came arching in his direction. He left his feet, gathered in the pigskin and landed in the middle of a knot of Virginians who were milling about rather aimlessly. He whirled, twisted loose from a would-be tackler, and set out for the goal.

He outdistanced his pursuit nicely and looked ahead to a clear field in front of him. There was a Virginia man behind him, slightly to his left, but that individual seemed curiously reluctant to make a tackle. Instead, the man from Charlottesville seemed to be *pacing* him.

An awful fear struck Coley Sprague's heart. When he had intercepted that pass, he had turned in the air. When he landed, among those Virginians, he had whirled again. *And now, was he heading for the right goal?*

He shot a frantic glance behind him. The Virginian still followed at the same distance and behind him came a pack of plebes, all with their mouths open, roaring at him. In the van of the Navy men was Arch Benedict and Arch was making wild motions with his arms as he ran.

"Oh-oh," Coley told himself. "It looks like I done it!"

He checked his stride, started to make a sweeping turn back in the direction he had come from. That was all the Virginia man who had been trailing him needed. The grinning visitor wrapped his arms around Sprague's long legs and dumped the plebe to the turf.

"Nice going, sailor," the Virginian said, as he disentangled himself. "I thought for a minute you were going to score for us."

Coley slowly climbed to his feet. A glance at the sideline markers showed he had been brought to earth on the seventeen—Navy's seventeen. He had made about forty-five yards on the interception and he had made it in the wrong direction. Another glance at the sidelines and he could see the plebe coach, the three-striper, holding his head in his hands.

Well, Coley told himself, Roy Riegels had done that and Riegels had come back to captain the team. There wasn't any use feeling badly about it. It could happen to anybody. Sure, it was a tough break, coming as it did on the first play he had made for the Academy, but he'd make up of it.

His optimistic deliberations were cut short by a rude voice. Arch Benedict was standing beside him and Arch Benedict was sore.

"Of all the dumb stunts!" Arch roared. "Of all the asinine, nit-witted plays I ever saw, that takes the cake! You had a score right in your hands and what did you do? While we were cleaning out the Virginia line, making a way for you, you take off like a big-billed bird for the wrong goal!"

"Sorry," Coley mumbled. "I got mixed up."

"Mixed up! I'll say you got mixed up! Our one chance to score this afternoon and you flub it. Where did you ever learn to play football, Mister Dumbjohn?"

Now, for one plebe to call another plebe Mister Dumbjohn was strictly against custom. The plebes, the smart ones and the slow-witted ones, the class leaders and the bottom-of-the-list men, were all in the same boat inside the walls of the Academy, each one subject to the tyranny of the upperclassmen. Theirs was a tightly-woven fraternity, of necessity. There might be plebes who had reason to fall out with one another, personally, but never, never, never did feelings rise so high that one could call the other by the despicable label of the upper-classmen.

Coley's eyes popped as he heard Arch Benedict apply the epithet. "Wait a minute," he said, slowly. "You've got no call to give me that name."

"No?" Arch Benedict demanded. "Just what should I call you, Mister Four-Oh?"

CHAPTER II

Fighting Words

NO, COLEY admitted to himself that he hadn't earned that precious label yet. Four-Oh was as close to the perfect mark as a midshipman could get; it meant superiority in all things and Coley had no illusions about his talents in the classroom and on the dance floor. But he *did* know how to play football and just because he had made a boner on his first play didn't give this man Benedict the right to call him Mister Dumbjohn, as though Benedict was a second or third-year man.

"I don't care what you call me," he said, "but lay off that Dumbjohn business."

"Why, you—"

"Play football," the referee barked. "Get started or I'll give you five for delaying the game."

Benedict closed his mouth, gave Coley a glare and grouped his team in a huddle.

"Try the tackle with Number Eleven," he growled. "Maybe Mister Dumbjohn here, can run the right way this time."

Coley tightened his mouth. There was nothing to gain, he knew, by arguing with this big guy here on the field. The thing to do was to show Benedict and the others that his first clinker had been a mistake, take the ball for some nice gains that would make Arch see that he, Coley, didn't really deserve the name Mister Dumbjohn.

Number Eleven called for him to drift to the right while Benedict took the ball through tackle on a cut-back. He completed his assignment and Arch went for five. The plebes tried the same play again, and again Arch took the ball through, this time for a first down. The plebe stands sent up a feeble cheer. Arch called for an end sweep and Coley ran interference, dumping a Virginia tackle and managing to keep his feet for a pass at the defensive back who had come up. The play was good for eleven yards. The Navy rooters perked up.

"We pass," Benedict said. "Me to Michaels on Number Sixty."

Coley's assignment again was the de-

coy run off to the right. He made his move, then cut back in to spill the Virginia end who was rushing Benedict as he started to fade. Again Coley kept his feet, although the Jayvee end went sprawling, and Coley headed downfield to give Michaels some protection.

But Michaels was in trouble. Coley saw at a glance that the intended receiver was completely boxed in by Virginia men, without a chance of getting that ball. He veered off toward the sidelines, turned and raised a hand. He was loose, without a Charlottesville man within twenty feet of him.

He saw Arch Benedict look squarely at him. There was no chance that the plebe captain did not see that Coley was in the clear. And still, Benedict turned away, dodged an incoming Virginia man and shot the pass at the beleaguered Michaels.

It was almost an interception, a Virginia man laying fingers on the oval, but failing to hang on to it. Coley shook his head. That had been a bum play, a certain long gain and a possible touchdown thrown away. It was as if Benedict had deliberately ignored a chance to score, but that, of course, was impossible. Coley decided that Arch had not really looked his way, that he had just feinted in his direction without seeing that he was in the clear.

He jogged back to the huddle. As he bent over, he said, mildly:

"I was loose, Arch. Maybe you didn't see me, but I was wide open."

Benedict's voice was harsh when he answered.

"Maybe I saw you," he said, "and maybe I was afraid you'd run the wrong way again, Mister Dumbjohn."

Coley fought down the surge of anger that swept through him. He kept his voice quiet.

"That's a heck of a way to play football," he observed. "A man shouldn't refuse to throw a pass because another guy made a mistake."

"I'm running this team," Benedict snapped. "You just try to play your position, if you can."

He called for the same pass play, with the other wing-back, Parkingson, as the intended receiver. Coley went off to the left, this time, took care of the end and went down the field. The Virginians were not fooled. They covered all the potential plebe receivers while the line surged in on Benedict.

Coley managed to slip away from the Virginia back guarding him. Again, he found himself in the clear. Again Arch gave him a glance and again Benedict turned away. The pass went to Parkinson and this time the Virginians didn't miss the interception. It was Coley who cut over and spilled the Virginian back with a smashing tackle.

THE three-striper sitting on the bench was not blind. Indeed, the men who had served under him, at sea and ashore, always maintained that the Commander had eyes in the back of his head, especially when one of them tried to sneak a smoke while standing watch. The coach had seen everything that had happened on the field, and he had seen Arch Benedict pass up two good chances to throw long-gain passes to the angular Coley.

The Commander's temper by that time was not of the best. Coley's run in the wrong direction had done nothing to soothe his ruffled feelings and Benedict's weird passing provided the spark needed for the explosion that was inevitable. The coach sent in a man for Benedict and when Arch came off the field he found a red-faced officer waiting to spill some red-hot words in his ear.

Coley did not know what the Commander was telling Arch, but a sidelong glance toward the bench convinced him that Arch Benedict was being chewed in no uncertain terms. Sprague felt no elation at this sight. He had not known Arch Benedict long, but long enough to know that the big man wouldn't take kindly to a dressing-down inspired by anything to do with Coley Sprague.

Arch was a big man in more than physical size in the plebe class. As the years passed, barring unforeseen accidents, Arch's stature would continue to grow. Even now, in the early part of the plebe year, it was not too hard to look ahead to the day when Arch Benedict would graduate at the top of his class, recipient of the Honor Saber, escort of the Color Girl, the Man Most Likely to Wear Stars on his summer slates. And if Benedict was the kind that held grudges—and Coley suspected he was, for all his personable good-fellowship—things might go very hard indeed for Coley Sprague, the tag-ender, the fellow

whose uniform never seemed to fit; the man whose hair never seemed to be combed, no matter how much time he applied to it; the plebe who, out of an entire battalion, would be the one to put his newly-shined shoes into a mud puddle a couple of minutes before inspection.

The substitute signal-caller, a plebe named Josephs, asked for a pass play with Coley on the receiving end. Sprague went between tackle and end, shook off a Virginia secondary man and turned to take the pass in from his right shoulder. He twisted out of a Virginian's grasp, glimpsed the set-up downfield and took off. They finally grabbed him from behind, on the Virginia thirteen and the Navy stands took full advantage of the occasion.

Benedict came back in after the next play, an off-tackle slant that picked up three yards. The big star's face was still tinged by the impact of the three-striper's comments. His voice was terse, clipped, as he bent in the huddle.

"The Commander says to feed it to Mister Dumbjohn," he said, acidly, "and orders are orders. Number Five-A, Michaels to Dumbjohn."

"The name," Coley said, slowly, "is Sprague."

"The name is Dumbjohn," Benedict repeated, "and I can prove it behind Dahlgren Hall any time you have doubts."

Coley swallowed. When it came to using his fists, he was as awkward as he was at dancing. This big, thick-bodied man, he knew, would murder him in a fight. But the challenge had been made, and there were worse things at the Naval Academy than taking a beating.

"Tonight," he said, his voice breaking, despite himself. "Right after quarters."

He took the pass from Michaels and got to the two before he was downed. Benedict bulled over for the score and that was all right with Coley; it was the logical play.

That was all the scoring the Plebes did that day, but it also was all the scoring that the Virginia Jayvees did. Coley, on defense, played a roving, flap-armed game that proved troublesome to Virginia's passing attack and when the men from Charlottesville finally abandoned the air and tried the ground, they found the plebe line too heavy for them. The three-striper took Sprague out late in the last quarter and managed to say a few words to the gangling youngster as he came off the field.

"You did all right, Sprague," the Commander said, "after you found out which goal was which. You were okay."

Even this grudging commendation failed to lighten Coley's heart to any great extent. As he stood in the showers, the water sluicing down his angular body, he wondered just how long he would have to take Arch Benedict's punishment before he could go down to stay. He hoped it would not have to be too long. Maybe—just maybe—Benedict would open the fight with a clip on the chin that would put him away right off the bat.

HE MARCHED to supper, sat down on the very edge of his chair with his shoulders arched back at an uncomfortable angle until the upperclassman at the head of the table gave the plebes permission to eat, then merely dabbed at his food. His lack of appetite caught the eye of the exalted being at the head of the table.

"You don't seem hungry, Mister Dumbjohn," the fourth year man said. "Perhaps you miss your quail on toast, your bubbling champagne."

"No, sir," Coley replied, humbly.

"Or perhaps the lack of soft music, beautiful women and gleaming full-dress shirt fronts disturbs your digestion."

"No sir," Coley said.

"Then," suggested the upperclassman, "suppose you take a brace, Mister Dumbjohn, and contemplate your ingratitude to the taxpayers of the United States and the commissary department of the United States Navy who provide you with this food that replaces the hog jowl and black-eyed peas you doubtless had for Thanksgiving dinner in the mud hut you crawled out of to come to Annapolis."

Obediently, Coley Sprague "took a brace." He sat there, his spine the required four inches from the back of his chair, his shoulders pushed back to their utmost. He sat there for the rest of the meal, his tired muscles protesting. It seemed like several hours before the order to rise came from the head of the table. He marched from the dining hall with the others, grateful for his release from torture, remembering to keep his legs down to the twenty-inch step that

was required.

In his room, he sat staring, unheeding at the books in front of him, waiting for the call to quarters bugle that would send him out into the night to meet the sledge-fisted Arch Benedict. At the other desk, Coley's "wife," his roommate, sat muttering equations in a barely audible voice. The roommate was an individual from Kentucky named Durham, and it was inevitable that he would bear the nickname "Bull," even though he was completely non-taurine in appearance. He was short, just over the minimum height, and he had a round baby face made more infantile by his wide blue eyes and light, almost nonexistent eyebrows.

The two plebes were busy, one with his books and the other with his thoughts, when there was a sharp rap on the door and two upperclassmen, first year men, walked in. Coley and Durham sprang to their feet and stood at rigid attention.

"At ease, Dumbjohns," the taller of the two midshipmen ordered. "Which one of you is Dumbjohn Sprague?"

"I am, sir," Coley said. The two first classmen frowned at him.

"We've heard something about a fight between you and a Dumbjohn Benedict," the spokesman of the pair continued. "Is that right?"

"Yes, sir," Sprague admitted.

"Don't you know," the upperclassman asked, severely, "that all differences between students at the United States Naval Academy are to be settled in the ring at the gym? Don't you know you're liable to be masted if you have a slugging match anywhere else, and without gloves?"

"Yes, sir," Coley said. "The other man named the place, sir."

The two first year men looked at each other and the taller of the two shrugged.

"In that case, Mister Dumbjohn," said the second midshipman, "I guess there's nothing you can do but go through with it. According to the code, you will need two upperclassmen as seconds. Taking it for granted that a Dumbjohn like you would have no personal friends in the elevated ranks, Midshipman Thurston and myself, Midshipman Allen, are forced to offer ourselves as your seconds, purely in the interests of the preservation of the code. You understand, Mister Dumbjohn?"

"Yes, sir," Coley managed. "Thank you, sir."

"Don't thank us," the taller of the pair snapped. "Your seconds were chosen by cutting cards. We lost."

"We'll see you behind Dahlgren Hall, right after quarters," said the other. "Don't be late." The two men wheeled and left the room.

"Gee," breathed Bull Durham in an awed half-whisper. "You going to tangle with Arch Benedict?"

"I've got to," Coley muttered. "He called me out in today's game. I couldn't dog it."

"He'll massacre you," Durham said, dismally. "He's done a lot of boxing, I've heard. If Spike Webb was still here, he'd be a cinch to make the boxing team, everybody says."

"He's not so tough," Coley murmured, without conviction. "He just thinks he's tough."

BUT Arch Benedict looked very tough indeed when Coley arrived at the designated place. It was a moonless night and Benedict's bulk loomed even larger than ordinarily in the darkness. He was accompanied by two upperclassmen who conferred in low voices with Coley's seconds, Thurston and Allen.

"There'll be no rounds," Allen said, at the end of the conference, "and remember, we've got to be as quiet as possible. Let one of the watchmen or the guard on the Reina hear any noise and we'll all be in trouble. You understand?"

"Yes, sir," Coley said. His heart unaccountably seemed to have jumped up next to that prominent adam's apple and his long, thin body seemed very fragile, in comparison with Arch Benedict's thick bulk.

"Good luck, Mister Dumbjohn," Allen said, in a low voice. "You've got the reach, so I'd keep away from him if I were you—if I could."

"Yes, sir," Coley said, automatically.

"And we'll stop the fight if it gets too brutal," Thurston put in, "so don't worry about being permanently maimed."

"Time," somebody called, in a low, cautious voice.

Coley advanced to meet Arch Benedict. The heavier man came shuffling in, his hands held low. Coley pawed with a left which Arch brushed aside contemptuously. Then Coley tried to bring over his right and failed. Arch came in

close and smashed two hard punches to Coley's middle. Sprague gasped. Those punches hurt.

He tried to dance away from Benedict crowding him. In desperation, Coley flailed with the left again and felt a thrill as his knuckles landed. Arch was in again, pounding away at Coley's midsection. It was easy to see that Arch had done a lot of boxing. Even in that semi-darkness he handled himself with a confidence that told Coley that any hopes he might have had of winning this fight were ridiculous.

Still he stayed in there, giving the best he had, even if that best was almost pitifully lacking. Arch Benedict hit him half a dozen times for every blow that Coley managed to land and Sprague's punches packed none of the power that Benedict's did. During the first part of the fight, Arch had worked on Coley's midsection. Now, with the lanky boy's breath coming in sobbing gasps, the heavier man raised the level of his punches and went to work on Sprague's face. When Coley awkwardly raised his guard, Benedict sank a couple of punches wrist-deep in Sprague's middle. When Coley dropped his guard, Benedict smashed home some blows to Sprague's chin.

The end was not too long in coming, and Coley unwittingly forced the conclusion. He had been backed up against the brick wall of Dahlgren Hall and now, as he tried to break out into the open, he half pushed, half wrestled Arch Benedict around until his tormentor was against the wall. Then Coley levelled a long, looping right. His knuckles missed Benedict but they didn't miss the wall. There was a crack, a sickening wave of pain and, despite himself, Coley was forced to clutch his damaged hand.

"Hold it!" somebody ordered, in a low voice. "I think our Dumbjohn has broken his hand."

Benedict drew away as Coley doubled over the hand that screamed with pain, tears welling in his eyes. Somebody, Allen or Thurston, gripped the swelling hand and felt the knuckles with fingers that sent spikes of agony shooting up Coley's wrist and arm, almost to the elbow. A groan forced its way past his clenched teeth.

"Uh-huh," the midshipman said. "This Dumbjohn has got a cracked flipper. This fight is over. Dumbjohn Benedict is the winner on a technical knockout. Now everybody hit for home before some watchman sticks his big nose into this little affair. Dumbjohn Sprague, you'd better report to the sick bay with that hand."

"But what's he going to tell 'em?" one of Benedict's seconds asked. "They'll want to know how he cracked his knuckles."

"Tell 'em you fell out of bed, Dumbjohn," Allen said. "And now shake hands with Dumbjohn Benedict."

Unthinkingly, Coley thrust out the right hand he had banged against the wall and Benedict grasped it. Later, Coley tried to convice himself that Arch had not known that the proferred hand was the injured member; he tried to make himself think that if Benedict had known that he wouldn't have twisted that puffed hand in so rugged a clasp. As it was, Coley came very close to fainting with the pain of that handshake. Again a groan came from between his teeth and Arch Benedict laughed.

"Did he hurt his handsy?" Benedict asked, with a sneer. "And just when I was beginning to enjoy myself, too."

"That'll do," one of Benedict's seconds said, sharply. "The purpose of this fight was to get rid of all hard feelings. He did the best he could, Dumbjohn, even though he was over-matched. Now get to your bunks, Dumbjohns, and everybody connected with this little affair keeps his mouth shut."

CHAPTER III

What's in a Name?

SOMEBODY, however, forgot that final admonition and it was not Coley Sprague. When he went to the sick bay, he insisted stubbornly that his damaged hand and the other marks that showed on his face were the results of a fall from his bed during a nightmare. The sharp-eyed medical officer who attended Coley knew that Sprague's explanation was ridiculous. He could have pursued his investigation further but perhaps he remembered his own midshipman days. It might even have been that he had been involved in a battle behind Dahlgren Hall himself when he was a Dumbjohn like Coley. At any rate, the medical officer solemnly entered Coley's explana-

tion in his records.

"I shudder to think of what's going to happen to you when you're at sea and sleeping in a hammock, Mister Sprague," the officer said, tongue in cheek, "if you can bang yourself up like this in a fall from a bunk that can't be over two feet from the deck."

"Yes, sir," Coley Sprague said.

"And take it easy with that hand for awhile," the officer continued. "It's not too bad a crack, but it might give you some trouble if you don't take care of it."

And there went Coley Sprague's plebe football days out the window. The three-striper who coached the plebe team received Coley's report with an exasperated grimace.

"I have one man," he said, "who seems to know something about the rudiments of football, at least, and what happens to him? *He—falls—out—of—bed—and—breaks—his—hand!* My sainted aunt!"

The story went around the Academy, of how Coley Sprague, the tall, gawky plebe, had broken his hand in a fall out of his bunk. Coley might have suspected that Arch Benedict had something to do with the spreading of that tale, but there was no proof. He tried to answer the sly remarks of his classmates with a grin, but the doing came hard, especially when Arch Benedict's words came back to him, by devious channels.

"That guy Sprague," Arch Benedict was quoted as saying, "really is a Dumbjohn. Can you imagine a man being such a bucket that he fouls himself up over a bad dream?"

Now at the Naval Academy, the term "bucket" is just one degree less hated than "dumbjohn." To apply both terms in the same statement, as Benedict was reported doing, was larding on the ridicule in heavy doses.

"Why don't you tell people what really happened?" Bull Durham asked. "The way Benedict's telling the yarn makes you look like a dope."

"Those first-classmen told me to keep my mouth shut," Coley explained. "If the word got around that there was a fight, the brass might start asking questions and somebody would be bound to get in a jam."

"Well, Benedict's not keeping his mouth shut," Durham protested. "That guy really has got it in for you, Coley. It would be only fair for you to drop a word here and there to knock down that dizzy falling-out-of-bed story. Say the word and I'll spread the real yarn for you."

"Uh-uh," Coley said, quickly. "This will all blow over, in time, and I wouldn't want those upper classmen to think I was a flap-lip, even if Arch Benedict is."

But it didn't die down. Somebody, probably Arch Benedict, saw to that. The handsome, heavy-set plebe seemed to take great delight in throwing that broken hand up to Coley, reminding the other plebes that Dumbjohn Sprague was perhaps the only man in the history of the Naval Academy who had tangled with a nightmare and had come out with a set of cracked knuckles.

And there seemed to be nothing that Coley could do about it, either. Another fight with Benedict would prove nothing, except that Benedict still was a better man with his fists. And even if he did break his silence and explain that he had broken his hand by a wild swing at Arch, a swing that had missed its target and hit a brick wall, he still would be cast in the role of a stupid dumbjohn who couldn't land his punches where he was aiming. No, it was just a question of gritting his teeth and trying to keep his grin intact, while the other plebes snickered and Arch Benedict thought up new cracks to mumble, *sotto voce*, at every opportunity.

"One thing, anyway," he said to Durham one night, "this is sure giving me a workout in keeping my temper, and that's supposed to be one of the qualities a good officer needs."

"Huh," Durham grunted, "I can just see Halsey or Nimitz or Farragut or John Paul Jones taking all that abuse and keeping their tempers!"

THE plebe football season dragged on to a dismal finale with no wins and one tie to show for the year. The big team didn't fare much better that season. After winning the opener against William and Mary, the Navy Blue and Gold dropped every other contest, usually by a one-point margin. On two occasions, Navy's opposition scored in the last minute of play to take the lead away from Annapolis. On still a third Saturday afternoon a Navy back, running over the goal line just before the final gun with the winning score, dropped the pigskin and saw it recovered by the other side.

It was a dreary season and the Four-N cheers that rolled out at Baltimore's Municipal Stadium, Franklin Field and the other places where Navy played that year were more often defiantly brave than joyously elated.

Even Bill, the Navy goat, seemed to droop his horns toward the end of that disastrous year.

Coley's damaged hand was finally declared mended in time for spring training, although it had barred Sprague from trying out for the plebe basketball team. He had hoped that with Christmas leave, the mid-year exams and other activities of the winter his class-mates would find themselves too busy to remember the story about the fall out of bed, but his hopes were not realized. He discovered that when he reported for spring training, to meet Arch Benedict on the practice field and hear Benedict's taunt:

"Here's Mister Dumbjohn, gentlemen. Everybody can relax now. Dumbjohn Sprague will win for Navy—if he doesn't have another nightmare."

It was doubtful that anybody besides Arch Benedict could have gotten away with this persistent heckling, could have kept up his eternal rehashing of a gag that ordinarily would have gone stale by that time. But Arch Benedict had made himself a big figure in his class. He had wrestled for Navy and had been unbeaten that winter. He had shone in the classrooms; he had proved himself a natural-born seaman afloat.

If there were some who suspected him of being an "admiral's mate"—a swelled-head—they had to agree that Benedict didn't carry his egotism over the line that would have brought down the heavy hand of the upperclassmen. And there were few plebes who would not admit that as a Bancroft Hall politician, Benedict had few equals at Annapolis.

Coley Sprague, on the other hand, seemed cut out to be the butt of jokes from the start. His appearance was anything but prepossessing, as has been noted, and he always found the going hard—in the classroom, aboard ship, on the drill field. If any man in Coley's battalion was to mistake left for right on a flanking movement, that man was almost sure to be Coley. If a sudden gust of wind was to swing a boom without warning and brush a man overboard, it would be Coley Sprague who made the splash.

He was "anchor man," the lowest in his class, from almost the first exam and no amount of desk duty seemed able to get him out of that post. Another, less inarticulate midshipman would have found some answer to Benedict's jeers, as the weeks passed into months, but not Sprague.

But he did know how to play football. He demonstrated that fact when spring training started and the way he handled himself during those warm days brought a ray of hope to the eyes of a coaching staff that was doing its best to forget the previous season. The head coach's eyes were thoughtful the afternoon he saw Sprague race down a broken field, eluding half a dozen tacklers with an ease that belied his awkward gallop.

"Far be it from me to make predictions," the coach told a sports writer when the spring training season was nearing its close, "but I think we ought to do better this year than we did last, with a couple of breaks. We've got a couple of plebes who will be youngsters next Fall—Benedict, Sprague and Carling, to name a few—who should play a lot of football for Navy, barring accidents and bilging out."

Bilging out was a constant threat, in Coley's case. Every exam that came up brought with it the terror of missing that all-important 2.5 mark and the powers-that-be at Annapolis always have been renowned for their complete disinterest in whether a man who bilged was a football star or not.

It had long been a subject of considerable mourning among Navy coaches that in the matter of appointments to the Academy or in blinking at a paper that just barely missed the passing mark, the Navy held not a single brief for a grid-iron great. Indeed, Annapolis coaches had been known to wail that the Academy faculty seemed to take special relish in busting out men who might not be any great shakes at calculus, but could tote a football in the right direction. And as for a coach to make a plea for special consideration of one of his charges—if a coach tried that once, he never duplicated the experience.

So the Annapolis head coach probably kept his fingers crossed when Coley Sprague sailed with the other members of his class on the cruise that marked his first days as a youngster. He might have watched the cruisers clearing Annapolis

Roads on that misty June dawn and breathed a prayer that Coley, the best backfield prospect he had seen in too long a time, would not fall overboard in some Norwegian fjord nor yet wreck the ship that carried him during his spell on the bridge.

The coach knew something about Coley's history; he knew the tall, angular boy still carried the title of Mister Dumbjohn for all his graduation from the plebe class; he knew that his next-best backfield prospect, Arch Benedict, seemed to carry a special grudge against Sprague, and he knew that Coley had done about everything wrong that he could, and still stay at Annapolis. Little wonder, then, that he might have prayed to his pigskin gods that Coley Sprague would find himself somehow, take a brace, and remain at the Academy at least long enough to win a few games for the Blue and Gold.

Coley returned with the others, still a member of his class in good standing—or at least as good standing as he ever had enjoyed. Of course there had been a few incidents during the cruise that had enhanced his position as Mister Dumbjohn.

The enlisted men aboard his ship, never backward in trying to make a youngster midshipman look silly, had seized on Sprague as the natural target for their skulduggery. They had Coley scurrying about on useless errands—"sandpapering the anchor," to use Navy parlance—and a couple of their stunts brought Sprague dangerously close to being called before the mast. How he weathered the cruise without landing in the brig on several occasions was a mystery to his shipmates, but weather it he did and took his Sep leave—the thirty-day September leave given midshipmen at the end of their training cruise—with the best of them.

CHAPTER IV

Dumbjohn Repeats

IF COLEY SPRAGUE was a changed man when he returned to Annapolis, practically nobody seemed to notice it. His "wife," Durham, might have thought it odd that Coley was writing home nearly every night and getting an unusual amount of mail addressed in feminine handwriting, but the little roommate never mentioned the fact to anybody. When the girl's picture appeared on Coley's desk, however, Durham yielded to his curiosity.

"Sister?" he asked, although he must have wondered how so homely a man as Mister Dumbjohn could have such a lovely sister.

"Uh-uh," Coley said, and his face grew pink. "Just a girl I know back home."

"Ah-hah!" Durham crowed. "Romance!"

If possible, Coley's face grew pinker.

"Naw," he said. "Just a friend. What girl would think twice about a romance with a dumbjohn like me?"

Little Bull Durham looked across the room at his "wife" and tried to wreathe his baby-faced features in a ferocious scowl.

"Some day," he said, darkly, "you're gonna stop thinkin' of yourself as a dumbjohn and look at yourself for what you really are—one of the best football men this place has ever seen. Some day you're going to push Mister Arch Benedict's wisecracks down his throat. You're letting that guy get the Indian sign on you, Coley."

Sprague shrugged his angular shoulders.

"No use kidding myself," he mumbled. "I might as well admit I am a dumbjohn, and always will be, I guess. All Esther—that's the girl in the picture there—had to do was take one look at me and she could see I'm no savoir, nor a ratey one, either. Just a dumbjohn, that's me."

Durham snorted in disgust.

"Get out the tear bucket," he said, "you're breaking my heart."

With the football practice season on again, Coley found his struggle to keep up to that 2.5 mark going that much harder. At the close of his last class for the day, and when other possible bilgers like himself hied them off for desk duty over their books, Coley had to climb into his football uniform and go through his paces on the training field. Then, after chow, when he should have been applying himself to his books with doubled effort, to make up for the afternoon time he had missed, he found his eyes growing heavy, the printed words on the pages in front of him swimming in maddening patterns. The average football man at Annapolis had to sweat out his

studies the hard way during the season. Some fortunate few, like Arch Benedict, could assimilate their lessons with ease. Besides being naturally brilliant, Benedict had gone to a preparatory school that pointed its graduates straight at the Naval Academy. Coley had not been so lucky. His high school had enjoyed a high scholastic standing but his A.B. course had not put the emphasis on math and engineering that schools such as Arch had attended did.

He plugged along, getting his share of swabos—zeroes—and a minimum of gouges—successful exams. He was on the danger list early that Fall and there was none besides Bull Durham who knew the amount of mental perspiration Coley put into his studies in off hours—often by the light of a hand torch held under the blankets after lights-out—to escape a bilge.

"You're killing yourself, mate," Durham said, one morning when a haggard, shadow-eyed Coley staggered from his bunk. "It's not worth it. Give up football, why don't you?"

"And prove to everybody I'm a dumbjohn for sure?" Coley asked, bitterly. "Besides, Esther is coming down here for one of the games and I've got to be in the lineup."

"Just a friend, huh?" Durham asked, with a leer. "Sounds more like romance to me."

"Well—well, maybe it is sort of a one-sided romance," Coley admitted. "I mean, I think she's something pretty swell and she—well, I'm the only guy in my home town who ever went to the Academy and that makes a difference, I guess. Probably if I wasn't in uniform, she'd never look at me twice."

"But if you can make a couple of long runs in some game she's watching, she might think you're something pretty swell yourself, huh?"

"That's about it," Coley confessed.

NAVY opened against an always dangerous Penn State that year, at Annapolis. The relatively small stands beside College Creek were jammed to overflowing long before game time and the traffic snarls extended up the Ritchie Highway almost to Glenburnie. Navy, to quote the sports columnists, was an unknown quantity that year, with a starting backfield made up of three youngsters and a fourth year veteran, and a light line consisting of five youngsters, a third year man and a fourth year man, the great center, Dick Stotten.

The relegation of such backfield men as Minosicci, Kendall and Forrester—the previous year's luminaries—to the B-team had brought a flood of conjecture and condemnation in the public prints. True, the papers said, the old backfield of Ward, Minosicci, Forrester and Kendall had lost all but one of their games the previous season, but was the Navy coach wise in entrusting the fortunes of the Blue and Gold to a youngster backfield and an untried line?

"Granted that Benedict seems to be above par, off his record as a plebe," said one Baltimore columnist, "it's hard to see why the Coach is banking on Sprague, who was sidelined by injuries last year as a plebe, and on Carling, another last year's plebe who, it will be remembered, didn't show any stuff that helped that painful one tie—no wins record to any great extent. Added to that, is the persistent word that at least two members of the new backfield are engaged in some kind of feud which, if true, certainly should not make for teamwork."

The rumored feud definitely was true, at least as far as Benedict was concerned. The handsome, blunt-bodied Benedict had not relaxed his heckling of Coley by a particle during the training period.

It was: "Mister Dumbjohn through tackle" and "Number Ninety, Carling to Dumbjohn," all during those practice sessions, in a low voice the coach could not overhear. It was the veteran member of the backfield, Tommy Ellis, who finally spoke up.

"Listen, Benedict," Ellis said, "let's cut out the Dumbjohn business, what do you say?"

"Okay," Arch said, with a grin. "Let's try Number Fourteen, Ellis around Dee-Jay's side."

Now, after the preliminary warm-up, and while Dick Stotten was in midfield, watching the referee spin a coin for the kick-off positions, Coley strapped on his yellow helmet and listened to the coach's instructions.

"They've got a heavy club," the coach said, "and that means we've got to use the air more than the ground, at the start. Take chances, Benedict, with your pass plays and try Sprague on some end

sweeps if you're close to the wall. Maybe that heavy Penn State line can't move very fast. And use a seven-man defense line on their third downs if they're anywhere close to a first down."

"Sure, Coach," Arch Benedict said. "Only thing is, if Dumbjohn Sprague intercepts a pass, like he did last year, against Virginia, who's going to steer him in the right direction?"

"Never mind that," the coach said, sharply. "Get out there and play me some football!"

Coley trotted out with the others, resentment burning within him. Benedict, he told himself, had forgotten to say that he, Coley, had set up the only score that had been made against the Virginia Jayvees that afternoon that he had run the wrong way. Benedict forgot a lot of things when he was ribbing Dumbjohn Coley Sprague.

Penn State had won the toss and had elected to receive, with Navy defending the north goal. The kick-off was a low, twisting ball that carried to the Penn State seven, where it was taken by the Penn State star, Horvicky. The big, rangy visitor waited for some solid interference to form and then started upfield.

Coley was down to the Penn State thirty, out on a flank, when Horvicky broke away from his interference and cut across the field, trying to sneak past the Navy men who were converging on the phalanx of blockers he had picked up. He came straight at Sprague before he saw the lone Navy back drifting in on him, then tried to break back in the opposite direction. Coley gathered himself and launched his long, lean frame in the tackle.

Coley should have had the Penn State back; there was no doubt about that. But Coley missed. He overshot his mark and went sliding past the State man, reaching frantically for the legs that were just beyond his fingertips. It was a clean miss, the product of over-eagerness, Coley's too-urgent determination to show Arch Benedict that, dumbjohn or not, he could play a game of football.

There was a groan from the stands as Sprague sprawled on the turf and Horvicky reversed his direction again and continued his run. It was Benedict who finally nailed the fleet Penn State back with a spectacular shoestring tackle, just as Horvicky seemed on his way to a score.

It was, Coley admitted inwardly, one heck of a way to begin his playing days as a starting back on the big Navy team. In itself, a missed tackle was regrettable but not unforgivable. The best man who ever put on a helmet and shoulder pads missed a tackle once in awhile. It could be called a natural result of trying too hard, in the first play of the first game of the season. But Arch Benedict, Coley suspected, wouldn't let that missed tackle pass without some kind of comment.

IN THAT, Sprague was all too right. As the Navy team jogged into its defensive position, Coley could hear Arch saying:

"I thought for a minute Mister Dumbjohn was falling out of bed again and busting his hand. You've got to admit Mister Dumbjohn certainly looked sound asleep on that play."

Mister Dumbjohn, Mister Dumbjohn! Coley, gritting his teeth, wondered if that despised name ever would leave him; if he ever would stop giving Arch Benedict cause to throw that hated epithet at him. The thing was one of those vicious cycles he was always reading about. The more Benedict called him Mister Dumbjohn, the more upset he got and the more boners he pulled, giving Arch more reason to call him that name. Just when he had thought people were forgetting he was the dumbest dumbjohn at the Academy, Benedict had come out with the name and he had promptly goofed off, to lend weight to what Arch had called him.

He kept his head down as he trotted to his position in the six-one-two-two defense, his heart a heavy lump within his chest. There were times, he thought, when it didn't seem worth the effort to shake that name. He loved the Navy; he wanted to make a career in the Navy, but for all his gruelling work in the classroom and on the football field, it seemed that he was fated to be a laughing-stock, a ridiculous figure, a sort of midshipman's Ichabod Crane who never could do anything right or hope to escape the sniggering laughter that Arch Benedict inspired and led.

The continued derision, Benedict's ceaseless raillery, was capable of undermining a more solid self-confidence than he ever could possess. Another midship-

man would have forced a showdown long before this, even if that showdown had meant another trip to the meeting place behind Dahlgren Hall, another beating. Another man would have found some way to explain to his classmates what had really happened; tell them how Benedict had gotten sore that day when the plebe coach had chewed him for not throwing passes to Coley, made them see that all this dumbjohn business was the fruit of a small-mannered grudge that Arch bore for him.

But another midshipman wouldn't be Dumbjohn Coley Sprague, the only youngster who still carried a plebe nickname. Another midshipman would know what to say and what to do, in the right way. He wouldn't just take Benedict's constant, venom-flecked ribbing, as Coley did, without doing something in retaliation.

The whole thing, Coley told himself, was that he wasn't cut out to be a Navy man. Perhaps, he thought, it was cowardice that made him accept Benedict's persecution without hitting back. And what kind of a ship's officer would he make if, deep down, he was a coward?

Perhaps it would be better to bilge out, remove himself from this life of hard work with few rewards. Perhaps he had had no business coming to Annapolis in the first place. Perhaps—

It was a Penn State pass and Coley was on the play automatically. The wingback had drifted out to the right, opposite Sprague and now he was turning to gather in the lateral. It was a play timed so that Coley had two alternatives, his decision to be made in a split second. Either he could play the ball or the receiver. If he played the wingback, there was the almost positive chance that he could spill the man behind his line of scrimmage. If he played the ball, there was a fainter chance he could intercept.

He played the ball. And he made his second mistake in two plays when he did.

There was a stiff wind blowing from east to west and that wind flared suddenly to pick up that lateral and literally hurl it into its receiver's hands. Coley hadn't figured on that sudden gust, with the result that the ball sailed past his fingertips—it seemed that everything was fated to go past his fingertips that afternoon—into the Penn State man's clutch. Coley went down again, after his frantic lunge, and looked around in time to see the Penn State back pick up at least a dozen yards on his completion.

"Mister Dumbjohn," Benedict was saying, "is always falling down. Trouble is, he never takes anybody down with him."

"Play ball," Tommy Ellis growled. "Let's forget the dumbjohn business and get organized."

"Get organized with Mister Dee-Jay with us?" Benedict asked. "Impossible!"

Penn State poked one through the middle for three. They tried again, in the same place, for two more. On third and five, they passed up the logical pass play to try an off-tackle slant that Dick Stotten, Navy's hard-tackling roving center spoiled. Penn State went into punt formation.

Because of the wind, Navy put two safety men back for the kick. One was Arch Benedict; the other, Coley Sprague. The ball came to Coley.

With the pigskin five feet from his outstretched hands, Coley knew he was going to fumble. He knew it as surely as he knew his own name; as certainly as he knew the nickname that Arch Benedict had given him. It was as Bull Durham had said; Arch had the Indian sign on him and there was nothing that he, Coley, could do about it.

He felt the pigskin slap his hands, he heard the hollow *plunkkk* of the ball, he saw the oval bound high in the air to be carried off to one side by the wind. He made a desperate leap for the loose ball but a Penn State man was on it before he left his feet.

Mister Dumbjohn had given the enemy the ball on the Navy sixteen.

CHAPTER V

A Star Is Born

HE CLIMBED slowly to his feet, tears of frustration threatening to break through and spill out onto his cheeks. He saw Dick Stotten, the team captain, raise his hand to the referee in the time-out signal. He saw the tall center turn toward the bench and raise his hand again, fingers spread wide. The take-out sign; the signal that meant that there was a dumbjohn aboard who ought to be replaced.

Stotten intercepted him as he started for the sidelines. The big All-America's

hand rested briefly on Coley's shoulder and Stotten said:

"Take a break, mister. When you come back in, you'll make up for all this."

Coley nodded dumbly, grateful for the great man's kind words. Stotten's thoughtfulness almost made up for the jarring note of Arch Benedict's voice, in the background.

"Now, maybe," Arch said, "we can play some football, with Mister Dumbjohn out of the game."

The Navy stands gave Coley a loyal cheer as he trotted off to make room for the veteran Minosicci. He accepted the blue, gold-bordered, U.S.N.A.A.A. blanket somebody handed him and wrapped it around himself; not that he needed it, because he had not been in the game long enough to work up a sweat, but to better hide himself in its folds.

"What happened, Mister Sprague?" the coach asked, after an interval.

"I don't know," Coley confessed, miserably. "Nothing I seemed to do worked right, sir."

The coach was a tall, blunt-featured man with the four stripes of a Captaincy on the sleeve of his overcoat. He looked out at the field now, where Penn State was putting on the power to smash its way to its first touchdown.

"Ever hear about complexes, Mister Sprague?" he asked, in an idle, almost negligent voice. "Men in the service aren't supposed to be able to afford them, but maybe we're only human, after all. Maybe we'd do better if we admitted we're subject to the same ills that the poor civilians have."

"Sir?" Coley asked, in bewilderment.

"What I'm trying to say, Mister Sprague," the coach explained, "is that I've not been exactly ignorant of what's been going on between you and—er—another member of the squad. I hoped that you'd snap out of it, call this man's cards, find out for yourself that a man who wears the uniform of the Naval Academy has a certain responsibility to the dignity of that uniform."

"I—I don't understand, sir."

"They call you Dumbjohn, Mister Sprague," the coach said, ruthlessly, "and you let them."

"I—I went to the mat with him once, Captain," Coley managed.

"And you lost," the coach said, his voice heavy with scorn, "so you quit right there. Do you think the Navy had a glorious victory at Pearl Harbor? Do you think they did themselves proud at Wake Island, or Guam? No, Mister Sprague, they took a beating at Pearl and they let the Nips have their own way at Wake and Guam. But they didn't quit and admit they were a bunch of dumbjohns who didn't have any right in a first class war, as Japan and Germany thought. They came back with what they had and took a beating for awhile and then they began to win a couple of fights, and finally they won the sea war in the Pacific!"

The stands across the way burst into a rocketing volley of cheers as the Penn State plunging back went over from the two yard line for the score.

"Well, what—what do you suggest I do, sir?" Coley Sprague asked, in a small voice. The coach looked at him, the pain wrought by the Penn State touchdown etched on his square face.

"How should I know?" he asked, roughly. "I'm no psychiatrist and I'm no baby-sitter. You've got to work it out yourself, Mister Sprague. Now warm up, because I'm sticking you back in, after the kick for point, and heaven help you if you let this Mister Dumbjohn complex keep you from playing the kind of football I know you can play."

Coley Sprague paced up and down the sideline, pulling his knees high and working his arms. He wished he had more of the die-for-dear-old-Navy spirit but to be honest, he wished the coach was not sending him back in. This, he told himself, was his bad day. He had pulled a succession of boners and it was probable that he would keep on making misplays, while Arch Benedict's chant of Mister Dumbjohn grew more acid.

It was all right for the four-striper to talk about complexes and the need for ignoring them, but the Captain didn't know what it meant to be regarded as the perpetual Mister Dumbjohn, the man who always did everything wrong.

He got the coach's nod and forced himself to run out on the field, holding up his hand. Minosicci came out and Coley found himself back on his twenty, waiting for the Penn State kick-off with the score seven-oh, against Navy.

"See if you can hold it this time, Mister Dumbjohn," Arch Benedict cracked. "They'll probably be kicking to you, seeing you were so good to them the last time."

The kick, of course, did come to Coley. He juggled it for an awful instant and then wrapped his hand around the point of the oval, cradled the ball between wrist and elbow and started down the field. His blockers formed nicely and began knocking over the Penn State men as they came in.

Ahead of him ran Arch Benedict, slower on his feet than Coley but a deadly blocker—when he wanted to be. Sprague shortened his stride to match Arch's pace. A Penn State tackle, big and broad, came dancing in, trying to feint Arch out of the way. Coley watched, in numbed amazement, as Arch failed to make even the least try for a block, kept on up the field leaving Coley to his fate.

The thing was so deliberate, so obvious, that it brought a long, low growl from the stands as the State College tackle closed in gleefully. Even the spectator least learned in football lore could see that Benedict had missed his assignment when the sloppiest kind of a block would have slowed up, if not stopped, the Penn State tackle.

COLEY SPRAGUE found rage welling up within him. It was one thing for Benedict to carry his feud onto the football field in sharp-tongued ribbing. It was another for Arch to cross up his team, the Navy, in order to make Mister Dumbjohn look bad.

The thought struck Coley Sprague with paralyzing force. Arch Benedict, for all his high grades, his excellence at sea and on the drill field, his prowess on the football field, his popularity among the other members of his class, was no Navy man!

Arch Benedict might be able to talk fast and smooth, he might handle his watches better than Coley could, he might make four-oh while Coley had trouble making two-five, he might look better in a uniform than Coley, but he was still no Navy man! Because no real Navy man would sacrifice a chance for a long Navy run-back, even a possible touchdown, to satisfy his own grudge! The Navy was bigger than a million Arch Benedicts and Coley Spragues.

The Penn State tackle came in. Coley Sprague stabbed a short, hard straight-arm that was dangerously close to a left hook. The big man from Pennsylvania took it on the point of his jaw. His feet came up and his shoulders went down. There was a thud as Coley galloped past the fallen tackle.

Arch Benedict, Coley was telling himself, was a phoney, a snake, a sea lawyer. He wanted to catch up with Benedict and tell him to his face. A Penn State man came in to try to keep him from getting at Arch and Coley swivel-hipped away from him. Another man attempted a block intended to throw Sprague over the sideline, out of bounds. Coley stopped on a dime and the Penn State man crashed by him.

Sprague was still running, all out, when he saw the man in the striped shirt and white knickers fling his arms into the air. He kept on running, forgetting that he still carried the ball, as he followed Benedict around to the place where the other Navy men were grouping, winded and laughing.

Big Dick Stotten interpreted the look on Coley's face and caught Sprague just before he reached Arch Benedict.

"Take it easy, mister," the great center counselled.

"Let me tell him," Coley panted. "Let me tell him that it's him that's the dumb-

[*Turn page*]

john around here. Anybody who'd throw away a chance for a score for Navy like he did is the real dumbjohn! Me, I might be stupid in a lot of ways, but I've always tried my best for Navy. And nobody can do any more than that."

"Sure," Stotten said, easily. "We were all wondering when you were going to get wise to yourself, Coley. We were all hoping that there'd come a day when you'd see that a man like you, who's always in there, plugging for Navy, was worth a dozen men like Mister Benedict, who doesn't do as good as he can because he wants to back up that Mister Dumbjohn routine of his."

Coley looked at the big Navy center, staring.

"You mean—you mean you really think that?" he asked. "But why didn't somebody tell me?"

"Because there are some things a man has to find out for himself, that's why," Stotten answered, simply. "There are some things a man can't be told, the right way—the Navy way."

Gradually, the realization that Dick Stotten was his friend, that there must be others at the Academy who would be his friends if he let them, men who had been waiting for him to shake off the Mister Dumbjohn complex Arch Benedict had fastened on him, seeped into Coley Sprague's brain. He looked across at Benedict, standing apart from the others, and it suddenly was impressed upon him that Arch was, after all, a pretty cheap piece of merchandise. Because Arch, in spite of everything he was, or thought he was, was basically no Navy man.

He laughed aloud at the realization that he, Coley Sprague, Mister Dumbjohn, had something that Arch Benedict never would have. Arch might win the Honor Saber, escort the Color Girl, be at the head of his class, but some day. somewhere, he would be found out as a man who worked and played for Arch Benedict and not for Navy.

What the devil, he told himself, he didn't want to tell Benedict off now; he didn't want to take a poke at his tormentor. Instead, he felt sorry for the guy, the man who had proved to Coley. at least, that there must be some fear in the jealousy that kept him repeating his senseless chant of "Mister Dumbjohn."

And why was Arch Benedict afraid? Why, simply because Benedict always had to be top man; he always had been in prep school and at home before he came to Annapolis, and he couldn't surrender his place now, in any field of endeavor. And that meant that Benedict saw in Coley Sprague a threat to his football stardom. That was why Arch Benedict had worked so hard from the first to make Coley a target of ridicule, the perennial Mister Dumbjohn.

It hadn't quite come off; Coley saw that now. He looked at Benedict again and saw that Arch realized it, knew that all his careful campaigning had gone for naught. Coley saw that Arch knew that Sprague—and at least a few other midshipmen, including Dick Stotten—recognized him for what he really was. And Coley knew that Arch must realize that the picture he presented, behind all the trappings, was a pretty shabby thing.

It would be easy, from now on, to treat Arch Benedict with the contempt that he deserved. But Benedict could play football, and Navy had need of the big back. Personalities meant less than nothing when they conflicted with playing the game for the Blue and the Gold.

Coley Sprague forced a wide grin to his lips and walked over to Arch. He knew the gesture was over-dramatic, corny, but he had to put out his hand to the man who had made his life miserable for so long.

"How about it, mister?" he asked. "How about starting a new log and playing some football for Navy—together?"

Benedict hesitated and then accepted the proferred handclasp. He was beaten and he knew it, but he was enough of the consummate actor to summon up an answering smile.

"Why—why sure," he said. "Sure, Mister Duh—"

He broke off short. Coley laughed.

"Go ahead and say it," he invited. "Mister Dumbjohn. It's okay. You see, it won't mean anything any more. Not after we win a few games for Navy, together."

●

Willy flung challenges into the teeth of the varsity

A TOUCHDOWN FOR WILLY

By JOHN WILSON

It takes everything but the Fire Department to get Willy started, but he's a holocaust of action when he wakes up!

WILLY had that feeling again. It came upon him with a suddenness that wiped away three years of war, and brought the sweat to Willy's brow. Willy could once again hear the thunder of the crowd's roar splitting the sky and climactically bursting in the spelling of—Willy Haines. Willy was inspired.

At this moment Willy knew the old thrill of slashing tackles, and crash-blocking that shed the interference loose from the ball-carrier. Willy thought of the famous "Hard Rocks" of Fordham and Notre Dame's legendary "Seven Mules". These thoughts stirred Willy because he, too, was a lineman. They came about, however, because Willy was listening to Tex Martin, Brighton College's most talented barber-shop lawyer,

and prexy of the Alpha Kappa fraternity.

"Now don't misunderstand me about this matter, Willy," Tex said, "because it is entirely up to you. Of course, you might like to know that the Alpha Kappas are counting on your loyalty. We feel that with the war over and the Alpha Kappas out to resume leadership over rival fraternities, each member should do his part. You see, Willy, it's important for us to be fully represented on the football squad. You are a cinch to do okay, being that you were around three years before going into the Army."

"Yes, I was around," Willy remarked. "I played maybe three minutes in three seasons. I cannot see how I can be much help to anybody. Besides, I do not need a football scholarship, since I am enrolled under the GI bill of rights. However, I would like nothing better than to win a football letter before I graduate."

"I cannot see how you can miss, Willy. I got it straight from the coach that the linemen are very bad. Everybody wants to be a backfield star. You will have practically no competition, things being what they are. Believe me, Willy."

"I missed before," Willy insisted, "I can do it again."

"What with the experience you've had in the Army?" Tex exclaimed. "You're older now, Willy, stronger, and know what things are about. Willy, you don't seem to realize your own strength."

"I was rasslin' champion of Company 'G'," Willy said. "I remember one time—"

"That's the spirit, Willy," Tex cut in. "Get in there and fight for old Alpha Kappa. We need you, fellow."

These things passed through Willy's mind now. It did not matter that he lay smothering at the bottom of a tangled heap of humanity. This had become no uncommon experience. His face was buried in a tuft of dirt. The smelly earth was in his mouth. Bruises welted his body. These things a man can endure.

But the thought of being deceived by his brothers of the Alpha Kappa was another matter. The brutal truth was that Willy had made no slam-bang tackles, got no cheers. Willy was the same old perennial scrub he had been before the war.

IT WAS a scrimmage, the orange-clad varsity in there against the gray-shirted scrubs. And Willy surveying the varsity from his tackle slot quite agreed with Tex Martin that every backfield man wanted to be a star and mostly at Willy's expense. But the varsity also had a brick wall in front of them, a hard-charging, steamrolling pack that swept wide clearings for the ball-toters to step free and loose.

Willy suspected on this point that Tex had deliberately tossed in a misstatement of fact. It irked Willy in many places, learning the hard way. Whatever Brighton's gridiron weaknesses during the war years, they had been adequately patched with returning GI's. Willy was one of many.

The combination of the hot September sun and the relentless driving power of the varsity had the scrubs back on their heels. Wearily they crouched to meet the next thrust at their sagging line. Willy planted his feet solidly. He looked nonchalantly into the strained faces of the varsity. There was no longer a chance that he'd ever be one of them. Somehow, it no longer mattered to Willy.

"Killer" Conroy, the line coach, came up behind Willy and dusted his pants with a gentle kick.

"Snap it up, Willy, and stop dragging your anchor. Didn't the Army teach you anything? You certainly are awful, Willy, and I am being kind saying that."

"I'm doin' okay and don't bring the Army into it," Willy said. "Every time I move three guys bump me around. It's getting to be a helluva situation."

Brighton's head coach, Rube Boylan, walked over to Willy.

"Willy, you just don't give a darn. You need more than a kick in the pants. Willy needs a firecracker under him."

"The trouble with Willy is that he's a natural born goldbrick," Killer Conroy said. "Look at him—fresh as a daisy. I don't know why the Army didn't declare Willy essential. It certainly would have saved us a lot of trouble."

"I learned a few things in the Army," Willy replied. "Maybe I ought to tell you what to do with your ball club. I do not have to be pushed around."

"Willy," Rube Boylan said with sweet sarcasm, "one more word out of you and you will not be telling anybody anything."

Willy shut his mouth because he knew when the red flag was waving.

Hike. The varsity shifted to the left. The ball was snapped. The interference

swung in a massed herd off Willy's tackle slot. Charging fiercely, the opposing end and tackle double-teamed, clamped a high-low block on Willy.

For a moment, Willy fought doggedly against being slammed to the baked turf. Then he relaxed and found himself looking up from the ground at the passing parade.

Nails Barclay, Brighton's All-Conference wing, who had returned from the war to the campus, looked down at the sprawled scrub tackle.

"Willy," he said, "I'll bet the Army had no trouble teaching you to crawl on your tummy. It's wonderful how you've mastered the art. You're more wonderful than ever, Willy. You would be a star on the swimming team, no doubt."

Willy's face went brick-red. He was getting tired of being bounced around like a rubber ball. It was no fun being a chopping block for the varsity. Again, the Orange-clads moved into formation, deep in scoring territory.

They uncorked one of Coach Boylan's pet scoring numbers. The play started along the design of an ordinary power thrust. Instead of the wingbacks driving ahead, they crisscrossed as the play unfolded. The No. 3 back finally got the leather and tried to flank the end.

This time Willy sized the play up perfectly. He split through the varsity line. The blocking half tried to wipe him out but Willy would have none of that. He jammed the blocker to the sward. When Digger Higgins came sweeping around the flank, Willy nailed him for a six yard loss.

Rube Boylan took off his baseball cap, scratched his hairless noggin, pondering the play. He studied a card on which the play was diagrammed. Finally he stumped over to Willy.

"Willy," he said dryly, "Only the end could have stopped that play and he was blocked out. You must have been offside. I wish you would wake up and stop gumming things up."

"Offside?" Willy repeated. "The real trouble was that Digger Higgins telegraphed the play. He looked at the end to see where he was playing. That is how I figured things out."

Digger Higgins glowered at Willy. "I don't know how you do it, Willy," he said evenly. "You're terrific. Why don't you shake yourself down and give your brains a chance to settle."

"You were offside, Willy," Coach Boylan insisted.

That was a little too raw. Willy knew he hadn't been offside. He had stopped the play cold and it was being passed off as a mistake. He was always getting tough breaks like that. When he did make a nice tackle, he made it look too easy. Willy was thoroughly disgusted.

THE varsity dug their cleats into the turf with savage anticipation. The ball flashed back, and it was a repeat of the previous play. Digger Higgins whirled and came hightailing it in Willy's direction. Something akin to a couple of pieces of falling timber fell on Willy and he went down hard. He felt a pair of flying cleats step blithely on his sacroiliac, and he guessed they belonged to Digger Higgins. When Willy found his legs again, Digger was across the goal.

"Now see, Willy," Coach Boylan was saying, "that time the play was perfect. You did not jump the gun and see what happened. I think you get the point. Don't you, Willy?"

"Yes, it's as clear as a meatball in my face," Willy said.

Digger Higgins' face was wrinkled in grin. "Your telegraph system break down, Willy?"

Willy meekly went about his business during the remainder of the scrimmage. He exerted no great effort, letting the traffic pass as it willed. Willy didn't give a whoop. The shadows lengthened over the torn turf and Coach Boylan gave a long blast on the whistle.

"Three laps around the field, everybody", he said. "Willy, you take five. Maybe you will learn not to sit in a chair when you're supposed to be playin' tackle."

With great reluctance, Willy trudged around the field. He was a very downcast individual when he completed the extra two laps and started for the showers.

"Willy," called a girl's voice from behind. It was a nice voice, the kind that always did tricks to Willy's heart. Marge Boylan was the coach's daughter.

"Hullo, Marge," Willy said. "What's new with you. Things are terrible with me."

Marge Boylan zeroed in her big blue eyes on Willy. She was a sweet trick. A bit on the frivolous side but a sweet

trick, nevertheless. "Oh, Willy, you're down in the dumps again."

"Worse than that," Willy moaned. "I let those Alpha Kappas sell me a bill of goods on going out for the team. They said I was a cinch to be a first stringer. But all I am going to get out of it is a seat on the bench again."

"I can't see why Dad keeps you on the bench, Willy," Marge said, concerned. "When you came home from the Army you were perfectly handsome in your uniform and pretty ribbons. Now that Sam Slade, who plays your position on the varsity, doesn't look nearly as handsome as you. He can't be such a good player, Willy. Sam never seems to get as much dirt on his football suit as you do."

Willy shrugged hopelessly "Marge, there is something I don't understand about you, either. How can you be a coach's daughter and know so little about football?"

"I like football players but do not care too much for the game," Marge said simply. "It is something mother and I must tolerate."

"There is no reason why I should tolerate it, too. I am going to quit."

Marge frowned. "Willy, you must never do that," she said. "You know Dad hates quitters and I'm sure he'd never consent to us getting married if you did that. Willy, promise me you won't quit."

"I promise," Willy replied, "but you know I am also working for the government and that takes a lot of my time."

"Exactly," Marge said quickly, "and that brings up another point. There are rumors going around that you and a certain redhead are slightly more than friendly."

Willy chuckled. "You mean Thelma Hood. That's merely a business association"—Willy snapped his fingers—"Miss Hood and I are both employed at the Veterans Administration."

"I do not think you are one, Willy, to let business interfere with pleasure. Perhaps father is right in making you a benchsitter and I happen to like Sam Slade's clean uniform. Father says Sam is a wonderful center."

"Tackle," Willy corrected.

They did not depart on an altogether friendly note.

Even a hot needle shower and brisk rubdown failed to cut Willy's grief away. He was in no mood to be tampered with when he sat down at the Alpha Kappa dinner table an hour later.

"Here comes our varsity candidate," one of the brothers piped. "Make way on the bench for Willy."

WILLY said nothing but the remark salted his already taut nerves. The good brothers had apparently been waiting for Willy. They wasted no time in getting rid of what was on their minds.

"Willy, I took in the scrimmage this afternoon," Tex Martin began. "Tell me, have you acquainted yourself with the rules of the game? I believe the idea is to knock down the opposing man on occation. Is that not so?"

The color splashed into Willy's cheeks. He pushed the plate of hot soup aside, stood up. "A fine one you are to talk, the bunch of you. You fed me a pack of lies about how easy it would be to make the team. You handed me the old Alpha Kappa build-up and I went for it. But I don't see one of you guys out for the team."

"Eat your soup, Willy," one of the brothers said. "It's getting cold."

Willy persisted. "I got nothing but aches and pains outa going out for the team. That's okay for me but why don't some of you guys try it, huh?"

"Pipe down, Willy," Tex Martin said. "We only make the suggestions. You follow them at your own risk. Some of us happen to be of the intelligent type. Our contributions are bent in furthering the good of the fraternity in other fields of endeavor."

"Baloney," Willy said. "Baloney."

"Willy, there is nobody stopping you from resigning from the team," another brother said calmly. "Certainly, if I ran around with the coach's daughter and still couldn't make the team, I'd resign. And that from your own future father-in-law, alas."

Willy ate his soup. He was in no position to call the bluff of his fraternity brothers, having made a promise to Marge to stick the grind out. The ribbing, good-natured that it was, unsettled Willy's pride no little. It all boiled down to his being a confirmed scrub.

On Fridays, Coach Boylan held only a short, light practise session, letting the aches and minor injuries of the week mend. So it was on this day that Willy generally visited the town's V. A. office, where he assisted on a voluntary

basis in the investigation of the housing complaints of veterans. Like other parts of the country, Brighton was hard hit. There hardly existed a vacant barn or cellar.

Willy strode into the downtown V. A. office and as usual Willy stopped at Thelma's desk, picking up the complaints assigned to him to investigate.

"I have your work-folders here," Thelma said, smiling at Willy, and removing the horn-rimmed glasses. "Mister Sherdel wants a word with you, Willy."

"What does he want?"

"I'm sure I wouldn't know, Willy. Nobody ever knows what Mister Sherdel wants."

Willy went into the office where a thin-faced man in a shiny blue suit sat behind a large desk.

"Sit down, Willy," Sherdel said. "I understand from Miss Hood that you are starring on the college baseball nine. Congratulations."

"I sit on the bench mostly," Willy said, "and it is the football team, if you don't mind."

"Of course," Sherdel said. "I meant baseball. That's what I like about you, Willy, your modesty."

"Thank you, Mr. Sherdel. I think you're modest, too."

Sherdel nodded, fumbled in a wire basket and finally came up with a letter. "We have a letter here from a veteran, Willy. It seems he owns a bungalow and rented it before going to war. Now he has returned and wants to live in his own house. However, the housing shortage being what it is, the occupying tenant had no place to move. The ninety days grace we gave the present tenant has expired and the veteran is desperately in need of a place to live."

"I'll see what I can do," Willy agreed. "Maybe I can help a little but I don't know. People are living in everything but shoes these days and some are living in them."

"I particularly wanted you to handle this case, Willy. It seems that the tenant involved is the baseball coach at Brighton."

Willy leaned forward. "You don't mean Rube Boylan, the football coach, huh?"

"Yes, I believe that is the gentleman's name, Willy. I think you are best qualified to handle the case, knowing the man as you apparently do."

"I'm sorry, Mister Sherdel," Willy yawned and said, "I can't seem to agree with you on this point. I would rather stay clear of this case."

SHERDEL shook his head, disappointed. "Of course, you don't have to accept the assignment, Willy. You are working on a voluntary basis. You have been very cooperative—in the past. But I think that being a veteran yourself, you should consider your brother veteran. Think of the obligation, Willy."

"No, thank you," Willy declared. "Maybe the guy was a first sergeant or lieutenant or something. No thank you."

"Willy, such prejudice!" Sherdel said, evidently shocked. "Since you feel that way, I prefer that you do not touch the case. Go away, Willy. I am very busy."

Pangs of conscience were already beginning to needle Willy. He was shirking his duty because he was afraid of Coach Boylan. Willy was suddenly sorry that he had ever become mixed up in the Brighton housing situation. Willy conceded that he was a mouse but even that did not help.

In the practise sessions that followed, Coach Boylan gradually turned on the heat. He made the final cut in the squad and Willy, surprised, found that he survived.

The Brighton coach was a stickler for fundamentals. He wasn't always satisfied to utilize a manufactured dummy for his contact drills. He preferred that his men also get the benefit of a human chopping block. That is where Willy fitted into his plans.

"Some of you guys have forgotten what the rolling tackle is all about," Boylan told the squad. "You're knocking yourselves out on tackles. If you don't tackle properly, you're going to get hurt. We're gonna work on this stuff. Hey, Willie, C'mere."

Willy came a-trotting. That was a mistake, Willy's outburst of energy. No sooner had Willy approached than Coach Boylan staged a personal demonstration. He flung a knee between Willy's legs, pivoted and twisted Willy to the ground. He rolled as he performed the tackle, emerging on top. That was the idea, to land on top.

"Okay," Boylan bellowed, "the rest of you line up and try the same thing. Willy, you stay where you are and let

them tackle you. They need the practise."

One by one they rammed into Willy. Naturally, they weren't supposed to crack down on him. Some did, though. Digger Higgins slashed into Willy and the two of them went down in a tangled heap. Willy was shaken. He got to his feet, taking plenty of time.

"C'mon, Willy," the coach barked, "snap into it. I let you stay on the squad and you ought to be a little grateful."

Willy began to breath hard, an angry fire smouldering in his lungs. Nobody was going to slap him around the way Digger Higgins had done. The drill went on, Willy taking his punishment and waiting for Digger to let loose another tackle. Willy's patience was rewarded. Digger came at him, hard and low. Willy side-stepped at the last instant, letting Digger plow his face into the turf. Then Willy promptly bounced on him.

Digger stormed to his feet. "I ought to let you have one for that," he said hotly. "In fact, I think I will."

He started a punch and Willy saw it coming. Willy lunged in close, sending both hands jerking against Digger's shoulders, the way he would an opposing defensive end. Digger hit the ground, landing squarely on his rump.

"Don't get cute with me, boy," Willy said now. "I can twist you into a pretzel and break you in a dozen pieces."

Digger Higgins, looking up from the ground, knew Willy was big enough to do exactly that.

Coach Boylan stepped up to Willy. "I should have chucked you off the squad a long time ago, Willy. You haven't got the nerve to stand up to those soft tackles."

"I'm doin' okay," Willy said, defensively. "But I'm getting tired of being slapped around by some of these smart bimbos. I am getting tired of a lot of things."

"Caution, Willy," Rube Boylan warned. "I am getting slightly sick of listening to that big yap of yours."

INSIDE of Willy, the fire was a spouting flame now. The tacklers, though easing up, flopped him around plenty. Once when Willy had hardly regained his pins, Ace Morrison slammed into him. Coach Boylan let out a chuckle, and Willy's resentment against the coach climbed several notches.

The varsity lined up against the scrubs for a scrimmage and Willy took over his tackle slot. The first-stringers went to work on Willy, crashing and ripping through gaping holes on his side of the line. Ace Morrison raced forty yards before he was forced out of bounds.

The Brighton coaches stood to the left of Willy and they made no effort to hide their opinion.

"I figured Willy was plain lazy," Killer Conroy said. "It ain't that a-tall. Willy simply hasn't got the spunk."

Rube Boylan shrugged. "They're running all over Willy. Let's get another tackle in there."

The play got under way before Willy's replacement was called on the field. It was a power drive off tackle. Willy made with a lightning thrust, jabbing the lunging wingman aside, and busting through the two-man wedge. The fury of the block swept Willy to his knees. But he flung out his arms, grabbed Digger Higgins around the shoetops and dragged him to the turf. Now Willy meant to show some real line play. He had been a nice boy too long.

A new man came onto the field. "You're out, Willy," he said. "I'm in. Scram."

Willy trudged across the field, wearily plunked down on the bench and watched the remainder of the scrimmage. When the session drew to a finish, Coach Boylan motioned the squad to gather around him.

"In another week we open our season against Western. I haven't definitely decided on my starting line-up. Just to give everybody a fair crack at the jobs, the Orange team will scrimmage the Grays this Saturday. That's all."

Willy felt an urge to laugh aloud. The coach was smearing on the old oil. His purpose was to alert the scrubs into a fighting mood so that the varsity would get a good work-out, prior to the Western game.

Willy was still laughing to himself about that one, walking off the field. Coach Boylan touched him on the shoulder.

"Willy," he said, "I know the football field is no place to discuss personal problems. However, I'd rather see you here than have you going around with my daughter. Marge won't listen to me but I know you will, Willy. I want you to

just sort of forget Marge."

The burn came into Willy's face. "Marge and me are going to be married. You can't ruin our lives, Coach."

"I don't want no quitters in my family," Boylan said. "Willy, go find yourself another girl. I would rather see Marge marry anybody else but you."

"That is a fine attitude to take, Coach," Willy blubbered. "You are trying to make in-law trouble before I even marry Marge."

"I don't want any more nonsense out of you, Willy. Remember that."

Willy was bursting with indignation. The coach had no right trying to interfere in Willy's love life. Willy's walk quickened, taking him to the athletic director's office. There, he made a phone call to the V. A. offices.

When Willy arrived at the V. A., Sherdel was waiting for him.

"It is rather late," Sherdel said, "let's get to the point quickly, Willy. You said it was important."

"It is," Willy said. "Have you made any arrangements about the veteran's case against the Brighton football coach."

"There is nothing definite to report if that is what you mean."

"Well, I've been thinking things over and would like to make my services available. I agree with you that I have an obligation and should not let my personal feelings enter into the matter."

Sherdel smiled. "I'm glad you see it my way, Willy," he said. "I'll dig up the facts for you and let you go to work on the case."

That evening, Willy visited the veteran who had complained to the V. A. about the return of his bungalow which he had rented to Rube Boylan during the war. The vet was living with his in-laws.

"There simply isn't enough room in a three room apartment for two families," the vet told Willy. "And beside, I never did get along too hot with my in-laws. I wish we could go live in my bungalow."

"You can," Willy said. "This other party has had plenty of time to find another place. The thing to do now is move in on the guy."

"Move in," the vet repeated. "How can I with this other guy living there."

"Very simply. Let Coach Boylan worry about that. Just move in on him. That's all."

SO IT came about that several days later, a truck loaded with furniture, Willy, the GI and several helpers, pulled up in front of the Boylan residence. Willy and the GI walked up to the door. Marge answered Willy's ring.

"Hello, Willy. What brings you here? I'm afraid that I can't ask you in on account of the way father feels about things."

"I am not calling on you, Marge," Willy began. "I have a regretful duty to perform. This gentleman on my right owns this house and he is going to move in right now."

"Willy, how can he? We're still living here."

There was a loud noise behind the door and then Coach Boylan was standing in front of Willy.

"What is this business about somebody moving in here?" Boylan demanded. "Just what is on your mind, Willy?"

"The V. A. gave you ninety days to go find another place to live," Willy retorted. "The time has come for action. This gentleman here, who is a vet and owns this house, is about to move into his own property."

"I suspect this is your idea, Willy. It will be a happy day for me when you graduate, if it is possible for such a thing to happen."

"I suspect it is my idea," Willy said honestly. "The man needs a place to live."

"I'm sorry, Willy," Coach Boylan affirmed. "But I will need a little longer to look around."

Willy turned, wagged a finger at the men on the truck. "Bring the furniture, men."

"I wouldn't mind so much this gentleman doing this on his own, but coming from one of my own scrubs, it hurts, Willy." Boylan emphasized "scrubs."

"Tough sledding, Coach," Willy said sympathetically. "Mighty tough."

And the vet moved into the bungalow.

Saturday came and the Brigton campus was deserted. The entire student body was flocking to the stadium to see the scheduled practise game between the regulars and scrubs.

The game itself, however, wasn't anything compared to the uproar caused by the news that Willy had been instrumental in moving his coach out of his living quarters. It practically amounted

to that because the next day, Coach Boylan and his wife took up refuge in the Alpha Kappa fraternity house. Marge went to a sorority where she was already a member.

The good brothers of the honorable Alpha Kappas, realizing the prestige and advantage of having the football mentor and his wife in their midst, lost little time in making a deal. In return for a two-room apartment, the Boylans would give their services to the Kappas.

The coach would now serve as an advisor and his wife as the house mother. This, of course, was great advertising in the gathering of future pledges to the Alpha Kappa rolls. And there was no hiding the joy of the Kappas over the prize they had captured.

Willy hardly shared the enthusiasm of his brother members. It seemed that the stare of Coach Boylan now reached from the gridiron into the sanctum of the fraternity house. But no words passed between Willy and the coach. Willy had every reason to believe that he would sit out the practise game because he had not participated in scrimmages or contact work since moving the veteran into the coach's bungalow.

"Willy," Tex Martin told him before the game, "the varsity is betting that you won't show up for the game. They say that they are going to make mincemeat out of you."

When the opening whistle blew, Willy was in there. He guessed that Coach Boylan was out to gain a bit of revenge. This was a good legal method. The thought angered Willy.

The varsity kicked off to the scrubs. The pigskin zoomed down to the scrub goal line. Chuck Prevost gathered it in, started upfield. Willy was all business. He picked out the varsity end and dumped him on his back. Willy got up and threw a block into another orange-shirted man and the ball-carrier lugged the leather through the path Willy cleared. He came back-thirty-five yards before a tackler slapped him down.

Desperation was written in Willy's eyes as he crouched opposite the orange-clad man. More than anything, Willy wanted to avenge the torture inflicted on him by the varsity. Never had his anger boiled and steamed within him as it did on this day. Strength and eagerness flowed through Willy, and Willy felt capable.

The play started and Willy ground ahead, smashing the enemy lineman to his knees and opening a huge gap in the varsity wall. Chuck Prevost hit for the hole, fumbling at the scrimmage mark. Downfield, Willy looked around and saw the ref pointing in the opposite direction.

Even a fumble on the opening offensive play, did not lessen Willy's determination. The real dog-fight was between him and the varsity and this was only the beginning.

Willy stopped two smashes aimed at his position cold. Then a spinner, with the ball-toter whirling through the pit of the scrub line. Again it was Willy who bolted into the varsity backfield, spilling Ace Morrison before he could actually get into motion.

On the wings of Willy's inspired play, the entire scrub team lifted their game. They fought the varsity as they never fought them before. They got possession of the pigpelt back on their own forty-yard marker and things started to pop and burst.

"Shoot 'em off my side," Willy said in the huddle. "I'll bust something wide open."

AND Willy did. A moment later, the spectators watched the strange sight of a gray-shirted scrub crashing through an opening in the varsity line. They saw a big guy moving ahead, blocking like a demon in front of the runner. First down for the scrubs on the varsity thirty-yard stripe. Stubbornly, the varsity yielded the inches. They stopped the march deep in the shadows of their own goal line.

The second quarter got underway with the first-stringers pressing hard on the throttle. With a relentless, steady attack, they pounded Willy's slot. They ganged up on Willy, dealt him the brunt of the hammering. Past midfield they drove.

Once again the backs shifted to the left. The power came hammering at Willy. Two blockers rammed their bodies at Willy. He went down on one knee. The ball-carrier drove viciously through the slight opening. Then a grasping hand reached out, pulled the runner down.

End and tackle drove shoulder to

shoulder, trying to force Willy out of the next play. Willy, on the defensive, lashed out with his hands, his arms. He lifted an orange-clad somebody off his feet and parked him in a heap.

Still the scrubs could not stop the momentum of the varsity drive. Absorbing the punishment the varsity dished out, Willy stood up bravely. His voice roared out above the noise of the crowd. He flung challenges into the teeth of the varsity and those who sought to blot him out of plays. Willy was, indeed, very rough.

At half-time, the game was a scoreless deadlock. But starting the third period, the varsity, smoldering under Coach Boylan's tongue lashing, went to work. They rolled, piling gain on gain, and struck straight down the field. On the three-yard stripe, they met resistance and Willy.

Digger Higgins cracked center for a scant yard. Another piledriving thrust battered at Willy's tackle. Willy threw his bulk at the interference, stopping Digger Higgins a yard short of the goal. No longer could Willy beat off the blockers with the same furious attack. He was gradually being leveled down by sheer numbers and overwhelming strength.

Willy was finally beginning to peter out. Once again, he flung himself at the hurtling Orange-jerseyed man. But this time he could not stop Digger Higgins from going over the line for a touchdown.

"Willy is all tuckered out," Ace Morrison said. "Poor Willy is having a time of it."

"Come visit me here, pal," Willy replied. "Bring your own derrick because that is what they will need to pull your head out of the dirt."

They lined up for the extra point conversion. Willy found new strength in his anger. He went busting into the varsity backfield. He felt the sting of the leather in his face and it did not sting too much because Willy knew he had blocked the kick.

On the bench, Coach Boylan was seeing the real Willy Haines in action, the big guy whom he had almost lost hope of making a varsity tackle. He turned to his line coach, Killer Conroy.

"We finally got Willy hepped up enough to play tackle the way it should be played," the coach said. "He is giving the varsity a helleva going over."

"Willy always needed a couple of props under him," Killer Conroy replied. "But how are you going to keep Willy on his toes?"

"That will not be too hard. Willy wants to marry my daughter. Willy won't have any trouble staying hepped up."

The scrubs could do nothing with the ball and the varsity took over. In five plays they had another touchdown and the score jumped to 13-0. But it was through no fault of Willy. Digger Higgins had stood on a dime and flipped a couple of heaves into the air. That had turned the trick.

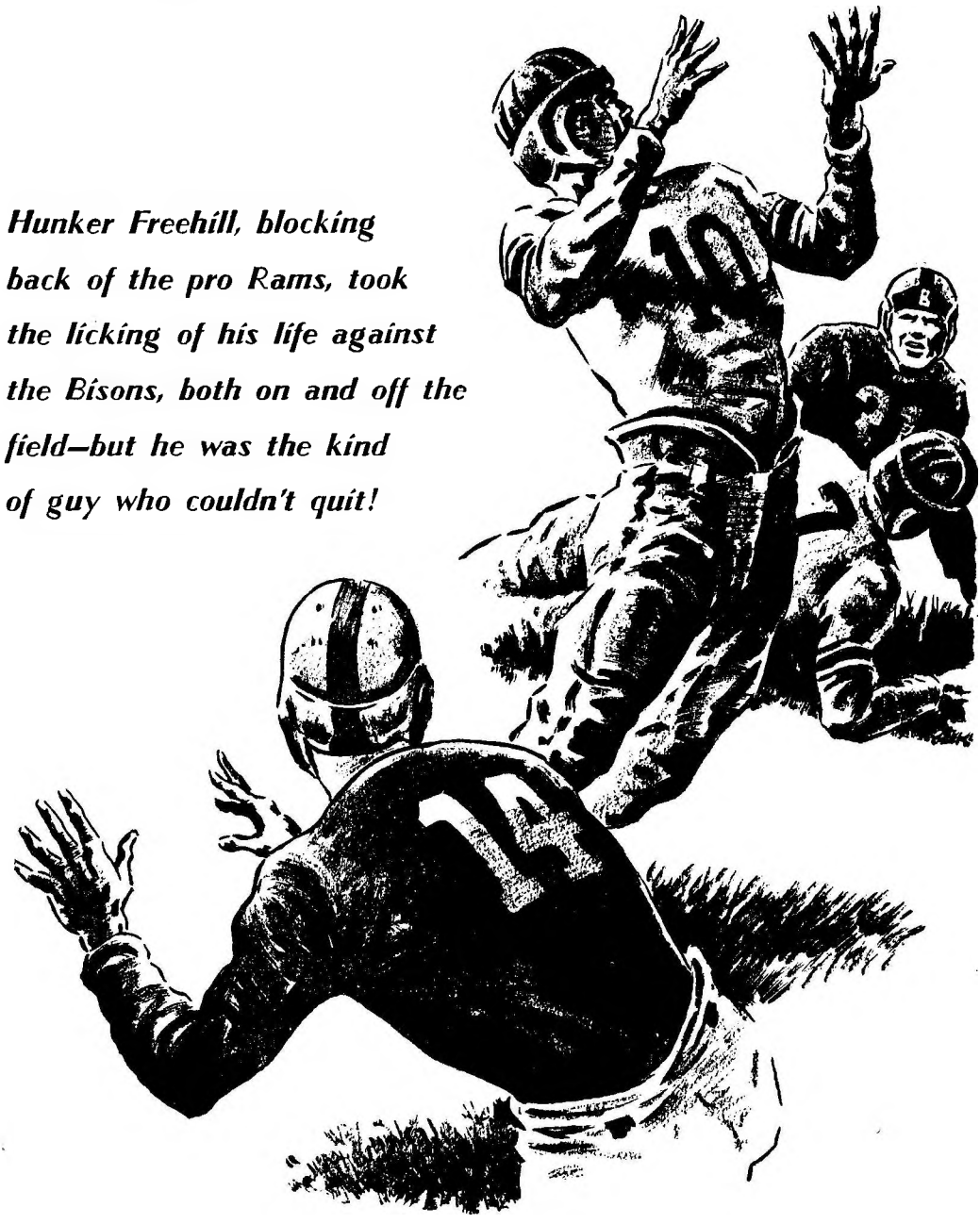
There was no doubt in Willy's mind that the varsity wanted to run up a score in the fourth quarter. The scrubs could not get an offensive under way and each time the varsity gained possession of the porkhide, they were moving it deeper down the field.

On the scrub forty, Ace Morrison was in the hole. He faded back to let loose a pass. But Willy was in on him, jolting

(Concluded on page 69)

NEXT YEAR'S HAS-BEEN

Hunker Freehill, blocking back of the pro Rams, took the licking of his life against the Bisons, both on and off the field—but he was the kind of guy who couldn't quit!



A COMPLETE GRIDIRON NOVELET

In the second half the Bisons took to the air

BY ROBERT SIDNEY BOWEN

CHAPTER I

Workhorse Woes

HUNKER JOE FREEHILL got up slowly and looked at the clock. Three minutes to the gun—three minutes, or three years! His bruised and battered two hundred and fourteen pounds didn't feel they could last three seconds. It was getting to be a very rugged job, this shunting aside of charging Sherman tanks quarter after quarter, game after game. Particularly after four years of it, steady. Particularly this game!

Whether the Rams beat the Eagles or not made litle difference. They would still meet the Bisons come Sunday week for the Eastern Pro Championship. Only it made lots of difference to "Bugs" Malone, the Rams' coach. For Bugs you won 'em all, or else.

That's why he had sent back his first squad at the start of the second half. That's why they were still in there, even though there was a lead margin of thirteen nice points tucked away in the bank and only three minutes to go. That's why Hunker Freehill blocked and blocked until his toes were quivering like plucked violin strings. For Bugs, you won 'em all, or else.

Hunker lifted his heavy head as a friendly hand whacked him on the rump.

"Bedtime in three minutes, boy! Let's go!"

The speaker was "Sparks" Adams, flashy, brainy Ram field general. Sparks was real pay dirt to the Rams management. He pulled in not only the dyed-in-the-wool fans but flocks and flocks of bobbysoxers, who worshipped him. He

was only twenty-two. He was good looking and he had fine white teeth. He was also one sweet quarterback.

"Yeah, what's three minutes!" Hunker sighed and moved toward the huddle. "But it would be nice to swipe the timekeeper's watch."

"Don't tell me you're geting old, Hunker?" Adams laughed.

Freehill let that one ride. It was too close to the truth. It hurt to be reminded. It made him wonder and worry all over again whether Bugs Malone would give the Ram management the word to renew his contract. Some of the boys, like Adams and "Bump" Ryan and Caldwell, had had their contracts renewed already. But not he. Down deep inside he was a little afraid to ask Bugs about it.

In the huddle Sparks said they'd go right on freezing the ball. They'd go for sixty-seven this time. The old-fashioned bull power drive through the right side. Just bust them up and hang onto the ball. Third and two. They'd make it a first, easy. Then only four more to last out until the gun. Simple.

Simple, sure! Hunker idly wondered if Sparks Adams suddenly didn't like him any more. Sixty-seven put it up to him as usual. Bump Ryan would take it on a spinner from Sparks and slide in behind Hunker. Hunker would lead him through the hole, *if* one were opened up.

And if it were opened up, the Eagle secondary would be there, waiting. You didn't need a crystal ball to figure the opposition's plays this late in the game. Not when the opposition had the ball and thirteen points besides.

For a fleeting instant Hunker was tempted to protest but held his tongue. The Rams came out of the huddle and into position. Sparks barked numbers and the ball was snapped. At the same instant Freehill shifted. Out the corner of his eye he saw Sparks slip the ball to Ryan on the spin. Then he was going for the hole that was being grudgingly opened. He jammed his way through and there were two of the Eagle secondary coming in low, shoulder to shoulder.

They side-stepped like ballet dancers to get around him and at the ball carrier. They didn't succeed. The Ram right half left the ground and went at them with everything he had. It was enough. The two men were spilled on their ears and the fleet-footed Ryan cut sharply away from the Eagle right half and then back into the open. The safety man dived for him and simply pushed his face over three yards of gridiron turf.

WITH nothing left to stop him Bump Ryan carried the mail forty-seven yards to another six points. Playing it for every extra pound of enemy flesh he could get, Bugs Malone sent in "Sure-Toe" Mullins. Sure-Toe did his stuff, and it was Rams 20—Eagles 0.

Hunker got up slowly again from the extra-point pile-up and looked at the clock. Two minutes and ten seconds remained. He looked hopefully toward the Ram bench but only one man was running out. It was Caldwell, coming right back in again, Sure-Toe having completed his job of work. Hunker Freehill would have been very happy indeed to see Bugs Malone suddenly fall down dead on his face.

With the rest of the boys he went back and lined up for the kick-off. Bump Ryan started toward the ball and the clock started moving again. It was an arrow-straight end-over-end down to the Eagle twelve, where "Cupid" Allison took it on the run. Inspired fifty-eight minutes too late, four Eagles formed in front of Allison and opened up for business. They jolted Rams left and right and Cupid Allison skipped merrily along.

At midfield he tight-roped the right chalk line, then reversed like a flash while Bump Ryan flew by him and slid out of bounds. His blockers behind him now, Cupid was strictly on his own. He had only Hunker and Sparks Adams to worry about. Reaching down deep for some strength that shouldn't be there but was, Hunker closed in hard and fast.

But his strength seemed to run out. He stumbled, tried to dive but dived the wrong way—smack into Sparks Adams. The two of them went sprawling and Cupid Allison romped on for the rest of the journey. The boot for the point missed the uprights by a foot and the gun hung a period on the contest.

In the dressing room Hunker slumped heavily on his locker bench, sat there with head hanging while aches and weariness built up to the peak and then slowly began to drain off. He thought about Mary and wondered if she had tuned in the game. He didn't think so.

Since their marriage a year and a half ago Mary hardly ever listened in. Every time the announcer said somebody was stretched out on the field she had the willies for fear it was him. And his share of times it *had* been.

And now, with the baby due any week, Mary was ten times worse. She didn't even want him to talk football when he was home. She almost hated the game.

If only he'd get a different kind of a job. One that *had* a future. He couldn't go on getting his breath and brains knocked out forever! What if it did put money in the bank? So did other jobs and a man kept his health. And so forth, and so forth!

Freehill sighed, toweled at his dirt-and-sweat-smeared face, looked up as somebody stopped in front of him. It was Bugs Malone and he was smiling —like a puma.

"That was beautiful, the way you took out Sparks! Just positively beautiful. You are a dope!"

Bugs never raised his voice. He never waved his hands or stamped his feet. He just quietly tore patches of skin off you as if he had a fistful of razor blades.

"Yeah, I know, Bugs," Hunker grunted. "I am a dope."

"First class and strictly blue ribbon!" Malone told him. "I should hold up your check for the game. Get out of that suit and in the shower!"

"Sure, Bugs," Freehill nodded listlessly and began to peel down.

The shower helped and, on the rubbing table, when Johnny Tate's miracle hands went to work, he really started back along the road to recovery.

"You played some football out there today, Hunker," the rubber told him. "The uncomplaining Rock of Gibraltar, I mean!"

"Yeah," the blocking back murmured. "I got a feeling I was in a game recently."

"Strictly good, I mean," Tate said. "But Bugs should have given you a couple of spells to get your breath."

"I do not think Mr. Malone likes me," Hunker sighed.

"Bugs would not like his own mother if she did not score in the first two minutes!" Tate snapped. "He is making too much of a workhorse out of you. Has made, I mean."

"I get paid, Johnny."

"Peanuts for the job you do! Four years, isn't it? A long time for a guy they only give the ball to couple of times a game."

"You're making me cry, Johnny. Hurry up, will you?"

"Couple of minutes, Hunker. You want to feel stiff as Malone's tongue tomorrow? How's the wife?"

"Fine. How's it feel to be a father, Johnny?"

"The first time, like somebody jerked the rug. After the fourth or fifth, no feeling at all. You just wonder where you'll dig up the dough."

"You make it really beautiful, Johnny."

"Did I advise you to get married? Okay, pal, off the table. Give my best to Mary. There can be exceptions, Hunker."

"Thanks, Johnny. You have made me a new man."

"Not at your age, I ain't! So long."

Freehill winced a little inwardly and went over and began to climb into his clothes. All around him the other fellows were doing the same. Talk was at a minimum. It wasn't like college. A job had been successfully completed and that was that. Let the heroes slap themselves on the back. Did steel workers and coal miners gather about and gush over the day's doings when the whistle blew?

CHAPTER II

Contract in the Balance

MARY was resting on the couch in the living room when Hunker let himself in. She was small, blond, blue-eyed and cute as a kewpie doll, even though the baby was expected most any time. For the ten-millionth time Hunker wondered why she had ever consented to marry him and went over and bent down and kissed her.

"How's it, baby? Where's your mother?"

"Out shopping and I'm fine. Surprise, darling!"

"Huh?"

"I actually listened to the last quarter. But I hated the announcer. He only mentioned your name once. I hope he drops dead!"

"It's his job." Freehill sighed. "And

I did give them a nice touchdown. Any beer in the ice box, baby?"

"I put some in this morning. And I think I'll try a pepsi. Bothers me least, anyway. Hurry back, darling."

Freehill looked at her an instant and then went out into the kitchen. He came back with the stuff on a tray and set the tray on a table next to the couch. He pulled over a chair and sat down. He lifted his glass and gave her his heart through his eyes.

"To Jimmy," he said.

"Or Marie," she smiled.

"For generations the first Freehill has always been a boy," he grinned and drank.

"Darling?" a moment later.

"Yeah, baby?"

"Did you speak to Malone after the game?"

"I didn't get the chance, honey. He blew fast."

"I'll bet!" Mary echoed and little flags began to unfurl in her eyes. "Joe, can't you see what that man's doing to you?"

Freehill leaned over and kissed her.

"There's worse than Bugs—I think. What's he doing to me, baby?"

"I'm serious, darling! I've never been so serious. It's time we faced the whole thing. I mean it!"

The blocking back smothered a sigh with a grin, and nodded.

"Okay, leave us face it, honey. What?"

"Malone, the Rams, the—the whole dirty business!"

"The two grand we have in the bank isn't dirty, baby."

Mary Freehill made a face and snapped her eyes.

"How long would two thousand dollars last us, if you had no job?"

"I've got a job, honey."

"For how long? One more game perhaps! What if Malone doesn't pick up your contract for next season? And if you ask me I don't think he has any intention of doing it!"

"Why, baby?" Freehill asked patiently?"

"Because he hasn't done it already!" she replied quickly. "I talked with Betty Adams on the phone today. Sparks has got his new contract and so have Caldwell and lots of the others. Oh, darling, I just hate to talk like this but I've got to make you see the truth. I've *got* to!"

The blocking back was silent for a moment because Mary's words skirted very close to the lump of feeling he had carried around inside him for a couple of weeks, now. He took a long pull on his beer, wiped his mouth.

"Stop worrying, honey," he said. "If the Rams don't want me there's other teams that do. I've only played Pro for four years. Lots of them ahead. Look at Ken Strong of the Giants and—"

"We're talking about *you!*" his wife interrupted passionately. "If Malone won't—oh, darling, don't you *see* how insecure everything is? Now of all times?"

TWO little drops began to glisten and shimmer in Mary Freehill's eyes. The blocking back felt as if his heart were being cut out a slice at a time. He put down his beer, took her two hands and held them tight.

"I got news for you, kiddo," he mimicked. "I heard about a couple of college coaching jobs being open, so I wrote a couple of letters. With what I learned at Haverford and four seasons with the Rams, some college could do fine with me."

Mary smiled, withdrew one of her hands and patted his.

"Of course they could, darling. You'd make a wonderful coach. Everybody likes you. And you've got more football in your little finger than most coaches have in their whole body. But, darling, you know as well as I do that for every coaching job open there are a hundred well qualified for the job.

"Half of them because you know the dean or are related by marriage to the athletic director. Oh, I don't mean it wouldn't be fine but—have you heard from either of them? "

"Not yet, baby. But I only heard about the openings a couple of weeks ago. Besides, they take their time in those things."

"So it's still nothing *certain!*" she breathed and didn't look at him. "Joe?"

"Look, baby, you get some rest. I'm a wonderful husband, giving you arguments. Now you just—"

"No, Joe. There's something I want to tell you about. I had a long talk on the phone today with Alice Sanders. You know, my roommate in college? Well, Alice is married to the general manager of a big life insurance company. And Alice said they are desperately in need of salesmen. She said—*Joe!* What's the matter?"

"Baby, you're kidding!" he gulped.

"Me sell anything? I couldn't even sell the atom bomb to Stalin!"

"Because you've never tried!" she replied hotly. "And you *would* make a good salesman. I know you would! You've scads of friends. Everybody who meets you likes you. Oh, darling, don't you see I'm only trying to—"

He squeezed her hand tight to check off the tears.

"Sure, baby, sure! What else did this Alice say? I'm really interested. Honest!"

"You're sweet and I love you, darling. Well, Alice said there was a few weeks training course. But you get paid a salary all the time. Not much, true. But we'd be able to manage. It would be something certain and with a wonderful future. You'd be surprised at what some of his salesmen make.

"Anyway, after the training period you keep on getting the salary, *plus* the commissions you make. And Alice said that new salesmen are given a list of prospects that are practically sure sales. You'd do wonderfully at it, Joe!"

"Unless I forgot and gave the shoulder block to some guy who tried to get away from me," Freehill grinned.

"Please be serious, Joe, because I most certainly *am!* In fact I told Alice that you would be *very* interested. She's going to tell her husband to get in touch with you. Remember, the name is Sanders—Wilfred Sanders—and I'm sure he's very nice because Alice is such a dear. Oh, darling—*please!*"

The tears really came. Hunker Freehill looked at her two little hands crushed to her mouth and he would gladly have hired out as a flagpole sitter if it made her happy. He gently took her hands from her mouth and held them tight.

"Sure, baby, anything you say. It might work fine, who knows? Anyway, I'll talk with this Sanders guy when he comes around. Promise, honey. Honest. Now, here comes your mother. You rest, baby. I'll help her with the dinner."

"Darling, you're so sweet!"

"That's better," he grinned and stood up. "Natch, I'm sweet. I'm crazy about the gal, ain't I?"

MONDAY'S session was devoted to light drill, and skull practise. Most skull practise. Mostly skull practise—for the Ram *numb*skulls, if you would believe Bugs Malone. No one who played against the Eagles was spared. Malone was like a Frankenstein medico performing a major operation.

He wielded his verbal scalpel with wicked delicacy—a small strip of hide skin at a time. No one was spared. Hunker Freehill got the full treatment. He was carefully peeled right down to the bone. Some of his friends suffered with him but only about one per cent as much.

Bugs Malone was positively merciless. So the overworked blocking back did not bring up the subject of next season's contract to the Coach after practise on Monday.

On Tuesday it was a real workout for everybody. Only a couple of the strictly hush-hush plays had been uncovered before the Eagles. So Bugs Malone took the rest of them out of the bag one at a time and tossed them at the starting squad. The subs were the opposition and they took a terrific pounding.

They handed back almost as much as they received. They knew the hush-hush plays formations, too, so eight times out of ten they knew exactly what was coming. Hunker Freehill got so weary of knocking them aside so that Adams or Ryan, or Caldwell could romp on down that he longed to crawl to the side chalk and lie down.

He spent double time on the rubbing table under Johnny Tate's miracle fingers. By the time he had dressed almost everybody had gone and Bugs Malone was alone in his office. When he entered the coach looked at him, flat-eyed, and waited.

"It's not that I'm worried, Bugs," Freehill began, "but the wife's going to have a baby, you know?"

"Who doesn't around here?" Malone snapped, and riffled some papers on his desk. "What else on your mind would have made you clip Sparks last Sunday?"

"For the hundredth time I tripped!" Freehill exploded. "Just tripped. Nothing else. It has happened!"

"Sure," Malone said with bland sarcasm. "To a lot of guys who maybe have been around too long. Well, what about your wife?"

Hunker had to pause a moment while he pulled the barb out of his heart.

"About next season's contract," he finally said. "She keeps asking me, have I signed yet? I tell her there's no rush, and everything is fine. But you know

how women in her condition can be. It would help her a lot if I could tell her everything's jake. See what I mean, Bugs?"

"Maybe it would help her, Freehill, I wouldn't know," the coach said tonelessly. "It happens, though, I haven't made up my mind about you next season."

"Why not?" Hunker grunted. "I carried the gilt edge boys plenty this season."

"Because I haven't, that's why! You're slowing up, Freehill. Getting old. Maybe not *too* old, yet. I haven't decided."

"Old—me?" the blocking back laughed. "You're kidding! I've got another four seasons left in me!"

"Like I have four arms!" Malone snorted. Then with a shrug, "But maybe you have got another season's play left in that load of blubber. I haven't decided. That's the best I can give you now."

"And thanks for nothing!" Freehill bit off. "Maybe you should dock me a few bucks for taking up your time!"

The blocking back had turned on his heel and was striding toward the door.

"Oh, Hunker!"

He stopped, turned, and looked back. Bugs Malone was smiling but not as far up as his eyes. You could find better smiles on wolverines.

"Sunday's game can make up my mind," the coach said when Freehill waited. "I want that one most. The boys that help get it for me are not going to be sorry. See what I mean?"

Hunker solemnly wondered if one good solid punch was worth a possible fifteen hundred—a grand for sure. He decided not, considering.

"A deal!" he snapped and went out.

CHAPTER III

Rugged Going

WHEN he reached home Mary was in bed and asleep. She had had a very uncomfortable day, his mother-in-law explained. He was sorry about that but he was genuinely glad to find his wife in bed and asleep. She would have asked him again if he had spoken to Malone and, if he had lied, she would have known it at once. And it would have started up all over again.

Sell insurance? Pound sidewalks, ride elevators, climb countless stairs for a door to be slammed in his face? It made him shudder. But what else, if Malone *did* cut his loose? His football had put him through Haverford, certainly not his classroom talents.

He had graduated without much more knowledge than he'd possessed in his freshman year. But his football had paid off. The Rams signed him and for good dough. Football was his trade. He didn't know how to earn money any other way.

Good dough for four years and now maybe a full stop? He couldn't kid himself. Another pro team would snap him up? Like fun! When Bugs Malone was through with you you didn't have anything left to be snapped up. It was a new contract for next season or else! He finally went to bed and dreamed that Bugs Malone was sticking insurance policies in his ears and pulling hundred dollar bills out of his mouth.

Wednesday and Thursday were both rugged days for the Ram squad. Very rugged! Like every other Pro team the Bisons had been scouted minutely and thoroughly all season long. On Wednesday and Thursday the Ram second string made like Bisons and ran off every play the scouts had jotted down in their notebooks.

The first string did its best but it wasn't half good enough for the razor-edged Bugs Malone. Wednesday he kept them at it until the park lights had to be turned on. And just about as long on Thursday. With both sessions, of course, behind locked gates.

Thursday night Mary Freehill was awake when Hunker got home. Purposely awake, because she went right to bat as soon as the blocking back had kissed her.

"Wilfred Sanders called, darling. He wants you to call his office and make an appointment," she said. "He sounds awfully nice."

"That's fine, baby." Freehill grinned and patted her hand. "I'll call him first thing Monday."

"*Monday?* Joe Freehill, you'll call him tomorrow! Why, of all the—"

"Okay, honey, okay! I'll call the guy tomorrow. But look, maybe we won't have to worry about that. I'm sure we

won't. Bugs is just being cute. Just his way of making sure I don't fall asleep Sunday. I'll be signing a new contract right after the game. Now tell me, what did Doc Crawford have to say today? He came to see you, didn't he?"

She looked at him and dragged shreds off his heart.

"Oh, Joe! Oh, *Joe!*"

"Hey? What's the matter, baby?"

"Go away! Please go away from me! You just don't care what happens to *us!* You and your precious Bugs Malone!"

He gaped dumbfounded.

"But, honey! I only said that—"

"Go away! *Please!*"

At that moment his mother-in-law came in and quietly led him back into the living room and left him there. He ate supper, or tried to alone. And then, until he was too tired to stand up, he roamed about the living room like a great big hurt and befuddled grizzly bear.

On Friday morning the entire Ram outfit was driven out to the country club, where they were to taper off, smooth down a few burrs and remain quartered until they drove to the park for the Bison game. When Freehill left with his packed bag his wife was still asleep. Or so her mother insisted. Just the same he stole quietly into her room, kissed her lightly, and stole out again.

His mother-in-law didn't wish him luck, but it didn't matter. He told her he'd phone both evenings and just before they left for the park on Sunday. He gave her the country club phone number written down on a slip of paper. She accepted it silently and that was that. He rightly guessed that she thought her daughter had made one big mistake!

FRIDAY evening around eight he was dead certain how his mother-in-law felt toward him. She insisted that Mary was asleep, and flatly refused to wake her and call her to the phone. He was almost tempted to ask her why she had the radio turned up so loud but he let it ride.

Instead he told her to give Mary his love, and then he went to bed and dreamed that he was blocking out policy-filled brief-cases for his mother-in-law, who was carrying the ball. Only it wasn't a pigskin. It was a horse-whip.

Saturday the first squad ran through a few plays, had a short skull session and knocked off at noon. In the afternoon Hunker played some golf with the rest of the Ram backfield and, when he come in from the links, there was a note stating that a Mr. Sanders had called. There was a number left for him to call. He tore it up and went in to dinner.

At eight he had a repeat performance over the phone with his mother-in-law. Mary was sleep again and couldn't be disturbed. The only difference from the night before was that Sanders had called the house and his mother-in-law had given him the country club number. Of *course* she had no idea who Mr. Sanders might be but she suggested that Hunker call the number. He didn't.

Right after a light lunch the Ram outfit drove to the park. It was an unhappy trip for Hunker. He tried the house just before leaving but there had been no answer. He imagined that Mary was asleep in the bedroom with the door shut, his mother-in-law gone down to the drugstore to pick up the Sunday papers. But he would have felt fifty percent better if his call had been answered. He didn't get a chance to call from the park dressing room. And then he was out on the field.

The Bisons won the toss for the kick-off and the Rams took the west goal, with the sun and what little wind there was at their backs. The stands were packed to standing room proportions and that meant a sixty thousand house at least.

While "Tip" Nardine, the Bison left half, adjusted the ball on his forty the way he wanted it, Hunker looked over the opposition. They were big, all of them. Program statistics showed that the Bison line outweighed the Ram forward wall almost eight pounds a man. And the backfield wasn't much less. Hunker could feel his bones and muscles pretending to ache already.

The kick-off came dead down the middle into Bump Ryan's waiting arms. He ballet-danced a brief instant while his interference formed, then started up the line. He had caught it on the eight and, because of savage, beautiful work by Freehill, he was able to take it to the twenty-one before he was brought down so hard he bounced.

The Rams tried twice at the ends for a total of four. On the second try Freehill missed his man and that ruined Caldwell's chances of possibly going for

a first down. A smash off right tackle netted three more and then Ryan dropped back to kick. The pass was perfect and he got off a long boot.

But it was no fun for Hunker Freehill. The Bison forward wall charged like exploding dynamite, and as he blocked two of them who came roaring through with upflung hands, he felt as if he were being blown off the field.

By the time he could get to his feet and get air back into his lungs the Ram ends had streaked down the field and spilled the Bison safety man on their thirteen. As he took up his defensive position Hunker hoped very much that the big boys would not come his way for a couple of plays at least. His first jolt of the game had shaken more things loose than had the whole of some other games.

But the Bisons were not the least bit considerate. With weight to their advantage they ran both plays through the line on his side. Hunker personally stopped both—the first after three had been picked up, the second after two. Sparks Adams gave him the old grin, and said something. But Hunker didn't hear, there was so much roaring in his ears.

The third Bison play was very pretty to watch from the stands. On a shift that sucked in the Ram ends, the Bison quarter lateraled into the right flat zone to the racing right half. The Bison right end broke through and took the pass over his shoulder almost in the clear. Bump Ryan ran over the side-stripe on the Ram forty-eight.

TWO straight power plays got eight for the heavier team. On the third there was a fumble and Hunker Freehill almost got it—but not quite. The Bisons recovered and it was first down on the thirty-six. There the Rams dug in and gave with everything. The Bisons tried three and got four for their efforts. Then the Bison full trotted off the field, and a specialty kicker trotted on.

The grandstand quarterbacks had already signaled for a coffin-corner try but the Bisons crossed them up. They went for a field goal from the thirty-eight and the ball sailed all the way for three big points. From then until the end of the first quarter that was all the scoring hung up. It was a case of the Bisons taking a sneak breather or the Rams playing inspired football. Anyway the pigskin spent practically all of its time in the midfield zone.

The quarter ended with the Rams carrying on the Bison forty-one, second and eight. In the huddle Adams called for Hunker to carry the mail on a Statue of Liberty to the left side. From a fake shift the blocking back cut over when the ball was snapped. As Adams faded to pass Freehill grabbed it off his fingertips on the run, then cut sharply inside the Bison right end.

Hands grabbed him but he swivel-hipped away and kept going for fourteen beautiful yards before practically the entire Bison backfield fell on him with every pound of flesh they had. He didn't want to get up but he somehow managed it.

A glance toward the Ram bench brought no happiness to his heart. Two men were running in but they were Halloway for quarter and Parker to spell Caldwell at left half. In the huddle the word was for Parker on a reverse with Freehill and Bump Ryan out in front for him.

The play went off smooth as silk and fooled the big boys in Bison jerseys. Parker went another thirteen to make it first down on the Bison fourteen. Ram fans in the stands began to plead hoarsely but thunderously.

From an identical shift Halloway ran off the next play but it was different once things were in motion. It was for Bump Ryan around right end. This one the Bisons guessed right and Freehill was helpless to block out the whole pack of them.

Ryan was hit like seventeen tons of brick and the ball squirted out of his hands. Only quick thinking, and quicker action by Parker saved it. He finally fell on it, but on the Ram twenty-six. Ryan looked reproachfully at Hunker, but the blocking back was too weary to do anything but let the look bounce off him.

A quick jump pass got three of the yards back. And then, playing it close to the vest, Halloway sneaked it over to just about the middle of the field on the twenty-two. Parker went trotting off and Sure-Toe Mullins came into the game.

A blind man would have stood a good chance of kicking the three points. But Sure-Toe Mullins wasn't blind. He was

just a guy maybe suddenly hexed by the opposition. Also he was very much hurried by the dynamite Bison forward wall. His kick missed by a wide margin and the Bisons took over on the twenty.

Bugs Malone sent in a whole new line and Adams and Caldwell into the backfield. Only Freehill and Bump Ryan remained in. Hunker felt like crying with rage. Instead he whammed through on the first Bison play and dumped the hopeful ball carrier for a two-yard loss.

Maybe that made the Bisons mad. Next play they pointed straight at Freehill and his two hundred and fourteen pounds climbed to a five foot altitude before he lit on his back. Sparks Adams finally brought down the runner after the Bison had made it just barely a first down.

CHAPTER IV

Ready to Cry, "Uncle!"

AS THOUGH what works once can maybe work again, the Bisons worked the same play with just a couple of variations. Hunker spotted those variations and a slightly lighter man would have been snapped into two pieces by the pile-driving force of Freehill's tackle.

The ball was placed down a foot behind where it had been. The next was a quick kick, but it didn't catch a smart lad like Adams sleeping. The flashy quarter scooped it up on his forty-six, and started to give the sixty-odd thousand a treat.

He ran through Bisons, he ran over Bisons and he ran around Bisons until he was finally dumped on the enemy thirty. The stands went wild and by then they had forgotten that the very first man who went for Adams would have grabbed him had not Hunker Freehill thrown a body block that almost snapped a couple of necks, one of them his own. But Sparks remembered and as they went into the huddle he gave the heaving blocking back an affectionate whack on the rump.

"My mother thanks you, pal, and so does my father. Let's do that again some time, huh?"

"Yeah!" Hunker mumbled. "About five years from now. And run a couple to the other side, will you?"

"Sure, right after you, boy!" Adams chuckled.

And the quarterback wasn't kidding. It was the Statue of Liberty, with Hunker taking. There was a ton of lead glued to each of Freehill's cleated shoes but he somehow managed to pick them up and lay them down and go inside the Bison end again for six.

"Count them, sonny!" he groaned as Adams helped him to his feet. "One and one is two. My limit for a game. Don't forget!"

The quarterback didn't forget. But he ran running plays, and Hunker had to get in there every time with his two hundred and fourteen pounds. True, he didn't get all the heavy work but he got a lot of it.

When finally Sure-Toe missed for the second straight time and the officials brought it out to the twenty, the blocking back wanted to scream to Bugs Malone to do something about him for Pete's sake. The Ram coach sent his first line back in, as well as Caldwell for Sure-Toe.

The Bison coach sent in some replacements too—a whole new line that was slightly lighter—maybe six, seven ounces a man! Then when two brilliant plays executed from a single-T picked up nineteen yards the Bisons suddenly switched to the air. A pass into the flat got seven, and a jump-pass through the slot to the Bison center, who had cut through, made it the three first downs in a row, with the ball on their own forty-nine.

Maybe, though, the big fellows had shot their bolt. Maybe the Rams had a good hard think about the fifteen hundred bucks they would each get if they won from the Bisons. At any rate the big boys were just plain unable to go very far forward with the pigskin on the ground or via the air route.

They finally kicked and it was a bad one that bounced out of bounds on the Ram thirty-seven. When it was placed down Sparks Adams lifted a leaf from the Bison book and took to the air himself.

The first effort was batted down, scant inches from the receiver's fingers. The second Caldwell took from Bump Ryan for nine good yards. Freehill's ears actually ached when he heard the word in the huddle but he carried the ball for the third time and made it a first down by half a yard.

Twice more Adams took to the air. The first was fine. Bump Ryan tore up eighteen yards of gridiron, to make it another first down on the Bison thirty-five. But on Adams' second toss the big boys said that enough was enough. Their roving right end grabbed the pigskin on the fly and set sail for six yards before Hunker smothered him.

With a minute and forty seconds to go the Bisons tried three desperate mile-long forwards to add something more to their three points. But the ball came back all three times. A running play through the right side got them only four yards when the half ended. To Hunker Freehill that moment was almost the most beautiful he had ever lived.

In the dressing room, on the table, Johnny Tate's soothing fingers pried away some of the aches but still not all of them. He heard Bugs Malone's quiet voice dissecting plays *and* players, but very little of it penetrated. Only when the coach came over and gave him the five-second silent treatment before he spoke did he take notice.

"Maybe you'd better remember our little chat in the second half, Freehill," he said and walked away.

"Just a warm, sweet guy!" Tate muttered when it was safe to. "You plan to give your brains to him, chum? You're doing it fast!"

"A guy must keep his job, Johnny," Freehill sighed wearily. "Guess you can guess, can't you?"

"Who couldn't?" the rubber growled. "But would Mary and the kid you're expecting like it?"

HUNKER FREEHILL didn't answer that one. It was something like a little bomb of light exploding in his head. He didn't know how Mary was today yet. He heaved himself off the table, bummed a nickel from Johnny Tate and dived into the dressing room phone booth.

He got his nickel back four times before ever-mounting worry finally touched off the really big bomb. His hands trembled so he dropped the nickel from the slot the first time. He finally got the hospital, and the words he heard from the other end made him go all tight, then melt.

Yes, Mrs. Freehill had been admitted about eleven o'clock that morning. No, nothing, yet. His wife was as well as could be expected. Her mother was with her. No, not for some time yet. Yes, she would try and see that his wife got his message. Yes, yes, Mrs. Freehill would receive the best of care, of course!

For a moment Freehill sat in the phone booth while the cold sweat oozed out and trickled down. His first impulse was to dash out to Bugs Malone and tell the coach to get himself a replacement right half. He curbed the impulse, for obvious reasons.

Presently he stepped out of the phone booth slowly.

No more than a minute after the second half had got under way it became pretty plain that the Bison coach had not curled up with a good book in the dressing room. Among other things he must have suggested that his team get in there and really make their extra weight count.

That they started to do.

Tip Nardine took the kickoff on his seven and twisted, swiveled and hurdled to the forty-one before he went down. Hunker Freehill made the tackle and there were so many shooting stars in front of his eyes that he was forced to take out a couple of seconds to clear them away before he could see where his team was taking its defensive positions.

The Bisons took to the air and their passer was given a world of beautiful protection. Rams charging in were dumped right and left like empty beer kegs. Three beauties took the ball to the Ram twenty-seven. On the next play, though, Lady Luck apparently looked the other way.

A quick fourteen-yard pass nestled cozily into Freehill's arms.

Calling on all the power he had he slam-banged through desperately-clutching Bisons to his own thirty-eight. There he went down so hard he half expected to see the hole close in over him. When Bump Ryan hauled him to his feet and happily whacked him on the back he focussed his eyes on the clock.

Only three and a half minutes had gone by. He knew that he couldn't make time fly but maybe if the Rams piled up plenty of points Malone would take him out.

Then he could get to the hospital in a hurry.

"Come on, guys!" he panted in the huddle. "We get a million because I've got to be leaving, hear?"

"Yeah, Hunker," Adams echoed absently and gave the word for the next play.

It was an end-around with the final switch to Bump Ryan. It worked for eight yards. But an eager Ram was offside and the ball was placed back on the thirty-three. Adams tried a quick pass but it was batted down. An off-tackle smash got six and then the Rams kicked to the Bison twenty-four, where a fancy-stepping lad gobbled it in and brought it back eleven.

Two line smashes that netted little and the big fellows quick-kicked. Once again they didn't fool the Ram safety man. He caught it on his forty and brought it back to the midfield stripe. Beginning with the next play both coaches started to experiment.

PLAYERS trotted onto the field and off the field but nothing worth talking about took place. After seven the Rams were forced to kick. And, after missing a first down on their very first play, the Bison were held pinned to the wall and had to kick, too.

The third quarter finally passed into football history with the ball on the Ram forty-two and in the home team's possession. And with Hunker Freehill still thumping and banging his way along toward a full sixty minutes of body-and-brain-pummeling football.

As the ball was switched to the forty-two on the other side of the midfield stripe the blocking back brought to the fore the thoughts that had been filling up the back of his brain. Mary was in the hospital having a baby. Cold sweat trickled with the hot that covered his entire body.

His impulse was to go running off the field. To heck with football, to heck with the Rams and to heck particularly with Bugs Malone. He knew that the coach was using up every bit of him there was left and wouldn't care a hoot whether he dropped dead after the game or not.

A few seconds of wild, rebellious thoughts and then he clamped the damper down on them. He could use the fifteen hundred he'd get if the Rams took the Bisons. He could also use the one grand he'd get even if the Rams lost. Also, there was just a faint hope regarding Bugs Malone and next season.

Anyway, he had to get in there and play some football.

CHAPTER V

The Way Out

GET in he did, but he definitely wasn't alone. Every man did on both teams. It was as though the bars had suddenly been let down and anything went. Eleven guys hurled themselves at eleven other guys. The only things lacking were knives in their hands—or maybe lengths of lead pipe.

The whistle and the horn played a symphony as penalties were handed out left and right. After practically every third play a man from one team or the other failed to get up off the ground. All the time the ball just moved up and down the field between the two thirty-yard stripes.

Slammed, walloped and belted from every conceivable angle, Hunker Freehill ceased turning his head any more when a Ram replacement came running onto the field. It wouldn't be anybody to tap him on the shoulder.

Every time he went down blocking, carrying the ball or tackling, he cursed himself for getting up. He was using up the football he'd need for next year and maybe the year after that. Why didn't he have brains enough to stay down and look dead?

It wouldn't take much effort. Maybe it was because he didn't have any brains left. They had been scrambled and pressed paper thin long hours ago. Hunker Freehill stayed in there and somehow kept on going.

Back and forth between the two thirty-yard stripes, the clock stopping for time outs and such, and then starting moving again. And then eventually the Bisons pulled off a quick-kick that did catch Sparks Adams with his head in his arms. It rolled to the Ram six, where a Bison end streaked in and fell on it. And for all those who cared to look, which included everybody in the stands and down on the field, the clock said one minute and four seconds to go to the gun.

A sweet cut around right end by Bump Ryan picked up six. Crossing up the unsuspecting Bisons completely, Sparks Adams made a quarterback sneak for a first down on the eighteen. The clock said forty-five seconds to go. In the

huddle Adams reached way down to the bottom of the bag and came up with an all-or-nothing play.

It was a combination Statue of Liberty, lateral into the left flat zone and a kitty-corner pass down field to Caldwell, who should be waiting there. As Freehill listened to the word bells and gongs went off in his head. His blocking for Bump Ryan, who would take the lateral in the flat, could make or ruin the play. He had the crazy urge to speak but kept his mouth shut.

The Rams wheeled quickly out of the huddle and into the line. Sparks Adams barked what he was supposed to bark, the shift was set up and the ball was snapped. In full flight Freehill cut over in front of Ryan. That whole side of the Bison line charged like mad elephants, as though the play had been telegraphed to them.

Hunker dumped one and kept his feet. Out the corner of his eyes he saw Ryan taking the lateral in his hands and dance-fade a step or two while Caldwell raced into the clear. But out of both eyes Freehill saw two great big mountain-sized Bisons thundering in. He left his feet and went at them—maybe with a prayer, he didn't know.

It seemed that the entire gridiron exploded between his ears. Then suddenly he was flat on his front with half of his face in the sod, and the one eye he could see out of was staring through a maze of tangled legs and half-prone bodies at Caldwell's racing figure crossing the Bison thirty, the twenty, the ten, then over the last stripe into the pay-off zone wihout a Bison hand being placed upon him.

There was just enough time left for Sure-Toe Mullins to make good for once. He did and the bark of the gun meant the championship and fifteen hundred bucks apiece for each and every Ram.

Hardly had the bark of the gun been lost in the bellowing roar from the packed stands when Hunker Freehill started running toward the tunnel door that led under the stands to the dressing room. As he passed the Ram bench hands grabbed wildly for him and voices shouted but he didn't check his stride. He probably would have gone flat on his face if he had tried.

In the dressing room he hurled his helmet from him, toweled his face with one hand and yanked open the door of his locker with the other. By then Johnny Tate's arms were wrapped about him and the rubber was practically crying with joy.

"Hunker, you sweetheart! Malone should kiss your foot for the rest of his life! Hey! Where you going, boy?"

"Woman's Hospital!" Freehill panted and flung his top coat over his shoulders. "I'm having a baby! I mean, Mary is!"

"No fooling? Say, there was a guy looking for you, just after you'd gone out for the second half. Said his name was Sanders. That mean anything to you?"

"Not right now it doesn't!" Freehill cried, and went running toward the outside door just as the rest of the squad came piling in from the field.

MAYBE the driver of the cab the blocking back grabbed outside had listened to the game on his cab radio and recognized Freehill. Or maybe he drove people in dirty football uniforms to maternity hospitals every day in the week.

Anyway he didn't ask any questions, and his driving was both skillful and fast. Nor did he utter a word of complaint when Freehill leaped from the cab at the hospital door and left him there with the flag still down.

The white-clad lady at the desk inside appeared no more than mildly surprised. But after all, experience had taught her that expectant fathers were seldom responsible for their actions. Smiling, she led him to a small waiting room on the second floor and left him there with the promise that she would find out if there were any news and let him know.

For over an hour Hunker Freehill sweated out what little sweat was left in him. Nurses and doctors came and went by the waiting room door but not one of them so much as even glanced in at him. He didn't dare leave to seek out information though every minute he spent cooped up alone in that room was a year stripped off the wrong end of his life.

However, at long last a lady in white turned into the room smiling.

"Congratulations!" she said. "A fine eight-pound boy. And Mrs. Freehill is doing fine, just fine. Of course, you can't see her right now but I'm sure you can a little later. I'll bet you wanted a boy, didn't you?"

"*Gee!*" Hunker Freehill breathed, as

the lady in white seemed to sort of blurr out. "Gee! I knew it would be Jimmy!"

The lady in white laughed and went out. Hunker Freehill sat right where he was, riding around and around on Cloud Six. And then suddenly a little gray-haired man with a nice face entered the room and made him come down for a landing.

"Well, there you are, Mr. Freehill! I've been trying to catch up with you for three days, now. My name's Sanders. I want to talk with you."

A lot of the sunshine went out of Bunker Freehill's life but he smiled bravely.

"Yeah, I know," he sighed. "Okay, Mr. Sanders, I'm listening. I don't think I'd be very good at selling insurance though."

The little gray-haired man blinked and looked startled.

"I beg your pardon."

"Skip it," Hunker said wearily. "Go ahead. What's your proposition?"

"One I'm sure will appeal to you, Mr. Freehill," the other said. "Of course, Cranford isn't exactly Yale or Southern California, but we're growing fast. Right now our student body is close to two thousand. And we—what's the matter?"

Hunker Freehill had sat bolt upright and reached out with a groping hand.

"Wait a minute!" he got out with an effort. "Don't you peddle insurance? I mean, aren't you a big shot in some company?"

"Good heavens, no!" the little gray-haired man gasped, and looked almost scared. "I'm secretary of the Cranford University Athletic Board. We received your application as football coach. Well, we investigated you thoroughly and I have been sent here to offer you a three-year contract at seven thousand dollars a year. That includes, I might add, living quarters for you and your family on the campus grounds. I have the contract right here in my pocket."

Hunker Freehill listened to it all but it was almost too difficult to believe. Eventually it sank in and made sense. Sanders! Two guys with the same last name. So what? Well, for one thing he could have saved himself a lot of lumps today if he'd met this particular Sanders yesterday. But would he have?

One thing was certain, though. Tomorrow he would call on Bugs Malone in the coach's downtown office. If Bugs didn't offer him a contract for next season he would punch him right in the nose. And if Bugs did offer him a contract he would likewise punch him right in the nose.

Either way it would be a very beautiful and appropriate touch!

"As I said, we are not yet a big school," the little gray-haired man's words sifted through to him, "but we're growing fast. I'm sure you'll have all kinds of material to work with."

"Yeah, yeah!" Hunker Freehill murmured as his eyes filled up with stars. "Got a lad in mind, right now. Name's Jimmy. In maybe eighteen, nineteen years he'll be one of the sweetest blocking backs you ever saw!"

The little gray-haired man opened his mouth to speak, but closed it and shrugged. After all, the Board had made no stipulation that the new football coach at Cranford University be sane! So he reached into his pocket and pulled out the contract and his fountain pen.

Johnny passed one to Zoller, and

GOOD-BY

By NELSON

SILENCE hovered over the stands. The crowd sat shivering in the November chill, stunned by the incredible thing they'd seen today. "Buzz" Borman had been stopped at last. And Cordell College was about to lose a ball game.

It was hard to believe. Many fine ball clubs had tried to stop Buzz Borman, the little man with the winged feet and fancy hips, and none had succeeded—until today. Now it had been done. And Cordell's Broncs would taste their first defeat of the season. Stop Borman, and you stopped the Broncs. It was that simple. Any good Cordell fan would tell you the same.

Johnny Stark stood over the purple-jerseyed huddle and surveyed the situation. It was not good. The scoreboard read: Tech 12, Cordell 7. Less than five minutes to go. The goal line some seventy yards away. It was, Johnny decided, time for decisive action.

He was no midget quarterback, this Johnny Stark who played "under" in Cordell's modified T. There were a hundred and ninety pounds of him, rugged and blond. He was, moreover, a very agile young man who could thread

In the Crucial State Game, Quarterback Johnny

Zoller was tackled as he caught it

TO GLORY

A. HUTTO

a needle with a football at fifty paces. Not that he used that talent so often. Coach Jack Digby's system heavily favored the running game.

The system had worked nicely. Buzz Borman would run until they slowed him down. Then Johnny Stark would pitch one or two with deadly accuracy, the defense would loosen up, and Borman would ramble again. It was elementary, but very effective. It had won eight ball games.

Today, however, there'd been one small fly in the soup. Nobody could catch the football. Seven passes in ten had been muffed. The result was inevitable. Less fearful of the overhead menace, Tech had closed in—and stopped Borman.

Faulty pass-snatching had afflicted the team to some extent all year. Johnny had been forced to pick his receivers with great care. But today muffing the ball was epidemic. All of them—Lemmon, Carley, even Zoller—really had butter on their fingers today.

But they'd have to hold one or two now, Johnny thought, or Cordell was beaten.

"We'll pass out of this," he told them

Stark is Tempted to Try for Some Personal Fame!

calmly. "Eighty-four should do the trick."

He saw the doubt in their faces. They hadn't been packing all their guns today. Maybe it was one of those things, a late season let-down. Johnny hoped it was no more than that.

HE TOOK the ball and faked to fullback Stan Jones, scampered back and turned. "Legs" Lemmon was the only man open. Legs hadn't caught one in three games—and very few this season. But it would have to be Lemmon now. Johnny turned it loose with a prayer.

The ball hit Lemmon's outstretched fingers—and slithered off to the ground.

Johnny hid his disappointment. But he couldn't shut out the flash of memory. He recalled the words of Jim Kelso, State's coach, under whom he'd played a year while in V12.

"Come to State, Johnny, and I'll show the country the greatest passing machine they ever saw," Kelso had said. "I've got the boys who can snag that ball and take it places. All I need is that arm of yours."

It was tempting. State was Big Time, and Jim Kelso was no empty boaster.

But after the war Johnny had come back to Cordell. He'd promised "Pop" Furman he'd be back. Pop was counting on him. He couldn't foresee, of course, that before September was gone, Pop Furman, mellow, kindly, frosty-haired old Pop, would be sternly ordered by his doctor to retire, and that austere young Jack Digby would take his place. Pop Furman, he'd always felt, would go on coaching forever.

"They can't hold the thing today, Johnny," "Fats" Harlow, center and captain, was saying glumly. "Maybe we can shake Buzz loose just once."

They tried it. Buzz Borman scooted for a tackle hole. Tech smothered him. The little man got up, his flat brown eyes baffled. It had been a rough day for Buzz.

Johnny took it himself. He got inside the end, waded over the backer and kept driving. He made seven yards. It wasn't enough. He kicked.

The red team hammered out a first down, killing time in the process. Then Bennett, their speedster, broke through, cut back on Zoller, and sprinted. Borman over-committed, went down under a savage block. Johnny shunted off a man and kept his feet. He went after Bennett with all stops open. He hauled the guy down on the Cordell forty.

The line braced and held three times. Bennett booted for the corner and missed. The ball came out to the twenty.

Johnny noted the clock. It was on its last minute. He gathered his men. Their faces were taut with something akin to panic.

"I've got a hunch old Eighty-eight will score," he said. "Get down there, Lon, and I'll chuck you one."

Zoller got down there. The big rangy wingback was an artist at shaking loose. Johnny ducked a charging tackle and whipped the ball. It settled into Zoller's hands. The wingback juggled it, and Johnny's heart stopped. Then Zoller tucked it in firmly, and the safety man hit him. They rolled out of bounds, stopping the clock.

It was on the Tech thirty-eight.

The stands were going slightly crazy. The Broncs huddled with re-born hope. They had twenty seconds.

And then a Cordell substitute came racing on the field.

Johnny looked. It was Dick Elred, a beanpole end who could do little but catch passes, but did that very expertly. Not bad. They could have used the guy much sooner.

Elred joined them. "Coach says," he announced, "to run Buzz on Thirty-seven X."

There was a moment's silence. Then Hank Dobie, huge left tackle, shrugged.

"What the devil," he said. "Johnny could pass it over."

"Easy, Hank," Fats Harlow said.

Buzz Borman said nothing. But his eyes brightened. The guy really loved to lug that football.

"It's a good spot for the deception," Johnny said. "Run it right, and we score." He had doubts, but he tucked them far back in his mind.

It was a complicated play, good for maybe once a game, if everything clicked. Johnny faked to Zoller. Buzz trailed the wingback, lazily. Johnny kept the ball and faded. Elred was going down like a greyhound. Carley was cutting in behind him. Zoller was racing into the left flat. The Tech defense was pulling over to cover the flock of eligible re-

ceivers. For the first time that day they were not watching Buzz Borman.

THEN Buzz made his move. He spun —and was suddenly running back to the right. Johnny fed him the ball and blocked a pursuing Tech lineman, and Borman was on his way.

He swept past the unprotected flank. One tackler lunged. Borman cut back, escaping the man with ridiculous ease. Two others tried to sandwich him. The little guy planted a hand on one helmet, swung his hips, and pulled out wide, still going full tilt. The safety man maneuvered warily. A purple jersey screened him for an instant. It was all Buzz Borman needed. He careened inside again, like an express train taking a sharp curve, and ran over the goal line. And the crowd went crazy.

Johnny kicked the point, just to stay in practise. Tech brought the kickoff twenty yards, and the ball game was over.

They hit the dressing room. "So those punks thought they'd stopped little Buzz!" Legs Lemmon sang out.

"That'll teach 'em," Mitch Carley said. "It can't be done."

Stan Jones beamed. "They'll stop that guy—when they let 'em carry guns on the field."

Buzz shook his head judicially. "They nearly did it today, pals."

"At that, you got fifty-nine yards," Elred said. "That puts you past the eleven-fifty mark for the season."

Mitch grinned. "Give us the dope, Einstein. How much does he need next week to beat the national record?"

Elred's brow furrowed. He was a hound for statistics. He mumbled figures, then said:

"If he gains eighty-seven yards against State, he'll break the record."

"A cinch," Mitch declared.

"I dunno," Buzz said. "I was rotten today. I'll have to do better'n that against State."

"You will," Lon Zoller drawled, "if we start catchin' Johnny's passes and loosen 'em up for you. Today we couldn't hold a bag of beans."

There was an awkward silence. Buzz reddened a little. Legs Lemmon glared at Zoller. "Me, I thought the little man managed right well. His run won the ball game if I remember."

"We'll all get goin' next week," Fats Harlow hastened to say. "We had to play a spotty game somewhere. Lucky we got it out of our system before we hit State."

"No need for apologies, Captain."

They turned. Jack Digby stood there, a tall, wiry man with cold gray eyes. He looked at them, unsmiling as always, yet a little fondly too, in his own cool manner.

"You didn't play a bad game," the coach told them. "You made some mistakes. Most teams do, as a rule. A ball club is good for about one perfect game a season. Maybe ours is about due, if we keep hustling out there." He turned to Jones. "Okay, boy, let's have a look at that knee."

It wasn't a bad little speech, Johnny thought. The tension in the room relaxed noticeably.

Yet Johnny worried. Zoller's remark had been reasonable enough, but untimely. It had stirred a slumbering dissension, a thing Johnny had hoped would sleep till the season was ended.

It all went back to the fact that four of them, besides himself, were ex-GI's who'd played here before the war under Pop Furman. These men, Zoller, Harlow, Dobie, and Tobe Kenlock, a guard, remembered the seasons when Johnny Stark had been climbing toward national fame as the tailback star on Pop's single and double wing formations. Now, for the second year of Jack Digby's regime, Johnny was buried under the T, and the glory spot was occupied by a sophomore scat runner named Borman.

Johnny accepted it without rancor. There'd been some hopes of playing pro football, of course, which he'd simply had to forget. You don't attract the pros' attention by tossing half a dozen passes a week with a freshwater college team. But that was all right, too. Strictly his own funeral. Let little Buzz grab the headlines so long as the ball club was clicking.

BUT his old mates felt a smoldering resentment. Thus far, at Johnny's insistence, with Fats' support, they'd kept it under cover. They'd submerged personal feelings and played football, and it had been a fine year. It would be too bad to spoil it all with a dismal finish against State next Saturday.

State would be tough, very tough. State had three-deep power and a dazzling aerial game, built around the throwing arm of Gilly Gilstrap. Gilstrap's spot, Johnny sometimes remembered, was the one Jim Kelso had once picked for Johnny Stark.

He read the news accounts of the Tech game and found them interesting. Borman, he learned, had won the thing almost single handed. Borman's final run had been the thrill of the decade. Borman was the greatest back in Cordell history—undoubtedly all-American material.

Hank Dobie was burned up. "All-American—fooey!"

Johnny smiled.

"He's a sweet runner, Hank. A nice guy to have around."

The big freckled man snorted. "So he's a sweet runner—and what else!" Hank sobered. "Look, Johnny, let's be honest. This ball club has been playin' miles over their heads all year, and you know it. We're supposed to be bearcats, and what have we got—one break-away runner, a middlin' tough line, and no reserves. We've come within a gnat's whisker of losin' two-three times. But we've squeaked through. And why? Because you've lifted us clear out of our class. You handle that ball like a magician; you never call a wrong play; you coddle those bum pass receivers until they almost look good. You're the heart and brain of this ball club, but who knows it? Digby could wise up those reporters a little if he wanted to. But Borman's his pet article."

"Forget it," Johnny advised. "What bothers me in these papers is that stuff about Borman needing only eighty-seven yards to nab a national record. Those State men will be loaded for the guy. What Tech did to him will be polite in comparison."

He had reason to worry about it even more after the first scrimmage. Stan Jones slammed through the line, and two men in the secondary hit him at once. The fullback didn't get up, and a glance at his twisted knee was enough to show Jones wouldn't be playing any more this season.

It was a serious loss, Johnny knew. Cordell had suffered a string of injuries to its fullbacks, and the next man in line, Bobby Flack, was definitely mediocre. It meant less running power and more concentration on Buzz Borman.

The team felt it, too. They'd played under pressure, week after week, and now, with the hardest game of all just ahead, the breaks had already started going against them. Nerves became edgy. Tempers flared easily. On one occasion, Tobe Kenlock and Monte Hirsch, his tackle mate, spatted over a missed assignment. Another time, Zoller and Borman traded harsh words over a mixup in ball handling. Small things, but bad omens.

Then the next day a thing occurred which helped none to improve matters. Legs Lemmon had just caught his second pass in scrimmage.

"Nice snagging, kid," Fats said.

"Tell your friend Stark," Legs said. "Maybe he'll throw me one in a game, for a change."

"In a game, chum, it's different," Hank Dobie growled. "Or maybe you forgot how many you dropped."

Lemmon had dropped too many, which was why Johnny had practically quit chunking to him. But it certainly did no good to remind him of it now, Johnny thought regretfully.

It was a bad week. Digby worked hard with them, and the men labored, but when it was over Johnny knew they weren't ready. The old jealousies were stirring at last. Morale, so high up to now, was sinking fast. It would take a miracle, he feared, to restore it.

Johnny wondered if he believed in miracles.

That night Hank and Lon came to see him. They looked at each other. "We've been thinkin', Johnny," Lon blurted. "We know *you're* the all-American on this team. You're the best dang passer in the country, you never make a mistake out there, and you can kick and run with the best. Am I right?"

JOHNNY stared at him a moment, then shook his head.

"You're crazy," Johnny said.

"You can't fool us," Hank put in. "We know what this means to you, Johnny. You've planned for years to go to medical school. That takes dough, lots of it. Your GI tuition runs out in June, and you're flat. You got one way to collect several thousand bucks in a hurry—pro football. And if the pros knew how good you are, they'd grab you quick, and pay plenty of dough."

"I'll get it some other way," Johnny said.

"In a pig's eye, you will. What you need is some headlines to wave in front of those guys. And you're not gettin' 'em because all these hick sports writers can do is think up adjectives for Borman."

"Let's don't go into that," Johnny insisted.

"We've sorta gone into it already," Zoller said. "I've been telephonin' some friends back in Dallas. Pullin' a few wires, you might say. Ken Wallace, the A. P. writer, is comin' out to cover that State game tomorrow."

"Well, he covers it," Johnny said. "So what?"

"So you do your stuff, very fancy, and he writes it up for the big papers. But here's the real payoff—this Wallace is a special friend of Curly Hix who coaches the Cubs, professional champs. And Curly has told him to be lookin' around down here for a passer. If Ken says you're the goods, Curly will listen. Don't smile. This Wallace carries weight. I dunno why I hadn't thought of him sooner."

Johnny was silent. There was no denying it—he'd counted mighty big at one time on landing a contract with the pros. And this thing had possibilities, remote perhaps, but possible.

His eyes narrowed. "Do the rest of 'em know about this?"

Hank shook his head. "Now look, kid, the more you toss that thing around, the quicker we sew up the ball game."

"I'll hook every one you throw me, pal, or you can bust my nose when it's over," Lon said solemnly.

Johnny smiled drily. "You mugs are swell people. But—"

He was about to say, "the ball game's gotta come first," but he didn't finish. He was looking at the hall door, which he was sure had been shut.

It was open now. And in it stood Legs Lemmon, wearing a tight little smile.

"Come in," Johnny said easily.

Legs didn't come in. "I was looking for a bull session," he purred. "Looks like I stumbled in on a private party." He leered faintly. "Pardon the intrusion, gents. Pray continue your confidential talk." He closed the door firmly behind him.

Hank sprang up. "That snoop! He followed us!"

Johnny caught his arm. "Leave him be. Ignore it."

But he wondered how much Legs had heard. How would he interpret it? What would he pass on to the others?

They were questions which kept Johnny awake a long time that night. If Lemmon had heard, and if he chose, he could make it sound bad—a plot to shove Johnny Stark into the spotlight, and to heck with the ball club. Absurd, of course, easy to disprove. Except that the college might prefer to believe the worst.

He reviewed again the strategy he'd planned. Maybe he should change it now. But he knew that wasn't the answer. Tomorrow he'd either get the jump on disaster, or he'd probably find himself the most heartily hated man on the Cordell campus. . . .

It was the day. Bright, crisp, laden with the tang of football. The little stadium, bursting at the seams, buzzed with opinion, which was largely unanimous. State would be too strong. State had manpower, speed, aerial might. Cordell had only Borman. But it would be something to watch, a dramatic duel—little wizard Borman against the combined power and skill of State's undefeated machine.

Johnny Stark waited for the kickoff, his brain a jumble of things: the grim quietness back in the locker room; the oddly intent glances of his team mates, which told him Legs had talked; Jack Digby's final words:

"I'm leaving a lot of it up to your judgment, Johnny. We won't win this one by the book." And behind it all, Johnny had an awareness of the Wallace guy, up in the press coop.

Then a wave of golden jerseys was rolling toward him, washing away all the vagrant thoughts.

A LIGHT wind nudged the ball, and Buzz misjudged it. He went back and took it over his shoulder. He turned, very calmly, eluded one ambitious tackler, swerved and ran right past another. He wriggled into a field of gold jerseys. They smacked him down on the thirty-two.

Johnny's glance at the State defense took in a lot of things. A big, agile line, anchored by giants like Borczyki, Chrismon, Hovik. Fearsome Stomp Stommer and Al Janis backing up. Swift Dan

Heep at a half; tall, cotton-haired Gilly Gilstrap at safety. An imposing array of heft and talent.

He also saw them unconsciously eyeing Buzz Borman. Like wolves waiting for a lamb, and he called the play.

He took the ball and performed sleight-of-hand. Two men tackled the empty-handed Borman. Zoller, who had the ball, swept past the end. His long stride ate up ground. They finally swarmed him off the field, but he'd gained fourteen yards.

Johnny noted the tight State secondary, and his heart raced a little. Now was the time! Surprise was the essence of the thing. Surprise and timing and deception, and a little luck.

Fats gave him the ball, and his hands moved like twin triggers. Twenty thousand people searched for the ball, their eyes following Borman, then Flack. Then all at once, they saw Johnny Stark standing back there, arm upraised, and Lon Zoller sprinting into the open, past the safety man.

Johnny chucked it, with plenty of snap. The wind clutched at the flying leather. Lon slowed his stride a fraction. He pulled the ball into strong hands and got away from there in a hurry. Gilstrap pursued him with frantic haste. He hit Zoller on the two-yard line, and pitched him across the double stripe.

For ten full seconds the crowd couldn't believe it. Then they went collectively crazy.

The purple team gathered, a little awed themselves. The line held, and Johnny kicked with deliberate care. The ball split the uprights.

State was annoyed, but unworried. By a fluke they were behind 7 to 0, but they'd remedy that situation at once.

They brought the kickoff to the thirty-five and went to work. "Stomp" Stommer, a black-thatched terror at full, ripped the purple line for five yards. Gilstrap pitched neatly to Hovik, and it was a first down. Gilstrap whisked off tackle for six.

It was a power offense, Johnny saw, moving off the single wing, with precision passes to give it spark and punch. It would be very hard to stop.

Dan Heep took a handoff and started wide. Tobe Kenlock broke through. Heep cut back neatly, pivoted to avoid Harlow's charge, and simply dropped the ball. Fats promptly fell on it.

It was a sheer gift, Johnny knew. A wonderful break they couldn't afford to pass by without profit.

He called Flack's number. There was a nice hole. Flack slow-footed through it for three yards. Johnny did some cute ball handling, and the State backers pounced on Borman. Johnny, however, had the ball. He picked up eight before they stopped him.

He ran Buzz, for the first time. And for the first time that year, Buzz juggled the thing an instant. He slipped through a rapidly-closing hole. Stommer grabbed an ankle, lost it. Buzz stumbled a few steps, and Heep rode him down. It was good for seven.

Legs gave Johnny a narrow look. "I was beginning to think you were saving him for the *next* game."

Johnny said nothing. He was reading the scowls of the State men. That once, they'd forgotten Borman. They wouldn't forget again!

He backed up for a pass, and State covered Zoller like a blanket. Mitch Carley took the short throw, unhindered, and ran five more to the State twenty.

Flack and Borman criss-crossed. Flack took it and eked out three. Johnny faked to Buzz, kept it and ran wide for four.

"We got a *real* runnin' back, you know," Monte Hirsch murmured. "We might use him now and then."

"We will," Johnny said cheerily. "Eighty-eight now."

State expected a run. Johnny came out with the ball, as if to run. Then Gilstrap and Heep saw Borman coming, cutting out. So—a pass to Borman! They attached themselves to him.

Johnny threw. Zoller emerged from nowhere. He caught the pass in the end zone, and not a gold jersey was within twenty feet of him.

HANK DOBIE grinned hugely. "You're doin' a job, Johnny. You're really in form today."

"And on the right day too, eh, pal," Mitch Carley said, narrow-eyed.

Johnny felt the glances of the younger players, half admiring, half distrustful. It didn't make much sense. But they were thinking that while he gave them scores, he was also cutting himself a nice slice of glory, and maybe some play-for-pay money.

He kicked the point. He hadn't missed one since the third game.

The Cordell crowd was nearly tearing up the place. Five minutes, and already their beloved Broncs were ahead 14 to 0! That Stark was a nifty passer, at that. And wait till they turned Borman loose on those big bums! It was going to be a rout!

It was going to be tough, Johnny knew. But they should win now, if they got in there and played plenty of football. His plan had worked, incredibly well. State had come on the field obsessed with one idea—stop Borman. It had led them into a trap. Johnny had used the man as a decoy on nearly every play. Heretofore, he'd opened up the passes only after Borman was halted. Today he'd reversed the procedure. He'd struck through the air against a land defense, and Cordell had two touchdowns.

But the party was about over. His team would have to take it from here, and unless State folded from shock and surprise, it would still be a rough afternoon.

State didn't fold. They were enraged, determined—and brutally efficient. They took the ball and roared up the field. Stommer plunged, and Heep ran, and Gilstrap pitched. In eight plays they were on the Cordell six, first down.

And there fortune again smiled on the Broncs. Gilstrap dropped back and tossed one, and while Heep stood at the corner waiting for it, Zoller swept in front of him, picked the ball off on a dead run, and kept going. He went thirty yards before Gilstrap's desperate leap pulled him down.

Hit 'em hard and quick now, Johnny thought. He called a pass, and he knew, the moment he turned, he'd pushed his luck a little too far. Every man covered, his protection crumbling. He tried to run it out, and they smothered him for a loss.

The team came back, and he sensed the growing suspicion among them. Stark was playing a game today, but he was playing it for Stark.

Johnny's eyes hardened. He'd teamed with these guys two seasons, he reflected bitterly, and they didn't believe in him any more than that. It wasn't a nice feeling.

Carley was mumbling, "In case you forgot, pal, there's a little matter of eighty-seven yards—all Buzz needs to break a record."

"And I think it's time he had a chance to get started," Hirsch said.

"Take care of your muscle work, chums," Hank growled. "Johnny'll do the thinkin' in the ball game."

The old antagonism was among them now, a live, menacing thing.

"Let's go, Buzz, with Twenty-seven," Johnny said.

Actually, it was a thing he'd held in reserve. It was always possible the little guy might break away, even against the sharpest vigilance. He'd done it before.

Buzz took the lateral, essayed a cutback, changed his mind and swung out wide. He flanked the end, hesitated, tried to cut inside on Heep. He didn't succeed. It was a three-yard gain.

It wasn't good, Johnny knew, for Borman. Twice now it hadn't been good. The kid seemed to lack his usual faultless instinct for timing and footwork. A fearful doubt entered Johnny's mind.

He kicked out on the State forty. And the big gold team opened up the works. They tore great holes in the line and used a pass here and there, and in three minutes they scored. Heep carried from the five and swept a crumbled end for the touchdown. Stommer kicked with dispatch, and it was 14 to 7.

The Broncs went back, a little sobered by the fury of that attack. Johnny took the short kickoff to the thirty-eight, and for a while they clicked. Flack stepped off five. Borman darted into the line for a first down. Zoller went outside for eight, and Johnny gave it to Buzz again.

ZOLLER folded the end, and Buzz cut sharply. For a moment it looked as if he'd ramble for twenty or more. Then he slowed to veer away from a tackler, and Janis crashed him from behind.

So it was true, Johnny thought. Buzz had deserted his natural style, which was one of fluid, continuous motion. Today he was trying to be a stop-and-go runner. He was tense, overanxious—to get those eighty-seven yards!

Johnny ran him three times, hoping that action might loosen him up. But State was having a say about that. They pounced on him like hungry dogs after meat. He didn't get an inch. Johnny punted over the goal line.

And State proceeded to drive eighty yards for a touchdown. They used only seven plays, and on the last one Hovik took Gilstrap's pass and stepped over for the score. Stommer kicked, and it was

wide by inches. Cordell still had a slim 14 to 13 lead.

A minute before the half they still held it, only by the sheerest of luck. They'd got nowhere with the ball, and State had threatened constantly. Twice Gilstrap had barely over-thrown Hovik when the big end was in a clear field.

Then, with only seconds left, State scored again. Gilstrap, standing on his own forty, heaved one, and Heep bounced it on his fingertips and fell with it in the end zone. They booted the point, and Cordell was behind 20 to 14.

Cordell went in, weary and battered and a little dazed. Worse than that, they were no longer a team. They were torn apart by distrust and resentment—two factions, the younger and the older, silently accusing each other.

It was a crazy, senseless thing, Johnny thought. And the craziest part of all—he was to blame.

He felt a dull anger rising in him. He'd tossed everything into that opening gamble, feeling their only hope was to get the jump on a superior foe. That, he'd thought, would surely inspire them, possibly upset the enemy. And if it hadn't worked that way, it certainly wasn't his fault. So why should he care!

But he knew he did care. He'd rather have back their confidence, win this ball game, than to sign the fattest contract in pro football. If he could tell them that, make them understand! But the words, he feared, would sound pretty silly.

They rested in glum silence. Then Jack Digby, oddly uncertain, made a little speech about keeping the old fight, and they'd get a break. It didn't help much, Johnny thought.

They went back out. They kicked off, and State started rolling. They advanced inside the thirty, and the Broncs slowed them a little. Then Stommer crashed at center for a needed two yards, and Fats hit him explosively. The ball went over.

Borman carried, then Flack, and they got about two apiece.

"Those babies are playing practically an eight-man line," Johnny said. "Let's give 'em a lesson." He called a pass.

They stared at him. A pass here was against Digby's standing order. That Johnny knew. But he also knew that if they got out of this hole, they'd have to do something unusual.

They broke slowly, reluctantly. And it must have given the States a hunch. Every receiver was covered—except Legs Lemmon. Johnny had no time for hesitation. He sailed it. Lemmon reached, tipped the ball—into Gilstrap's hands. Gilstrap took it gratefully and ran. Carley cut him down at midfield.

"Never mind, Johnny," Hank said consolingly. "Good as a punt."

Johnny wasn't listening. He was looking at the squatty youngster running out. Bill Bean, his understudy. He'd almost forgotten the guy was on the squad, he played that little. But there he was, which meant Johnny Stark was leaving the ball game!

At the bench, Digby said quietly:

"I let you run your game today, Johnny. But you know our football. We don't throw it from that zone. You did it once before. Twice in a day is too many."

It didn't ring true. Johnny looked into the coach's eyes, and he knew. The pass was an excuse. Digby had been putting this and that together. And he'd suddenly decided the team wasn't going to work for Johnny Stark any more. Perhaps the man was right.

STATE was moving again. They sliced the tackles and swept the ends. Down inside the ten, Cordell resisted stubbornly, but Stommer took it from the two and catapulted over. The conversion bounced off the crossbar, and it was 26 to 14.

Buzz took the kickoff, and for one brief flash it looked like old times. The little man streaked and slid off half a dozen tacklers before they dumped him on the forty. But that was all. Borman slipped through for five, but Zoller was thrown without gain, and then on a lateral Buzz was chased down and smothered.

Flack kicked, and the State machine went to work. Methodically, without haste, they swept goalward again. They were really a great team, Johnny had to admit, full of beautiful, balanced power. The team, he remembered, he'd been entreated to join. For a moment, he pictured what it might have been, playing with them, pitching passes to the great Hovik and Heep and others of almost equal skill. The big time crowds, the headlines.

Then the picture faded, because he knew there was just one thing he really

wanted, to get out there with those guys in sweat-faded purple, taking the lumps just for the right to be one of them again.

It came to him suddenly that the Wallace guy, up in the press box, must be quite disappointed. He hadn't seen anything today from Stark but a couple of passes that might have been lucky.

And oddly enough, Johnny couldn't seem to care. One thing alone mattered, terribly. This was his last time in a Cordell uniform, and he'd always be remembered as the guy who threw down his team in the big game, just to star himself. It wasn't fair, of course, but it would go down in the books that way.

State slashed on, to the twenty, the ten. And then the purple team stopped them. They kicked out, and it started all over.

It was the fourth quarter. Three times more, State had menaced the goal line. And each time the tattered ranks of Cordell had somehow turned them back. State had the ball again, at midfield.

And then it happened. Gilstrap passed neatly to the center alley, and Fats intercepted, clamped big paws on the ball and lumbered ten yards before they wrestled him down.

Digby was on his feet. "All right, Stark!"

Johnny already had his helmet. He'd known somehow before the man spoke. He was to have one more chance.

He went into the huddle, and he could feel the old enmity and doubt, and maybe, he wasn't sure, a faint stir of hope.

He called the play. It was Borman on a left end sweep. Buzz got outside and cut upfield. He cut the wrong way, and Stommer flattened him.

But Johnny said:

"Four big yards. We're moving now."

He gave it to Flack. No gain. He faked to Zoller and spun into the weak side. They climbed him, but he kept his feet and dug out the yards. They brought out the chain. It was first down.

They kept going, through hard opposition. They reached State's fifteen, and they hadn't used a pass. State closed in grimly. It didn't make sense. They should have stopped this ragged outfit long ago.

Then Johnny passed. It was a short flip to Carley in the flat, and the end raced for the corner. Gilstrap hit him on the five.

"Take it over, Buzz, inside left tackle," Johnny said.

The line opened, and Borman went through. They hit him, Stommer head on, Borczyki from the side. The ball slid from Buzz's arms. Janis of State leaped. He covered it on the two-yard line.

Buzz got up, his face pale under the tan. "It happens now and then, kid," Johnny said. "Let's run this thing back on those slobs." Buzz nodded dumbly, and there was something grim and deeply grateful in his eyes.

They were back in a double safety. Gilstrap kicked. It boomed for the sideline. Johnny took it, inches inside the field. He turned, and Buzz was right behind him. He shoved the ball, whirled into Hovik, cut the man down like a reed.

Buzz went by like light. He made a wide swing, his swift feet eating up the yards. Tacklers wedged him toward the sideline. Hank threw himself into them. Borman shied away from the threshing mass, never losing stride or speed. He picked up a convoy of three purple jerseys and followed them across the goal line.

Then, while the crowd yelled itself hoarse, Johnny toed the ball, and it was 26 to 21, and Cordell was back in the ball game.

But minutes later, State was down on the Cordell twenty, and still coming. Then on a double reverse, Heep came speeding into the open. Johnny drove into him, and the ball plopped free. It became a magnet, drawing a swirl of diving bodies. When they dug to the bottom of the heap, Mitch Carley was draped over the ball, grinning widely.

"We got four minutes," Johnny said. "We better toss this thing a bit."

HE PASSED to Zoller, just as Borczyki hit him. He got up with blood on his jaw and saw they'd made twelve. He threw three times, short ones that couldn't be intercepted. Carley dropped one and got one. Zoller snagged the other, and they were on the forty.

Johnny fingered a lump on his cheek. Borczyki and Chrismon had been getting rugged. "It might be a good time for old Thirty-seven X," he said.

They looked at him, at the bruises and the calm blue eyes, with the look of men who have just made a startling discovery. They had pulled more than one out of

the fire this year, and they'd thought it was their own greatness, but they were seeing the truth now. They'd met better teams and beaten them, because they had Johnny Stark, and that made the difference.

They ran the play, the complicated 37-X which had whipped Tech. But the Hovik guy was too smart. He was waiting, and he slapped down Borman for a yard loss.

"I'll pass one to Zoller," Johnny said. He did it, a crisp little toss. Zoller was tackled as he caught it. He got up, walked a step, and fell down.

Johnny hurried to him, and the big wingback smiled ruefully. "A devil of a time to bust an ankle."

Johnny looked at the grotesque angle of his shoe. "Tough, kid," he said. "But you already played enough football today for one man." He didn't want the team to know the fear he felt. He'd counted on Zoller for the payoff.

They carried him off, and a sub came in. They regathered, feeling the tremendous loss. And suddenly, Legs Lemmon said:

"I ain't ever been worth much out here, and I'll never be fit to hold a light for that guy. But if you have to pitch me one, Stark, I'll catch it, or you can pick up the pieces and bury 'em."

"We'll run Eighty-Four," Johnny just said.

Nobody was entirely open, but Legs was tall, and Johnny threw it to him. Janis hit him immediately, a vicious tackle, but Legs held the ball. They were on the State thirty-three.

State sent in a big fresh tackle to help Borczyki rush the passer. In the time out, Johnny thought fast. Cordell had less than a minute, about three plays. State would be guarding against their one danger—a long pass. They'd be spread out deep.

He called them together. "You used to be a passer, Flack," he said. "You're gonna chuck one now." He outlined the play, which was not on the books, and said to Buzz, "I dunno how much you need to bust that record. Maybe thirty or so. But this won't count—you won't be running from scrimmage."

"The devil with the record!" the little guy said, almost fiercely. He looked up. "And another thing—before they blow that whistle. Maybe we'll make this, maybe not. Either way, it's been a great year, and I'll always be proud I was on a team with Johnny Stark."

"That goes for me, too," Monte Hirsch said.

"And me," Mitch Carley growled.

Johnny swallowed a lump. "We'll make it," he said. "A team like this can't miss."

He went into the slot and called numbers. Flack, now on the wing, came around in motion. Johnny flipped him the ball and said a prayer. It was in their hands now.

Flack ran wide, getting nowhere behind a screen of blockers. Buzz Borman, doing a nice piece of acting, was floundering in the secondary, apparently supposed to block and apparently confused. Then suddenly he flashed into action. Flack stopped and threw the ball. It was just a dinky little pass. But it settled sweetly into Buzz's fingers, and the little man was running into an open field.

Heep took a cut at him. Buzz turned abruptly, and Heep fell on his face. Buzz raced Gilstrap for the corner. They met at the two-yard line, and Buzz, flinging himself sidewise, careened like a stumbling colt, into the end zone, to make the score 27 to 26.

Johnny kicked the unnecessary point, and they went back and stopped two frantic State passes, and it was over.

They beat their way through the hysterical mob and gained the haven of the dressing room. There at the door, a tall, lean man with sharp brown eyes took Johnny's hand.

"Wallace, of the A.P.," he introduced himself. "This is unofficial, kid, but you can count on it. Curly Hix is going to hear from me. His old quarterback is up in years. He needs a young man, a smart one, to run his T, and—"

"If I spot one, I'll let you know," Johnny said with a grin.

It was a bum crack. But it was fine to be able to kid a little, and to know that down the years, wherever Cordell men gathered, they could speak with pride of what Johnny Stark, and his team, had done today.

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GENERAL of the GRIDIRON

An off-the-cuff chat with a truly great football mentor — Lou Little!

by
NAT BENSON

WHEN Reynolds Benson and his cohorts brought Lou Little to Columbia way back in 1929, they felt, and hoped, they were getting a pretty good football coach. But they didn't realize then that they were getting a great man as well.

The Solons of Columbia must have sensed something epic in Lou at his "inaugural" Columbia dinner when that dynamically vigorous muscle man, with the professorial face, the fire-chief's voice and the gymnast's build, rose to reply to the many nice things that had

International News Photo

Left to right—Venny Yablonski, Bill Swiacki, Gene Rossides and Coach Lou Little

been said about and predicted for him.

Lou was ahead of the game that night just as he is now after 85 victories in 18 years. Right from the start Lou meant business with a big "B." He knew then that the Lion's meadow was the "big-time," for at that inaugural dinner, at the end of a compelling and fiery speech he struck the head table's top with a big powerful well-formed hand and said vehemently:

"Gentlemen, I did not come here to *fail!*"

That was a pretty big speech even from a man as vital as Lou. But down the years he really made it stick.

Columbia and the bedraggled Lion were in the doldrums when Lou arrived in 1929. Under the presidency of the late great "Nicholas Miraculous" Butler and before his day, Columbia had done its best to disprove the truth of that cynical wise-crack that "a university is a big football stadium with a few outlying colleges attached."

Football had been frowned upon at Columbia as something that got in the way of honest study, that messed up the curriculum and automatically detracted from a great academy of learning's scholastic standards.

Lou Little was smart enough to realize all of these cogent facts, even in the beginning. He grasped the cardinal truth that football was meant to have its place in the Columbia curriculum—and that its place was a relatively humble one, especially in view of the Lion's dismal record in the days of the pre-Little era.

Solved with Eclat

But he solved the problem with a glitter and a gusto characteristic of the man. Lou Little has always been a force, a terrific driving combination of well-directed, perfectly-integrated mental and physical power.

Even in a brief talk with him you come away with the feeling of having had contact with a volcano that is under perfect control. He is one of the very very few people in the world who seems to exude mental as well as physical zing.

He looks, acts and talks like a fast-thinking, straight-talking professor of psychology. He never wastes a syllable or even a movement. Words come easily to Lou. He can get his best ideas across with the greatest of ease.

He gives off strength and leadership the way a dynamo gives off power. That's why so many scores of "his boys," who have worked and slaved and played with him for years, come back to him for advice—advice that really matters about things that matter—about their careers or marriages, their business prospects, their hopes and, what counts most, about their troubles.

Lou never mentions a word about this curious post-graduate nationwide "course" in making the grade which he has carried on for years without any thought of reward. But Lou's friend and confidant, Bob Harron, chief of Columbia's publicity bureau, is mighty impressive on how much more Lou Little does *off* the gridiron, famous though his exploits *on* the grid may be.

Lou was born in Leominster, Massachusetts, about 55 years ago. He was born Luigi Piccarelli, which is actually the equivalent of the more pronounceable "Lou Little." He inherited a vigorous but by no means hulking build from parents who were healthy and well-balanced.

He grew up in normal surroundings, in a well-organized home of decent middle-class comfort, with nothing to waste and nothing to need. One of his brothers is in the Merchant Marine, another is a well-to-do manufacturer—and Lou has not done too badly for himself!

Despite his tireless physical drive and his genuine mental domination of it, which early spelled "speed plus control," he was immensely popular with his fellow athletes at school.

He first distinguished himself as a hard tackler and notable "all-arounder" when he played on and later captained the Leominster High School team around 1910. He went from Leominster to Worcester Academy for a year, then to the University of Vermont, where he played and captained the U. of V. team in his sophomore year.

At the end of that football year, 1916, he went to the University of Pennsylvania, where he soon became known as one of the finest tacklers in the game.

The Greatest Thrill

"I think the greatest thrill I ever had in football, as a player at least," he says, "was the afternoon in 1916 when Penn's famous linecoach, Dr. Charles Wharton, read out my name as a starting tackle.

"That somehow seemed a stamp to me

—the final proof that at last I'd really made the grade in big-time college football. Before that, I hadn't been too sure of how I rated."

"On January 1, 1917, our Penn team played Oregon in the Tournament of Roses game, or the Rose Bowl, as it later was called. We lost a tough one to a big, powerful Oregon team, 13 to 10.

"So I guess that's why the sweetest moment of my life came 17 years later when my own Columbia Lions of 1933 beat Stanford 7 to 0 in the famous Rose Bowl game of January 1st, 1934. That victory made the Lion's "KF-79" play nationally famous. To me it was the perfect come-back remembering how Oregon had beaten Penn in 1917.

"As a player I think the most thrilling as well as the fiercest game I was ever in was the 1920 game that Penn lost to Dartmouth 20 to 19. For rugged play and aggressive battling I never played in or saw its equal. It must have been quite a game for the spectators, too.

"Each team made three touchdowns. First one team would make a score, then the other. It was a ding-dong struggle of the toughest kind. For sheer excitement I think I'd have to jump 27 years ahead to our 21 to 20 triumph over Army last year.

"I must say I never did see such football as Bill Swiaski played, grabbing off those forward passes that Gene Rossides threw. I felt that day above all days that a great Columbia team had reached the very peak of perfection. And I'd say I think we won on the strength of the greatest asset a team or a player can have —condition."

Lou's own career as a player was interrupted by World War I. He enlisted in the spring of 1917 as a buck private in the 54th Infantry of the regular 6th Army Division. His company speedily made itself noted for alertness in drill and Lou rose to a captaincy, where he was pointed out as the last word in snappy drillmasters.

His division saw a good deal of action overseas in the Meuse-Argonne sector in Alsace Lorraine and in the Vosges Mountains. After the Armistice he was on normal army duty until his return to the United States in June, 1919.

In the fall of '19 he went back to Penn, where he played on a great team which included football's current national Commissioner Bert Bell, Lud Wray, later Penn's coach, and Heinie Miller. Their coach was Bob Folwell.

"Lou graduated in the spring of 1920," his friend Bob Harron told us. "He sold stocks and bonds, coached and played a little pro football and first wanted to study medicine. Then he set his heart on becoming a dentist but he was outlucked there by an old quirk of fate.

"He discovered that at that time all standard dental equipment was made for right handers—and since Lou is a genuine southpaw he found himself getting badly snarled up in the equipment. So he naturally had to give up the idea of ever becoming a big-time molar-mauler."

In 1924 he was invited to go to Georgetown as football coach and, in his first year, he showed himself to be such a capable organizer in improving schedules and getting everything connected with athletics to function smoothly that he was made Georgetown's Director of Athletics in 1925.

By 1929 his football team ranked at the top of the roll, offensively and defensively. The time was getting ripe for the able man to meet the big-time situation that literally shouted for him to take over.

Light-Blue Doldrums

Football had been banned at Columbia from 1906 to 1915 and when it was resumed it was in only a small way with a very light schedule. The post-war years found Columbia laboring in the doldrums of football. Percy Haughton had died after only a short period of coaching there and Charlie Crowley, who had been Haughton's end coach, took over after Paul Withington finished out Haughton's last season.

Until 1929, lack of success had made the Lion pretty mangy. Then Reynolds Benson, who is at present assistant to Columbia's comptroller, began scouting around on the suggestion of other top executives, hunting for a coach who could give the student body some genuine zest for singing, "Roar, Lion, Roar!"

After considerable search they found Lou Little. He had made a fine name for himself at Georgetown, but he could go no further there and he had the all-important intelligence to understand that in any university worthy of the name, football ranked below academic studies.

He came up to Oxford-on-the-subway

in the spring of 1930. He had little to work with at first but Ralph Hewitt, the great drop-kicker and punter was shaping into the famous triple threat star he was destined to become under Lou's tutelage. But the Lions lost their first four games and by punishing scores.

Characteristically Lou, following the 52 to 0 shellacking that Columbia took from Dartmouth that year, when his hopefuls had been well and truly smeared, said nothing loud or bitter. But on the Monday following the game he had his say in crisp decisive tones.

"All right, fellows! We're starting today. We're getting ready *right now* for next season's game with Dartmouth. We start from here!"

Lou felt that there was no time like the morning after the Battle of Waterloo to begin straining and training for a soul-cleansing victory in the next meeting.

It was in the following year that Lou's coaching, Hewitt's great backfield play and the newly-inspired all-round teamplay for which Columbia was to win national renown, really began to turn the tide. They won 5 and lost 4 games.

In 1931, facing the same team which had trounced them 52 to 0, Columbia reversed the Dartmouth decision in a rousing 19 to 6 battle. That season was the first of four in which the Little Lions established a national reputation.

The great 1933 season saw them win 8 and lose 1. Lou's star was really in the ascendant. Asked what made him so great a coach, Bob Harron stressed the emphasis Lou places on condition for his players. A sane, hard-driving relentless enthusiasm, tempered with basic sanity and consideration for how much a player can stand. Lou loves to see a team keyed for combat but he never drives them over the edge.

When the Lions were visiting Princeton that epic year of 1933, Lou got alarmed as he watched his stalwarts tucking away a tempting luncheon at the Princeton Inn. He looked so unhappy that Harron asked him why he was bothered by the lusty appetites his warriors displayed.

"These fellows are too complacent, too smug, too sure of themselves. They're eating so much I'm sure they're too confident of whipping Princeton." Lou proved a true if gloomy prophet. That afternoon Princeton pounded the Lions 20 to 0 for the only defeat the great 1933 team suffered.

At the season's end Lou and his Lions were invited to the 1934 Rose Bowl game to face Stanford. Everyone expected that the Californian supermen would make a tasty meal of the Lions. Lou decided to give the scant 15 Columbians he took westward every possible break in conditioning.

He instituted rigid Spartan rule on the long train trip. He arranged for practise stops all the way out to the Coast. He even asked the boys not to mail a post card back east until the game was over. Instead of coming into Pasadena, where he knew his charges would be feted to the king's taste, he had them disembark at Tucson for a week of rugged conditioning that kept them on edge and made them descend on the Rose Bowl like a swarm of man-eaters on the eve of the big game.

Rose Bowl Miracle

Rain fell in torrents that Saturday night, 12 to 18 inches. The Rose Bowl field was flooded. The fire department began to pump it out and Lou was asked if they'd stay over a week and play on Jan. 8.

"No, we came out to play on New Year's Day—and we'll play that day!" thundered the Columbia mentor.

He sent an assistant coach down to report on the condition of the field and the coach reported it was nearly dry. Incredulous, Lou sent a second coach to verify the first report. This aide convinced him and he decided that the Lions would wear ordinary field cleats instead of mud cleats.

Cliff Montgomery, Little's great captain and field general, turned in a perfect game. Al Barabas scored the game's only touchdown after one of the two forward passes Columbia tried—the other was incomplete, the good throw, however, put the ball on the seventeen-yard line, whence Barabas scored on a naked reverse—the famed KF-79. Even with their great ground-gainer Bobby Grayson, California was held scoreless by Columbia's flawless stone wall defensive tactics.

Bill Corum, famed New York sports writer wrote of that memorable day, "No one of us who ever saw that battle in the mist and murk and rain will ever forget how the Lions, playing with 15

men to California's 35 and outweighed 17 pounds per man, won going away that foggy afternoon."

That victory marked one of Lou's great days. The other came 13 years later when his Lions again beat a mighty adversary, Army, 20 to 19 and won on condition as much as Swiacki's miraculous catching of Rossides' passes in that Homeric come-back of the second half.

How does Lou *do* it? How does he accomplish these miracles at long intervals and how does he keep his teams in such rare shape?

"Because he's such a terrific perfectionist," is Bob Harron's opinion, "the boys say he has eyes in the back of his head. He seems to see everything that every one of the twenty-two players does on the field and he goes into great detail in every explanation.

"Because he's so super-keen on condition he creates great second-half teams. He's a demon for work. Short furious runs, wind-sprints, strenuous calisthenics early in the season. All these factors count.

"Because the boys believe in him so sincerely, because they like him and trust his judgment. Because they've always realized he has their own best interests at heart. He'd always rather lose a game than risk a serious injury to any of his players."

Once the gallant Ralph Hewitt erupted from the player's bench with a heavily-taped injured ankle, literally berserk to get into a gruelling fray with Syracuse.

"Look here, Coach!" he pleaded. "I can play. I'm okay. Let me in there—the fellows need me!"

"You get back on those crutches!" roared Lou. "Don't you know no football game in the world was ever worth risking a permanent injury for?"

The same thing happened in the Lions' Rose Bowl Game when Tony Matal got knocked on the head with five minutes to go in the first half. Lou needed Matal desperately. He asked the Doctor how the slightly-groggy Matal looked.

The doc told Lou that in 999 cases out of 1000 an injury like Matal's wouldn't mean a thing, that Tony could go in and play. But Lou wasn't taking even that slim chance. He kept Matal out for the remainder of the game, although his absence might have meant a Lion defeat.

Faculty Friend

It could be honestly said the Columbia Faculty revere Lou for the same attitude toward academic studies. Lou raises hob with footballers whose grades are slipping, even from A to B. Only one of Lou's super-stars (and he shall be nameless) failed to graduate with degree standing from Columbia. Plenty of Lou's warriors get faculty work to do when they come back for post-graduate studies.

With those strong incisive features and that glittering pincenez set on that promontory nose, Lou looks like a professor. There is eloquent sureness in the way he expresses his most devious ideas. He can still "make with the words" in a big way, even though that almighty voice of his has literally worn itself down to a hoarse stage-whisper.

Mentally, Lou looks like the sort of "addition" any college faculty is proud to welcome. He's foxy enough to know that intelligent studious boys are easier to handle and make better footballers in the long run, however much superb physical co-ordination may count for.

That's why he's always dinning into his lads the responsibilities he wants them to assume toward their fellow-players, to the University, to good sportsmanship and to themselves. He never fails to drum into them the truism that football should and can be made into a proper integral part of a young man's college training and career.

Once queried on his greatest asset at Columbia, Lou promptly said, "The whole-hearted co-operation that I get on everything from everybody—faculty, alumni, executives, student body and athletes. No pressure and no interference from anyone.

"Even though the physical set-up here isn't the best, even though the annual player turnout isn't enough, even though later afternoon classes have always handicapped grid training, still the positive factors at Columbia have always outweighed the negative—and always will."

"You know," he went on, "perhaps a coach's greatest difficulty—at least the hardest one to overcome—is to have only limited material to work with, and have it demanded of you to lick bigger, stronger outfits. It's true that certain coaches can accomplish more with less

material than others can—and they're tops—no matter how many games they lose.

"Somewhere there ought to be an average struck between the material a coach has to work with and what he should be reasonably expected to accomplish. On the other hand, if a fellow has the men and the tools to do big things and then doesn't, he should have the good sense and decency to resign and admit the job's too big for him."

Conditions at Columbia over the years must have satisfied Lou, for his life's major decision was made when he decided to stay on with the Lions after the recent flattering and tempting offer from Yale. That must have been a hard one for anyone to turn down but the truth of the matter is likely that his roots had gone down too deep into the soil around 116th St. and Broadway.

Perhaps he felt too, that it was too late in life to begin all over again in a very different kind of background, where emphasis rests on certain formalities and social distinctions as it never did or could on the Lion's native heath. Lou's health is good now—an operation recently relieved him of a throat irritation but reduced that tremendous voice to a rugged whisper, temporarily at least.

Lou is probably the only coach who actually broke his neck to develop a team. One time, playing defensive wing, he ordered his line huskies to "hit him hard!"—"And harder!!"—and after a charge by the tenth successive two-hundred pounder, Lou took a bump that bowled him over and made him complain that night of a stiff neck.

The stiff neck turned out to be a badly-jarred vertebrae, which forced him to wear a neck support for quite a while and sleep sitting up. He's had his major share of such bumps, for some years earlier he hurt his hip pretty badly while scrimmaging.

Lou's "Best"

When asked to name the best players he ever had, Lou made a memorable reply that every coach should engrave over his stadium's entrance, for it is an immortal definition of the meaning of team play.

"To me *any* boy or player is outstanding when he gives 100 percent at all times—and even subordinates himself for the good of his team. Any sincere, conscientious worker on the field, any player with even average ability who is giving his best and thinking more of his team than himself—that fellow to me, sir, is an *outstanding* player—and I've had scores of 'em!"

Among the greatest players he ever saw Lou lists Jim Thorpe, Wilbur "Fats" Henry of W & J, Glenn Davis, Cliff Battles and "Red" Grange, the last named for his amazing agility, intuitive mobility and extraordinary change of pace.

Lou speaks warmly of Knute Rockne as a great man who went out of his way to encourage and hearten obscure workers in his own field—including Lou, to whom Knute gave a great lift by a few heartening words spoken to him as a young stranger at one of the first coaches' conventions he ever attended.

"Rock gave everybody, especially the little fellow, a real lift by building up his morale and making him feel better and, yes, a bigger man. He went to bat for me at Georgetown and seemed to consider it part of his job to encourage beginners in his own profession."

Fundamentals of the Game

Turning to football technique itself, Lou says, "I think the hardest thing in football is blocking and tackling effectively. They're the two fundamentals of the game. Any fellow who learns to do these things right will have his place in football.

"None of us enjoys learning fundamentals too much in anything. A good blocker in football naturally doesn't get the kudos and carry the glamour that a colorful running back does—but without blocking and tackling there isn't anybody who can get away for a run.

"Tackling's the great defensive weapon. Nowadays all boys relish offensive work better—it's in their natures, so you usually meet three boys who can run for every one who can block and tackle."

"Name the best teams I ever saw? Oh my, that's a tough one—let me see—I'd say Southern California's teams under Howard Jones in the late '20's—Rockne's last Notre Dame squad of 1930—the University of Pittsburgh in '16—and certainly the Army of '44-'45. Put in there, too, my Lions of '33 and '47."

"The game's a lot different now from 10 years ago. Today it's far more interesting, more unorthodox, more drama-

tic, more open. 10 years ago nobody'd pass on first or second down—now they do it all the time.

"The more open game has resulted in a better, faster offensive technique, with fast-breaking plays, more varied strategy, more thrilling forward passing—oh, it's a great game today—all the old stereotyped weaknesses are gone.

"Both professional and college football are well-played games. The top-flight college teams are on a par with the best pros. The 'edge' between them varies. And there's lots of room and crowds for both.

"College football gives the pro teams their best stars. Pro football develops them further, shapes them for coaching. It has increased football's national audience enormously. Properly guided and administered, pro football can fill a very important place in the community. And both pro and college football can do a lot to help one another.

"Pro football provides a good future for the college player of real ability. It's a huge help to a young fellow who wants to get into coaching and, with his pay from pro games, many a good player comes back to do post-grad college work and train further for his life's work.

"As a means to an end which is the extension of a young fellow's education, pro football is a splendid thing. Pro and college can do a grand job together for one another, for they don't interfere in any way.

"In spite of salaried players, I'd say a pro coach's difficulties are as great as those of a college mentor. Both have equally hard schedules, equally tough competitors to lick, equal difficulty in getting decent material.

"Football" concludes Lou, relaxing with a smile, "is a tough battle—but for my money there's nothing like it!"

A TOUCHDOWN FOR WILLY

(Concluded from page 37)

Morrison a couple of feet into the air, as he let the ball fly.

The ball wobbled ten yards, dropping into the hands of Chuck Prevost. Only Digger Higgins stood between Chuck and the goal line. Willy went over and salted Digger away. It was a hard, vicious block and Willy tried to shake off the cobwebs thickening in his head.

Prevost scored easily and Willy was not certain which side of the line he was crouching on when they lined up for the extra point conversion.

"Willy, you've been in our backfield all afternoon," Ace Morrison said. "We can't let you line up with us."

Willy took one step, and fell on his face.

They brought the water bucket to Willy, emptied the thing. Somebody held smelling salts under Willy's nose and he finally got to his feet.

Coach Boylan put his arm around Willy. "You were wonderful, Willy. Let somebody else play the last couple of minutes. I'm going to need you for that varsity tackle job."

"You're kidding!" Willy blurted out. "I wasn't so bad that you got to slice the baloney."

The roar came pouring out of the stands and Willy stood still a moment and let it sing inside of him.

They led Willy to the bench. "We had to do everything except call out the fire department to get you steamed up to play ball, Willy," Boylan said. "But it worked out. I got me a tackle."

"You're not sore about me getting you moved out of your bungalow?" asked Willy.

"How could I be sore, Willy. The house belonged to the man. Anyway, I had already arranged with the Alpha Kappas to live there. You simply pushed my plans up a bit."

Willy was silent a moment. Then: "There's one more thing, Coach. That's about Marge."

"Let's see the way you play tackle during the season," Boylan said. "Then we'll talk, Willy."

Willy grinned. "Marge will make a wonderful June bride," he said.

●

Just as Sims was about to be tackled, he yelled to

HIS EARS HAD HEARD

FOR a couple of seconds it looked as if "Red" Sauntry, of Lakeside, were going all the way. The green-jerseyed forward passing ace, neatly fooling the scattered Seabord defenders by fading as if to throw, had suddenly ducked around an inrushing end and sprinted into the clear toward the sideline and the home team goal line.

Caught off balance, all but one of the blue-clad Seaboard eleven were hopelessly out of the play. The big, swivel-hipped Sauntry poured on the coal as he went over the midfield stripe. It was late in the third quarter and a 10 to 7 Seaboard lead seemed about to turn into a deficit.

But Willis Sims, the Seaboard safety man and signal caller, had broken with the play and was moving up to crowd Sauntry over the sideline at about the forty-yard line. He looked little and frail as he edged carefully into the path of the 220-pound Lakeside triple threat man.

On the bench of the home team, gray-haired Seaboard coach, Ty Corliss, sometimes referred to in the sporting columns as the "Grand Old Man of Eastern Football," bit through the stem of his favorite pipe. Why, he wondered, didn't Sims give up a few more yards and let some of the other boys into the play. If he missed now, Sauntry would have a clear field. With a roar of warning Corliss leaped to his feet.

"Watch that end!" he shouted, but his voice was a faint unheard whisper

Quarterback Willy Sims Had a Special Talent

Al Morton and tossed him a long overhand lateral

THE GLORY

By SAM MERWIN, JR.

against the pandemonium from the sixty-two thousand screaming fanatics in the stadium.

Big Nick Judson, Lakeside's great pass-catching end, had come up into the play to take out the Seaboard safety man. Apparently late in noticing this new threat, Sims seemed to hesitate while the big wingman bore down on him. Corliss buried his face in his hands, unable to watch any more.

He looked up just in time to see the 165-pound Sims, with a quarter of a ton of racing bone and gristle almost on top of him, make a tentative, almost frightened stab toward the sidelines in front of the runner. Moving low to the ground, Nick Judson went for him with both legs driving.

"It's the ball game!" said Corliss with the grim fatalism born of the disappointments of forty coaching years.

BUT something went wrong with the play. The helpless looking Willy Sims suddenly went into reverse, moving back from the line. Judson veered, bumped him while off balance and Sims seemed to push him away as if he were a distasteful object—right into the path of the in-cutting Red Sauntry. Both Lakeside players went down in a crashing tangle of arms and legs while Sims looked on with a distressed air.

"Rotten luck, old fellow," came the safety man's clipped, rather high accents. "Such a nice run, too." He bent and helped the Green passer to his feet,

for Rattling Opposition During a Grid Tussle!

looking absurdly small in such behemothal company. He dusted him off carefully and, as Sauntry shrugged himself angrily loose, gave the Lakeside ace a friendly whack on his moleskins which sounded like a pistol shot all over the now-silent stadium.

"You so-and-so, I'll break you in two!" howled the doubly outraged Green star. He made a threatening gesture, and Sims wagged a gently reproving finger at him and grinned. The officials arrived, panting, just in time to prevent mayhem. The crowd made a sound between a gasp and a guffaw.

"I'll bet the little dickens had that play figured all the way," said burly, sandy-haired Sherman Wheate from beside the Blue coach on the bench. A syndicated sports columnist for thirty-five years, he had long been a close friend of Ty Corliss, had hunted and fished with him for decades during the off-season.

"I wish he'd figure them according to the book," muttered the Grand Old Man, shaking his head as Sauntry, badly rattled, threw his second incomplete pass in succession. He turned to a rugged-looking lad on the bench.

"Go in there for Sims on fourth down, Bayliss," he said. "Hang onto that ball when you get it. Now warm up."

Sauntry over-threw a third receiver by a full ten yards and the sub went streaking in. Sims came trotting off with a nonchalant air and tossed his helmet to one of the assistant managers. The gesture revealed him to be a dark, intelligent, homely youth with large alert features and a sweaty crown of black curly hair. Corliss called him over.

"You should have given with that play and let Morton get in on the tackle," he told his quarterback.

"By the time Morton got in on that play Sauntry would have been over our twenty," said Sims casually. He turned to watch the still enraged Lakeside star shank his punt out of bounds on the home team's twenty-eight.

"Okay, sit down," growled the Grand Old Man. Never inured to the critical vagaries of young men under the physical and mental pressures of a big game, he had long since reduced football to a percentage basis.

It had been close to twenty years since he had produced a real winning team. He had long since dropped from the big-time picture, owed his chance at Seaboard only to the breaks of war time—an open berth, no one else in sight to fill it and a phenomenal number of unearned stars assigned to the school to take various Navy "V" courses.

The result had been a long contract and much whoopla in the press about one of "football's immortals" returning from Valhalla to show the modern whipper-snappers how the autumn classic should be taught. His war time record had drawn a number of promising young men anxious to serve under his tutelage, but the 1946 season had been a sad one.

Lacking his war time edge over the opposition, his straight-playing team, despite good quality and drilling in the so-called fundamentals, had won only two and tied one game of an eight-game schedule. Once again alumni and the sportswriters went around mumbling about Old Ty losing his grip.

Now, out of nowhere, he had come up with a winning club. With four straight victories against first-rate opponents already behind them, Seaboard seemed well on its way to taking Lakeside, rated a power in the East—or had been a moment before. Sherman Wheate, paying his first visit to Seaboard in many years, watched the progress of play.

"A bunch of in-and-outers," he thought as highly touted halfback Al Morton went plowing over his own right tackle for a scant two yards as Lakeside lined up its defenders three deep against him.

"Somebody's tipping the plays," muttered Corliss.

THE Seaboard coach looked at his old friend, Wheate, who pretended not to have heard. The writer didn't have the heart to tell the coach that his plays had been tipped off years before by overuse.

But Seaboard was still leading by 10 to 7 and the third quarter was ticking away its final minutes. And Seaboard had already beaten smarter teams than the Green this year. Glancing down the bench to where Willis Sims stood over the waterbucket, carefully sipping from the dipper, the veteran sports columnist thought he had the answer.

His colleagues, he decided, had been missing the boat. They had been writ-

ing up such stars as Al Morton, the thriple-threat halfback, and Don Reade, the swift, hard-hitting center of the Blue. But they hadn't been writing up quarterback Willy Sims.

Judging from statistics, Wheate didn't know why they should. Sims, in accord with Ty Corliss' old-fashioned system of coaching, didn't do much but call plays and lurk well back in the safety position when on the defensive. He almost never carried the ball or passed it and his kicking, while apparently well controlled, was not of a height or length to match that of Morton, or even his understudy Bayliss.

Yet, Wheate suspected, Willy Sims was the real reason why Seaboard had been rolling up wins. He reminded the veteran columnist of Charley Buell, the old-time Harvard quarterback, who seldom, if ever, carried the ball, and more recently of Eddie Stanky, the Dodger second-sacker with the lowdown averages. Like both of them he had a genius for throwing the opposition off-stride.

A sudden roar from the crowd brought the focus of his attention back on the game in time to see big Nick Judson break through the Blue line, bowl over a backfield man and partially deflect Al Morton's punt and send it out of bounds short of the Seaboard fifty-yard line.

For two downs the home team held as Lakeside went bulling into the line. And then Sauntry, having sucked in the secondary defenders, pulled a jump pass on what appeared to be a third smash inside tackle and dropped the ball into the waiting arms of Nick Judson, who raced to the Blue thirteen before Al Morton brought him to earth with a vicious tackle.

Two plays later, with Judson acting as decoy, Red Sauntry faked another jump pass, crashed the befuddled Seaboard line easily and made the double white line without having a single Seaboard hand laid on him. A moment later he kicked the extra point to give the visitors a 14 to 10 lead as the third quarter finally came to its close.

"All right, Sims," Coach Corliss moaned after Al Morton had run the Green kick-off back from his own five to the home thirty-seven. "Go in there and see what you can do."

"Any especial instructions?" the quarterback asked. As he stood there, Sherman Wheate noticed that he was by no means the undersized stripling he had looked on the field. He stood, if anything, a bit above average height and his legs and hips had a reassuring thickness. He probably hit the scales at more than the 165 pounds which the program listing gave him. His eyes were bright, his chin firm.

"I appreciate your asking, really I do, Sims," said Corliss. "Unfortunately, since you will do as you darned please when you get out there, I see little point in special instructions."

"Take it easy, Coach," said Sims, giving the old man a familiar pat on the shoulder. "We've got plenty of time." He made a V for victory sign and trotted out on the field, pulling on his helmet. He did look thin out there—probably because of his thin chest and shoulders, Wheate opined.

By the time he got there, it was second down and the Blue had only three to go following a shovel pass run by Morton. Sims surveyed the situation briefly before going into the huddle and motioned Red Sauntry further back in his safety position.

"He's crazy," muttered Coach Corliss. Wheate grunted and watched the Lakeside back, who stubbornly refused to move backwards.

FIVE seconds later he was desperately trying for and missing the end-over-end parabola of a quick kick which hit the ground ahead of him as he raced back toward his own goal. The ball leaped like a scared rabbit and finally rolled to a stop on the Green six-yard line, there to be fallen on by Don Reade, the speedy Seaboard center.

"Crazy like a fox," said Wheate. "Now he's not only put them back on their heels but has Sauntry rattled."

"It's bad percentage football," said the coach in a low voice, but Wheate quelled him with a look. He was one of the few sports writers whose views football men respected.

"Don't say I didn't warn you," yelled Sims to Sauntry in his shrill voice. "Better listen next time."

Sauntry's response was an effort to run the ball, in the course of which he fumbled and recovered on the two. A kick, of course, was forthcoming. It was high and deep and directly upfield to the vis-

itors' forty, where Willy Sims circled under it and Coach Corliss groaned again.

"He'll fumble it when they hit him," he groaned. And Nick Judson and Hubey Kent, the other Green end, were on either side of Willy, poised to grind him to mincemeat. Willy, under the ball, appeared unconcerned by the fate about to be visited upon him. He might have been at practice.

"The nerve of that kid—oh, oh! Get *that!*" The sports writer shouted this as he jumped to his feet. For at the last possible moment Willy had lifted his right hand for a fair catch.

Too late the Green ends sought to stop their tackles. They may have succeeded in slowing them up a little—but from the sidelines it didn't look so. At any rate they both hit Willy and tumbled him hard to the turf—for which they drew a fifteen-yard penalty which put the ball on the visitors' twenty-five despite prolonged and vehement protests.

This time, before calling the play, Willis motioned Sauntry in closer and, when the safety man failed to comply, dropped a short looping pass into the vacant area—a pass which Al Morton snagged safely and ran to the nine.

The stands were screaming, but went silent as Willy paused and cupped a finger to his ear, apparently listening to the now almost apoplectic Sauntry. At any rate almost every one of the sixty-odd thousand present heard Willy.

"Oh, no, Red," he caroled. "You've already had two chances. You wouldn't ask me to give you a third?"

And he trotted back into the huddle—just in time to get a five-yard penalty for delaying the game. He tried to protest that the penalty should have gone against the visitors since Sauntry had been responsible, and drew another. On the bench Coach Corliss died more than a little.

"Take it easy, Ty, the kid knows what he's doing," said Wheate, putting a restraining hand on his suffering friend's shoulder. Corliss ran a hand through his hair.

"If he does he's the only one," he said. *"No-o-o-o!"*

He was on his feet shouting protests and encouragement at once as his problem quarterback proceeded to take the ball, fake a pass to Morton, then almost daintily and without much apparent hurry, pick a path right through the middle of the disorganized Lakeside eleven.

A nest of tacklers caught up with him on the thirty, but he went this way and then that way and faked a lateral pass. Then, just as everyone else on the field eased up, thinking him stopped, he broke away and took off for the Green goal line in fully cry. Sauntry made a desperate sprint to catch him in the last five yards, but Willy, looking over his shoulder and grinning, pulled himself clear in the nick of time and went over untouched.

"He's not supposed to carry the ball!" cried Corliss.

"Tsk, tsk!" said Wheate as the coach, in a fury of frustration, summoned Bayliss, as Willy, instead of kicking the extra point, ran it over. But something made him hold his hand. And when the home team scored again within five minutes as Lakeside fell apart and Willy connected with two long passes, he evidently decided to let Willy stay in.

THE final score of the contest was 31 to 14, with the Seaboard cohorts and Willy out in front. Sherman Wheate decided to interview the one-man star of the game. He got a chance to talk with Willy that evening at his fraternity house, a national society of which the writer was also a member. Willy was alone in his room, studying.

"Why aren't you downstairs?" Wheate asked him, referring to the dance which was going full blast below.

"Well, Mr. Wheate," said Willy, who proved to be an unexpectedly good looking young man in non-football clothes. "I've got to keep my marks up and I can dance all my life. Arthur Murray takes them on at any age."

"And you'd rather play football now? Is that it?"

"Football's all right," Willy said, and the grin he did not quite hide revealed his understatement. "It's a great thing to play under a man like Mr. Corliss. He certainly is wonderful as a character builder."

"He's a fine old man," said Wheate, wondering whether or not he ought to take the hide off this brash youth.

"A living course in press relations," said Sims, dead-faced. Then he nodded toward the books. "It's great to meet you, Mr. Wheate, but I've got to get at

this pre-med. It takes long enough to be a doctor if you rush."

Baffled, the writer went downstairs and out to the nearest convivial taproom, there to get into an argument with a history professor on the decadence and disrespectfulness of modern youth and that of the children of Nero's time. It was quite a session, for Wheate was not used to having his kindly advances rebuffed by young athletes.

Yet late the following morning, he filed a Monday column whose chief topic was Willy. He was not alone in this, for other scribes had come to life on the subject of the Seaboard quarterback, but Wheate was the only man to praise him, not for his unexpectedly unveiled runs and passes but for his genius at driving the opposition batty and lowering its playing ability.

Out of fairness to the youth, his personal comments were reserved. And, after calling up Ty Corliss and bidding the coach farewell, Wheate took off by plane for Chicago, where the Bears and the Green Bay Packers were putting on one of their Sunday specials.

Wednesday found him in southern California, where a late-session tennis tournament was under way with the Australian Davis Cup team putting on a farewell performance.

On Thursday he was in New Orleans, where the big-time winter golf tournament circuit was being again breathed into life and the field was still chasing Ben Hogan. And Saturday, to his considerable surprise, found him back at Seaboard for the intersectional game with Central University.

This time he shunned the bench for the press box atop the big stadium. All around him the newsmen were discussing Willy Sims and his newfound ability to pick up the ball and run with it. Willy had apparently been sounding off in a pre-game interview.

"And I've been thinking all along he was just lucky," said a news service correspondent.

"Did you ever see a kid with more nerve?" asked a writer from one of the New York papers.

"Well, let's see if he can live up to the billing he and the Old Man gave him," said a third reporter. "They're really going to turn him loose today. Good old Ty! Trust him to have something like this under wraps."

They saw plenty that afternoon. They saw Willy take the opening kickoff behind his own goal line, take off slowly as his interference formed, veer east, then half west as it was shattered by inrushing defenders, shake loose from a tackler who grabbed a leg and go all the way to score.

Tackled by three of Central's orange-jerseyed performers as he crossed the line, they saw him get up, shaken, and miss the point after touchdown. But the phenomenon of an unpoised Willy was forgotten as Central came roaring back twice in the rest of the half to pile up a lead of 13 to 6.

"Well, Sherm, what do you think?" said a writer to Wheate. The columnist shook his head and put his field glasses back in their case and started the long descent to the field house at the open end of the stadium. He was puzzled. Not once had he seen Willy do his aggravating stuff.

HE HAD been playing brilliantly, both on offense and defense, but he had shown no signs of the chatter and freshness which had so upset Lakeside the week before. Wheate wondered if Ty Corliss had ordered him to keep his mouth shut and how he had enforced it if he had.

In the Seaboard dressing room he found a strangely silent Willy standing close by Doc Prentiss, the trainer, as he bandaged the ankle of a wincing lineman. The quarterback nodded to Wheate politely, but said no words of greeting and went on watching the trainer's technique. Wheate was about to accost Willy when Ty Corliss spotted Wheate. The coach seemed not a whit put out by being behind at the half.

"Sims is really showing his stuff today, isn't he?" said the coach. He was beaming. "Watch him this half."

"He seems a little—toned down," said Wheate.

"And I feel ten years younger," the mentor commented. "I don't mind telling you now, Sherm, that I didn't like the sort of thing he was doing. In my day at Yale we went out and played football without psychological trimmings. I never have been able to—well, approve of them."

"That's fine," said the columnist a

trifle too heartily. Old Ty, he thought, had better wake up to what year it was. As he turned to go back to the press booth, he saw Willy regarding both of them with an odd gleam in his dark eyes. He wondered what would happen in the second half.

Plenty did. Willy ran wild. Taking the ball on almost every offensive play and using Al Morton as a decoy, he ran and passed and punted for thirty long minutes of play—and barely managed to tie the score in the last five minutes of play by flipping a pass to a substitute left end and booting the point after touchdown himself.

Seaboard, still unbeaten, had been tied. But since Central rated as a real power in the football world, the surprise team of the year was still well in the running for a bowl bid which would cap Ty Corliss' career nicely. That is, they would be if they won the rest of their games—for which they would need the Willy Sims of the Lakeside contest.

Wheate pondered the problem more than he had intended, as he covered the finals of a squash tournament, an ice hockey opening and a major prize fight during the week. He wondered if the young quarterback, after scoring his first touchdown and receiving unwonted plaudits in the press, was not suffering from a simple case of swollen skull.

But, despite his brusque self-assurance, Willy had not impressed the columnist as the type to have his head turned so easily. He sensed a problem of some sort and, since problems were his meat and drink, he was at the big Tidewater Bowl the following Saturday to see Seaboard face its toughest rival of the season in the big Scarlet with its bone-crushing, feather-passing star, Hank "Hunk" Murray.

He decided once more to sit on the bench in an effort to see things at close quarters, and was in his place beside the Old Man in time for the coin toss before the game. He saw his problem back, Willy, who had been named as captain for the day according to Coach Corliss' system, walk out on the field to shake hands with the towering Murray, the Scarlet captain, who stood easily six feet five inches in his socks.

The official flipped the coin and both men, after calling it, bent to see what it was. There was a *thock* as their heads came together and then Willy, who was wearing his headgear, was patting the gigantic Tidewater captain in encouraging fashion while Murray tried vainly to shake him off. By his red face he was obviously flustered.

"I wonder if he planned it," murmured the columnist, chuckling as the confused Scarlet captain called to receive, which was an obvious error since there was a heavy wind sweeping lengthwise through the stadium.

"Who knows?" Corliss muttered, shaking his head wearily. "And after last week when everything went so well."

"Except that you didn't win," said Wheate sharply.

CORLISS, his old friend, looked at him quickly, then subsided.

"Maybe you're right," he muttered. "But is it football? That's all I want to know—is it football?"

"Walter Eckersall used to think so," said Wheate. "And so did Buell and others. Only a few of them were ever able to do it—that's why you don't see it more often. For my book it's quick thinking in any sport."

Seaboard kicked off with the wind behind it, deep into the Scarlet end zone, where the ball was grounded. As the teams lined up Wheate could hear Willy's shrill voice calling to Hunk Murray and telling him again that he was truly very sorry for having bumped heads with him.

Murray, in position to receive the ball from center, looked up and almost missed the pass, which led him by a good two feet. He stumbled, trying to regain his balance, and fell easy prey to an inrushing Seaboard left end, who tossed the Scarlet star for a five-yard loss.

"Did I bother you?" Willy yelled as the big fellow picked himself up. "I'm sorry, but I really meant to."

Murray stopped and turned on his tormentor, but no words would come. He could only stand there and stutter. A moment later he got off a tremendous booming punt, but the wind caught it and pulled it back to the midfield stripe. Willy, gauging the bounce correctly, let it drop and had the satisfaction of seeing it roll eight yards toward the Scarlet goal line before a desperate enemy for-

ward could cover it.

Tidewater, which had evidently scouted Seaboard in thorough fashion the week before, was laying for Willy, but it wasn't Willy who did the carrying today. Instead he fed the ball to Al Morton on the first offensive play. Al, big, burly and fast, went roaring through on a behind-the-line lateral while most of Tidewater vainly pursued Willy. He got all the way to the enemy nineteen before he was downed.

Five gruelling plays later Morton punched the ball over and, seconds thereafter, Willy kicked the extra point to give Seaboard, the visitors, a 7 to 0 lead. Willy's ability to rile the opposition had paid off in quick order against a foe who was rated far superior to the visiting Blue.

For the first period it was all Seaboard. On the kick-off return, after the opening touchdown, it was Willy who brought Hunk Murray to earth on his own forty-five after it began to look as if the score would soon be tied. Politely Willy helped him up, appearing highly solicitous. Then, suddenly, Murray swung at him.

"What's the idea, Murray?" the referee asked, pushing his way between the players. "Why the slugging?"

"Don't ask me," said Willy innocently. "I only asked him how his head was."

"He made it sound as if I didn't have any," growled the aggrieved Scarlet ace. The referee gave him a look, picked up the ball and paced fifteen yards off toward the Tidewater goal, putting the ball on the twenty.

"One more deal like that and you're out of the game," he told Murray. "Let's see which one of you was right."

Murray, outraged and bewildered, mangled a couple of plays to lose nine more yards before the Tidewater coach yanked his star and put in a substitute who kicked. And again the wind shortened the punt.

Willy caught it on the home forty-seven, laying well back and then tearing up to take it on the dead run, thus leaving the Tidewater ends gaping foolishly at each other. Then, as he was about to be tackled, he stopped, yelled at Al Morton, who was halfway across the field, just getting up after throwing a block, and tossed him a long overhand lateral.

While Coach Corliss again hid his eyes, the big Blue ace caught the ball, looked at it foolishly, then trotted across the goal line—an easy chore, for there were no scarlet-jerseyed players in position to stop him. A moment later it was 14 to 0 in Seaboard's favor.

"Both of those rate as Willy-touchdowns," said Sherm Wheate, thus coining a phrase which he resolved to spring in his next day's column. "He's the smartest lad on a football field I ever saw. Where'd you get him, Sherm?"

"He just turned up here," said the coach absently. "I don't think I ever saw anyone like him."

"You and me both," said the columnist.

BUT that ended the easy scoring for the day. Tidewater, a truly able team, got hold of itself during the second quarter and began to take over the game. Willy, apparently sensing that the time for badinage was past, settled down to play grim, tough football along with the rest of the Old Man's team. He diagnosed plays, knocked down passes, occasionally made tackles in his safety position.

He should have been half dead by half time, but outside of an incipient shiner and a slight panting for breath, he apparently was fresh as ever. He was scowling over a field goal which Tidewater had managed to place-kick across just before the half-time gun sounded.

"If we hadn't let 'em get into the center of the field—" he mourned. Coach Corliss grinned.

"After forty yards out?" he queried. "No, they were lucky. You can't expect them to boot fifty-yard placements."

"Just the same, Coach," said Sims, walking beside the mentor as they moved toward the locker room, "I wonder if we couldn't have our ends play wider defense."

Wheate, who had not been invited to attend this between-the-halves session, grinned. He liked the spirit with which young Sims went after a football game. The kid hated to lose, but the columnist suspected that he could take it like a sportsman. He did his winning within the rules—his trick was to use them a bit more smartly than the other guy.

This time Seaboard received as the second half opened and big Al Morton made a fine runback to the Blue thirty-

eight. But now the home forwards had the jump on the visitors and Morton was forced to kick when three line plays failed to gain more than four yards.

Now the wind was against Seaboard and Morton's boot was short. Big Hunk Murray caught the ball on the dead run and bowled over a pair of Blue players who tried to bring him down. He headed for the sidelines, rumbling along like a Pershing tank, and stiff-armed two other would-be tacklers.

It was up to Willy. This time there was no blocker to play against the runner and he moved in against the much bigger man without hesitating. The crash of contact was sickening as big and little man collided head on, but the big man went down in a jarring fall on the Blue forty-two.

He got up, grinning a little as if he had got some of his own back against this annoying pest from Seaboard. And then he saw that Sims didn't rise, but lay stretched out on the turf like a corpse. He bent over him and yelled for the trainer, his own face going pale.

"Don't bother," said Willy, jumping spryly to his feet and grinning. "Just thought I'd take a little nap." He looked Murray over, grinned and shook his head. "Golly, but you're a fine big specimen of American manhood." Then he turned and walked away, yelling encouragement to his own men.

Murray stalked back to his place in the Scarlet lineup like a man in a nightmare. He fumbled on the next play and a teammate barely recovered. He was yanked and it was the second-string backfield that put over a Tidewater touchdown late in the third quarter when one of Al Morton's punts was blocked close to the Blue goal line. This put the score of the game at 14 to 10 in favor of Seaboard.

Willy, who was on the bench when this threat developed, pleaded with Corliss to put him back in there.

"I'll sew them up tight and deliver them to you in a sack," he told the Old Man. "Honest, coach, I've got their number. They can't do this to us now."

But, while Corliss hesitated, it began to look very much as if they could. The Blue was forced to kick again just before the quarter ended and again the wind made it short. Tidewater, with a revived Hunk Murray back in the lineup, came down deep into Blue territory with what looked like irresistible force.

"In for Bayliss, Sims," said Corliss reluctantly as the ball was advanced to the Seaboard twenty-two and another first down for the home team.

"Be of good cheer—Willy's here," Sims caroled as he moved into position. The remark drew a laugh from his teammates and a scowl from Hunk Murray, then a look of surprise. For Willy, on his own initiative, had traded places with Al Morton and was backing up the line with center Don Reade.

"Take it easy, Hunk," he yelled. "I don't want to get hurt." He waved an encouraging hand at the Scarlet ace, who took the ball from his quarterback as if he intended to crush it and came roaring into the Blue line right at Willy.

WILLY looked at first like a spectator. Then, as the big fullback went churning past, he dived in quickly and the two of them performed a pinwheel on the cold turf. When it was over, Murray had gained five yards but Willy had the ball. Luckily the referee was on top of the play or there would have been bloodshed.

"Want some more points, kids?" Willy asked the enemy as he prepared to call signals. He received no answer. Undiscouraged, he held onto the ball in his T formation and spun, racing back toward his own goal line.

"He's gone crazy, passing that deep!" moaned Corliss.

"He's not crazy—or is he?" replied Wheate. For the Seaboard signal caller didn't stop and pivot to throw a pass. Instead he kept right on going and touched the ball down behind his own goal line, making the score 14 to 12 in favor of the Blue.

"And with more than ten minutes left to play," said Corliss. "This is too much." He summoned Bayliss and told the substitute to go back in and take over.

But when Bayliss went in, Willy refused to accept the substitution. As captain, even temporary captain, of the team, he had technical right to overrule the coach on a substitution and he used it. Corliss simply looked at Wheate.

"In forty-eight years of football as player and coach I never saw it happen before," he said, incredulous.

"Well, there has to be a first time for

everything," said Wheate encouragingly. Then, "Hey! What's he doing—giving them two more?"

"I can't look," said Coach Corliss.

And once again, Willy had started back toward his own goal line, apparently headed for another safety which would knot the count. Back he went, never looking behind him, back to the ten, the five, the one.

Then, suddenly, he turned and threw—a long pass that went soaring over the heads of the players of both teams. Far down the field, uncovered by the bewildered Scarlet secondary, raced Al Morton. He got under it with a leap, gathered it in over his shoulder and went all the way. With the extra point it gave Seaboard a fat 21-to-12 lead.

And with the wind again behind them, Willy and Don Reade and Al Morton and the rest of the Blues saw that the highly touted home team never had another chance. They stopped two Scarlet threats by intercepting passes and were threatening to score again as the final gun went off.

In the locker room, afterward, Sherman Wheate came in on Willy's explanation of the international safety.

"Nothing was working, Coach, so we had to do something to ball them up," he said. "I figured they weren't sure whether I was crazy or not, so I decided to make them sure. That safety and then refusing a substitute sold them. They were ripe for the pass on the next play."

"We didn't play it that way in my day," said the old coach gruffly. Then he clapped Willy on the back. "But you and the rest of the boys have done a fine job for Seaboard and—yes, for me as well."

"Young man," said Wheate, catching Willy as, embarrassed, he ducked away, "I want to ask you some questions."

"Hello, Mr. Wheate." His tone was respectful. "Nothing was working, so we had to do some—"

"That's not what I want to know, Willy," said the columnist. "First, what happened to you last week? Why did you hog the ball? Did you have a taste of headline sickness?"

"Gosh, no, sir," said Willy. "Al Morton sprained his ankle the week before and I was taking care of it for him. I'm a pre-med as I told you. We didn't want Coach to know. He's a grand old gentleman, sir, but he has too many friends like you among the press."

"And that's why you were a bit—er—brusque with me when I called on you?" Wheate asked.

"Yes, sir. I felt rotten about it, but I'd promised Al and the rest of the boys to keep mum."

"I understand. You're a great gang. But one more thing, Willy—why didn't you talk up the game last week?"

"Why, sir, I got bopped on the Adam's apple on that first kickoff runback and couldn't speak above a whisper," said Willy. Suddenly he grinned. "It was the worst couple of hours I ever spent. Whew!"

"I think I understand that too," said the columnist as Willy headed for the showers.

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Rose Bowl Landmarks

OVER the years the Rose Bowl has acquired unequaled stature as the most important of post-season intersectional contests. And some of the following records, typical of the brilliant play the games have produced since they were inaugurated back in 1902, make its fame understandable.

Record kickoff runback—103 yds, Al Hoisch, UCLA vs Illinois, 1947.
Record yardage from scrimmage—170 yds, Willy Heston, Michigan vs Stanford, 1902
Record pass yardage—163 yds, Saunders, USC vs Pittsburgh, 1930.
Record No. passes thrown—24, Workman, Ohio State vs USC, 1921.
Record No. passes complete—12, Albert, Stanford vs Nebraska, 1941.
Record No. passes caught—6, tie between Stincomb, Ohio State, 1921, and Hutson, Alabama vs Stanford, 1935.

Coupled with such pressure-made catastrophes as Roy Riegels' wrong-way run back in 1929, these achievements have helped to put the Rose Bowl on top.

THE MUCKER

a novelet by JOSEPH KENNEY

CHAPTER I

The Chipped Shoulder

JOEY WILSON was a mucker. Nobody at Algonquin had any doubts on that score an hour after he checked in at the registrar's office. Joey himself made sure of that.

He was a big man, with a shock of coarse, black hair that grew low on his forehead. His eyes were small and set too close together. His nose had been broken, somewhere, somehow, and he had an undershot jaw that made his wide, thin-lipped mouth seem wider, if possible.

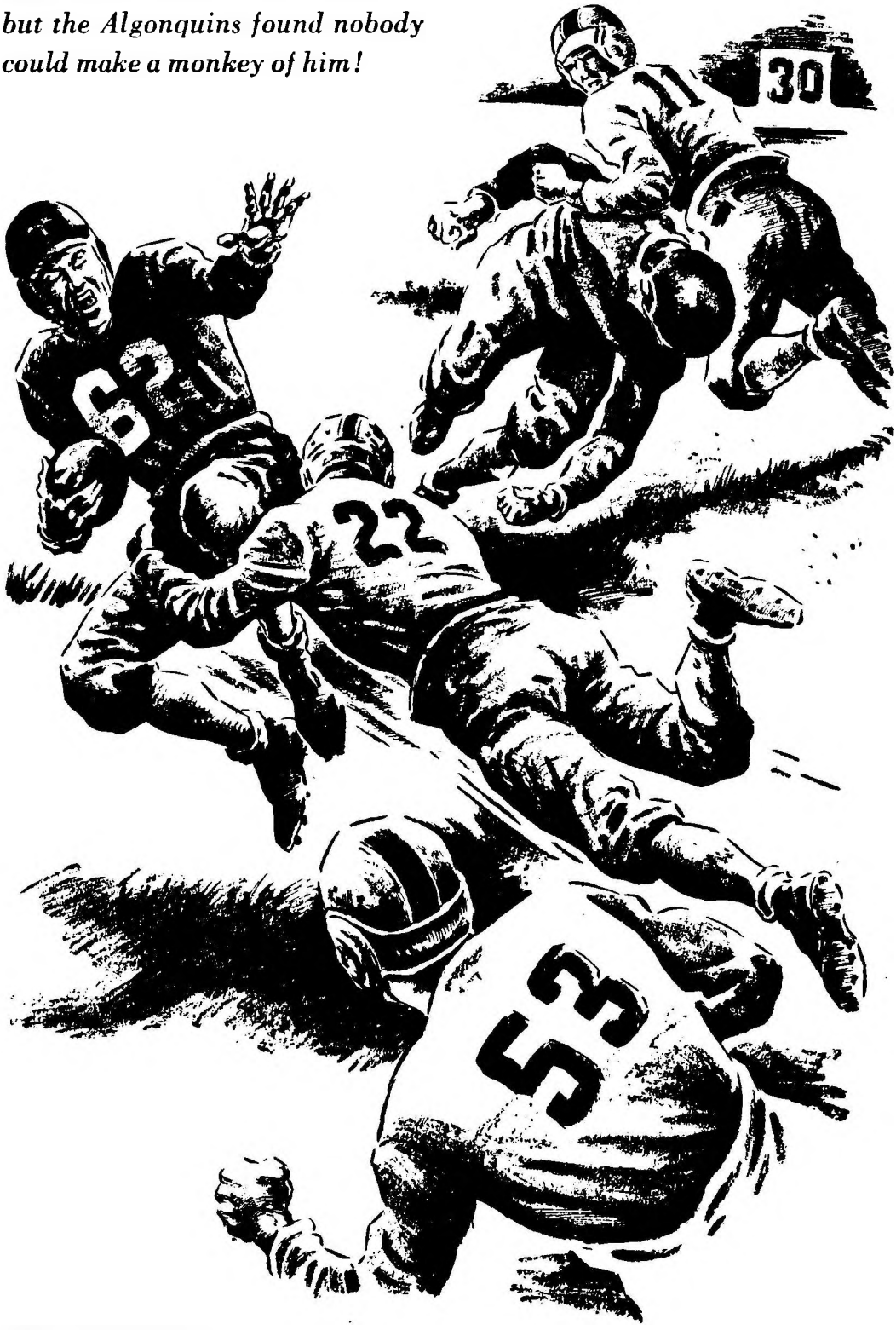
He had a minimum of neck and a maximum breadth of shoulder. His hands hung at the end of long, simian arms. His body was thick, his legs relatively short, with the suspicion of a bow. With just a little more hair on his body, he would have made a swell ape. He didn't do badly in that direction, as it was.

Algonquin didn't label Joey a mucker because of his looks, nor the fact that the clothes he wore were all wrong. Algonquin wasn't that kind of a school. The University had its share of rich men's sons, but it also had its contingent of working students and veterans who were not exactly rolling in wealth. There was some snobbery on the campus, but certainly no more and probably less than could be encountered at any school of Algonquin's size. Money and a family name counted for exactly nothing in most quarters. It was what you did and how you acted that got you your friends and enemies at Algonquin.

And Joey Wilson said and did the wrong things from the first day. Indeed, it was in the Registrar's Office that he got off on the wrong foot.

JOEY was being interviewed by one of the girls who worked in the Registrar's place, answering the hundred and one questions that seem so terribly important to the faculties of big schools. Joey had waited in line for quite some

Joey Wilson looked like an ape, but the Algonquins found nobody could make a monkey of him!



Wilson sent him down with a driving tackle

time before his turn to be interviewed had arrived. It was a warm September day and the crowded office was close to stifling. Joey had long since removed his coat and when he hit the interviewer's desk, the violently striped shirt he wore was plastered to his powerful frame with perspiration.

The girl doing the interviewing raised her well-bred eyebrows at the sight of the coatless Joey and that soaking wet shirt. Strictly speaking, Joey had been the most sensible man in the crowd that waited, by removing that jacket. But the fact remained that nobody else *had* taken off his coat, nor had anybody pulled the knot of his necktie down and opened his collar.

The black-haired man caught the look the Assistant Registrar gave him and dealt the young lady a scowl that made his unbeatable face uglier. "Whazza matter?" he demanded, without preliminaries. "You expect a guy to wear a tux, while he's waitin' for you make up your mind to talk to him and get this business over with?"

"I beg your pardon?" said the girl behind the desk, in a cool, rising voice.

"Granted," Joey said, bluntly. "Now let's get on with this bushwah so I can get outta here and get some fresh air. I filled out a dozen questionnaires, I guess, before I ever came to this joint and still I have to answer some more. About the only thing I haven't told you people is about my birth-marks, and I haven't got any."

The Assistant Registrar smothered whatever it was she wanted to say and went on with the task at hand, using a voice calculated to chill a Hottentot. Joey was unimpressed by the freeze treatment. He answered the questions in a brusque, almost surly voice, interspersing his remarks with loud reminders that he had answered that identical question several times in his written questionnaires.

"What'd you people do, lose my records?" he asked, once. "Like the Army, you prob'ly lost all those papers I filled out as soon as you got 'em. And what difference does it make what I did back when I was a kid? I'm here now, ain't I, and if I flunk, I get tossed out and if I don't, I stay, regardless of what's on those dopey cards you're fillin' out."

The Assistant Registrar had a temper, too, and one which had been sorely strained that hot day by the seemingly deliberate obtuseness of the incoming students.

"Mr. Wilson," she snapped, "believe me when I say I'm not going through this task for amusement or curiosity concerning your private affairs. These questions and answers are required by the faculty of this university and, tedious though it might be answering them, most of the young men whom I've interviewed, 'til now, have been gentlemen enough to bear with me."

Joey leaned back in his chair and scowled more deeply.

"Meanin' I'm no gentleman, huh?" he asked. "Well, that's okay with me, sister. Where I come from, the job I've been doin', a gentleman wouldn't last five minutes. I came to Algonquin to learn something, but one of the things I want to learn ain't how to be a little gentleman. I've got no use for that stuff."

As has been remarked, the Registrar's office was crowded and Joey Wilson's voice was loud. Before he had finished that interview—and it was suspected that that Assistant Registrar rushed things a bit toward the end—everybody within earshot knew Joey had nothing but contempt for gentlemen and their manners. They knew, too, that Wilson had been raised in the oil fields and had worked there all his life, except for a four-year hitch in the Army where, to quote Joey, he was meanest sergeant in the toughest platoon in the most rugged company of the roughest regiment of the most hard-boiled division under General George C. Marshall.

When he came out of the interviewer's office, he looked around at the students, boys and girls, who were waiting their turn. His wide mouth crooked into a mirthless grin as he jerked a thumb back toward the Assistant Registrar.

"Get her," he invited the others. "She asks me what kinda hobbies I got. *Hobbies!* I told her it was ridin' a wiggle-stick over a fishtail drill, and she puts it down, like it was playin' tennis or something. What a laugh!"

A few of the more nervous Freshmen responded with uncertain grins, but most of the people in the anteroom gave Joey Wilson stares that were as unfriendly as the Assistant Registrar's voice had been. Joey swept the room with his cold eyes again and shrugged his shoulders. It was as though he acknowledged that fact

that these people thought he had acted badly and was letting them know he didn't care what they thought then, or would think in the future. Then he gave a short laugh and walked out, his coat slung over his shoulder, his shoulders powerful under that striped shirt.

HE RAN afoul upperclassmen before he reached the Freshman dormitory he had been assigned. That happened when he cut across the lawn in front of Ashley Hall, disregarding the KEEP OFF signs scattered over the carefully manicured expanse of green.

Now, crossing the lawns at Algonquin was a prerogative reserved strictly for Seniors and Juniors and had been for ages. Even the doughty Sophomore at Algonquin kept carefully to the walks, no matter how late he was for a class, and for a Freshman to set foot on the grass was a major offense. Joey had taken no more than half a dozen strides before he was hailed.

"Freshman!" barked a deep voice. "Retrace your steps, on your hands and knees!"

Joey turned to see three men, each one as big as he, standing some twenty feet away, glaring at him. The Freshman from the oil fields stuck out his lower lip and scowled back.

"You speakin' to me?" he demanded.

"That's the general idea," one of the trio replied. "Get down on your hands and knees and crawl back to that walk."

Wilson put his hands on his hips and thrust his head forward a bit.

"Are you guys nuts?" he asked. "Whaddaya mean, crawl?"

The three big men moved closer. "Maybe you didn't read the Freshman Rules," one of them said.

Joey made an impatient motion with one big hand. "Oh, them," he snorted. "They gave me a little book about what I was supposed to do and what I wasn't supposed to do. It didn't make sense to me. I threw it away."

There was a deep silence and then one of the trio said, heavily: "He threw it away."

"Sure I threw it away," Joey said, belligerently. "And as far as walkin' on the grass goes, how about you guys? You're walkin' on the grass, aren't you?"

"We're Juniors," the tallest of the three explained. "There's a difference."

"Yeah?" Joey Wilson asked, with the suspicion of a sneer. "Well, you don't look any different from me from where I stand. As far as me crawlin' back to the walk, it'd take a lot more than you guys could offer to make me."

The three Juniors looked at each other, a mournful expression on their faces.

"Shall we?" one asked.

"I'm afraid," said a second, with a sigh, "we have to."

"Alley-oop," said the third, and they descended on Joey Wilson with a rush.

The Freshman from the oil fields put up a good fight. Everybody who witnessed the fracas—and the commotion seemed to draw the entire student body to the lawn in front of Ashley Hall—was forced to admit that if Joey had been meeting just one Junior, or even two, the results would have been different. But he had no chance, really, against the three giants who climbed on him; kick and punch and batter and brawl though he might. The Juniors did not use their fists, as much as Joey must have tempted them with his own short, hard, chopping blows. They contented themselves with gathering him up, one on each leg and the third and largest holding his writhing shoulders, and carrying him back to the sidewalk, there to dump him ungently on the pavement.

Joey scrambled to his feet, panting, the gaudy shirt ripped at a shoulder seam, the loosened tie in shreds, the knees of his trousers grass-stained, his flat face red with rage and exertion.

"I'll get you guys," he bellowed. "Some day when there aren't three of you, I'll make up for this!"

The tallest of the three Juniors, the one who had carried his head, stepped forward with a grin and put out his hand.

"Forget it, Freshman," he said. "You did all right, whatever your name is. No hard feelings, huh?"

Joey Wilson stared down at the proffered hand and then spit, dangerously close to the Junior's shoe.

"Nuts to that stuff," he grumbled. "Nobody does something like that to Joey Wilson and then wiggles out of the beatin' that's comin' to him with that let's-be-friends bushwah."

The Junior flushed and pulled back his hand. His companions tightened their faces and stared at Joey with cold eyes. The spokesman for the trio hesitated and then forced a humorless smile to his lips.

"Any way you want it, Freshman," he said. "But I don't think you're going to have a very good time here at Algonquin with that kind of an attitude."

"Don't worry about me," Joey growled. "I'll get along. I've been lookin' after myself long enough to get by without any help from the likes of you."

AND that was how Joey Wilson operated at Algonquin, those first weeks and months. He made it plain from the start that he regarded all the other young men, the Freshmen who observed the social amenities, followed the rules and steered clear of conflict with the upperclassmen and the faculty, as slightly ridiculous, on the sissy side. He made no friends among the other Freshmen. He showed absolutely no interest in the co-eds. Campus activities interested him not at all. He carried on relentless warfare against recognized upperclassman authority and there were a good many scuffles during those early days. Joey won most of those tussles, but in winning them he lost his chance to be accepted as another Algonquin man. He earned the name of "Bolo" which, on the Algonquin campus meant a rebel who flung his weight around in the wrong way, who took pleasure in kicking old Algonquin customs and manners in the teeth. There had not been many "Bolos" at Algonquin and those who had appeared on the campus invariably left the school for more congenial surroundings long before graduation.

"That's Joey Wilson, the Bolo," the co-eds used to whisper, when he swaggered past the Campus Shoppe. "He's horrible—I'm in his trig class. Big mouth and the manners of a pig."

"Well," another student would chime in, "he won't last long at Algonquin."

Somehow, by devious ways, those whisperings predicting his early departure from Algonquin, got back to Joey Wilson. When he heard the story, he barked a harsh laugh and thrust out his undershot jaw.

"Yeah?" he demanded. "I'd like to see the guy or guys that could make me quit this place before I'm ready to quit. And that's gonna be when I get my diploma."

He found the going admittedly tough in the classroom, from the start. What ever schools he might have attended in the oil fields might have been all right in their class, but Joey soon discovered that they had not given him the educational background he needed at Algonquin. He soon found that his position was unenviable. Accustomed to strut, boast, sneer and scowl on the campus, he discovered himself a much less self-confident, forceful character in the classroom. A few experiences of stuttering and stumbling his way through a recitation, to the accompaniment of barely smothered snickers from the other students, proved to Joey that—in his mind—there was only one way to shut up these mugs, and that was by being twice as good in the classroom as the best of the "little gentlemen."

So he became a grind, and one of the greasiest grinds on the Algonquin campus, at that. He might show up at early classes with dark circles under his eyes and his face lined with weariness, but his lessons were always letter-perfect and his professors, if nobody else at Algonquin, beamed on him. Some of his profs might be irritated by that belligerent, insubordinate manner of his, but that irritation faded when Joey, uttering every word as though he were issuing a defy to the world at large, made a flawless analysis of some problem or turned in an impeccable paper.

Some instructors took it upon themselves to compliment Joey in front of his class. For their pains they got only a sneering grin, before Wilson swept his slate-gray eyes over the rest of the room, as though daring somebody to say that all this commendation wasn't deserved.

"Can't understand the boy," one professor confided to another at the Faculty Club, one day. "Works his head off, is probably one of the most brilliant students I've got, and yet it always seems to me that he hates me and the other students, the whole school. Interesting."

"A bolo, I've heard," grunted the professor's colleague. "I've seen 'em make a big flash in the pan before, but they never last long. He won't be back next year, mark my words."

CHAPTER II

On the Line

THE semester was not very old before the call went out for candidates for the Algonquin football team. The school

was not in the big-time, though it once had been booked against Notre Dame, Alabama, Kentucky and Illinois. A de-emphasis program had cut the Algonquin club from the high-powered schedules and now the team played in a smaller league against teams that, at one time, would have been scorned as opening-day trial horses.

Still, the football spirit was high at Algonquin, despite the fact there were no football scholarships, no proselyting among the husky youths in the mines and on the farms, no high-salaried coaching, no Bowl ambitions. Nowadays, the Algonquin student body thought as much of winning a game from State Teachers as, in years past, they had thought of upsetting a highly-favored Minnesota team. The pep rallies held on the eve of the State University game were as wild and as colorful as they had been when Algonquin's top opponent had been one of the nation's powerhouse teams, with a Bowl bid hanging in the balance.

There were many who thought that it was only by watching teams such as Algonquin in action that a real lover of college football could see the game played as it was intended to be played. Several top-ranking sports columnists had said as much, after an afternoon of watching two mechanically perfect, impersonal, machine-like squads go through their uninspiring paces before a stadium packed with people more interested in how many points they could get with their bet than in the boys who were fighting it out down there on the barred turf.

There was nothing impersonal about Algonquin football. The university might be a big place, with its engineering and medical colleges, but the student body knew each member of the team, either personally or through a classmate, a room-mate. If Joe Blow made a nice run against Thiel or Haverford or Ursinus, his classmates were on hand to give Joe a pat on the back after the game. And if Dick Roe hot-fingered a pass that would have scored against State Teachers and won a game, Dick would get the consoling he needed after the game with some chocolate malts at the Campus Shoppe.

Algonquin was one of the few schools left in the country where the captain of the football squad was The Big Man on the Campus, whether he belonged to the school's most exclusive fraternity or was a member of the Commons Club. It was a place where a little gold football dangling from a key ring or a watch chain was one of the most precious possessions available to man.

Joey Wilson recognized this fact. He might sneer at the idolatry showered on the Algonquin football giants, but he knew, at the same time, that if he intended to keep his position as superior to this mob of gentlemanly jerks, he would have to earn himself a place on the team.

"And that," he said aloud, on one occasion, "shouldn't be too tough, considerin' the pat-on-the-wrist guys I have to beat out for the job."

COACHING the Algonquin team was Heinie Metchler, an old-school coach who had starred for Algonquin back in the dim and distant past. Heinie kept the job because of his love for the old school, rather than the pay the job brought him. There had been a time when he had turned down flattering offers from other big universities, preferring to stay at Algonquin. Now, in the days of the T-formation and its derivatives, the offers had ceased coming. Heinie, in the words of his younger colleagues, was a nice old guy, but hopelessly out-dated.

"Why he's still using the same men on defense that he uses on offense," the coaches used to tell each other. "He's still making his substitutions one by one, instead of a whole line or a whole backfield or a whole team."

If Metchler ever heard these comments, he paid no attention to them. He had had his fill of big-time ball, with its accompanying razzle-dazzle, crass commercialism, cynical semi-professionalism. He had taken Algonquin teams to Bowl games and had seen them win. He had looked at a 200-man squad turning out for Spring training, and less than half that squad comprised of men who were at Algonquin for any other purpose than to play football. He had watched the game taken further and further from the students, until his heart had been filled with disgust at himself and the high-pressure alumni who backed this new trend. And he had welcomed wholeheartedly the upheaval that had given the game back to the boys, that had stripped the carnival trappings from

Algonquin football, that had banished the "scholarship" strangers from the campus. Heinie Metchler had settled back contentedly to run out his days coaching small-time football—real football.

He looked over the crop of newcomers who turned out for that first day's practice and he smiled. A good bunch, with plenty of husky men, and every one of them, he knew, a bona fide Algonquin student without a ringer among them. He ran his eyes over the small crowd, picking out a familiar face here, measuring the build of a newcomer there, and finally his eyes lit on Joey Wilson.

Ah, he told himself, there was something that might turn out to be better than all right. The lad had the face of a fighter, a sort of bulldog expression that usually bespoke a tough tackle or a rugged guard, even a plunging back. Joey reminded old Heinie somewhat of Big Boy Drew, Class of '19, who had made Walter Camp's All-American at tackle, when an All-American was something beside a lineup picked by every self-styled expert in the country. Big Boy Drew had had that same dark face, that same grim determination, that same uncompromising intentness that had carried him to the the ranks of football greats.

Later, when he had a chance to speak to Joey alone, Heinie asked his questions. "Ever play any football before, Wilson?"

"A little," Joey said. "Not fancy-pants stuff, though, with all this paddin' on us. They don't go much for helmets and harness in the oil fields."

"High school?" Heinie asked. "Or prep?'

Joey barked his harsh laugh. "Be yourself," he told the old coach. "Do I look like I been to prep school? Lawrenceville, maybe, or Exeter, huh? Naw, I didn't go to prep school and I didn't go to High School, either. What schoolin' I got, I got by a correspondence course, and what's wrong with that?"

"Plenty," Heinie snapped back, "if they didn't teach you to give a civil answer to a civil question."

Joey's eyes flared for a second as he stared at the coach. Heinie Metchler may have been in his sixties but he had a chin of as solid granite as Joey's and his eyes could flash back as good as Joey sent. For a moment, the two men looked at each other, and then Joey dropped his gaze.

"Well," he said, and his voice was not as blaring as it had been, "I didn't play football in high school or prep. I played some sandlot ball. It was mostly pick-up stuff, but it was plenty rugged. When I was in Japan, after V-J Day, the regiment got up a team and I played some there, too."

"What position?" Heinie asked.

Joey shrugged his wide shoulders.

"Line, mostly," he said, "but I didn't like it. I want to play in the backfield. I'll make a better backfield man than any of these lah-da-dah guys I see out here."

Heinie Metchler rubbed his chin speculatively, looking at the dour-browed boy in front of him. Big Boy Drew, he remembered, had been a terribly hard man to handle when he had first come out for the team. He, Heinie, recalled that he nearly had missed having one of football's immortals on a team he coached; he had come close to bouncing Drew off the squad for insubordination before Big Boy finally came around to the realization that while the rest of the world might be down on him, the other members of his own team were his friends.

"We'll see," Heinie said, briefly. "I've got eleven positions on that club that are open. Without any Freshman rule, those positions are wide open to every man at Algonquin who wants to try for them."

"Save me a backfield spot, Coach," Joey Wilson said. "I'm sick of doin' all the work in the line while somebody else gets all the glad hand for goin' through the holes I made."

Heinie Metchler watched Joey swagger back to the group that was going through limbering up exercises. The Coach's eyes were thoughtful as he saw Wilson join the others who were straining and sweating on the turf, shedding the pounds they had accumulated during the summer under the hot September sun.

"A mucker," Heinie said, under his breath. "That's what they called Drew when he first came here. Now, they speak of them as bolo's, and I guess that's what they're callin' that lad. But mucker or bolo, some of them make mighty fine football men, like Drew. The trouble was, that others of that type wrecked a football club, annihilated teamwork, had

half the squad fighting them instead of the other team.

"And which kind, Mr. Joey Wilson," Heinie Metchler asked himself, "would you be?"

IT TOOK the coach only as long as it took to go through the training preliminaries to find out which kind Joey Wilson threatened to be at least. That happened when Metchler broke up the candidates into two groups, one composed of line hopefuls and the other consisting of promising backfield men. And Joey Wilson found himself among the men slated to fight it out for the line positions.

While the others trooped dutifully off to the bucking machine, Joey detached himself from the group and headed for Heinie Metchler. The scowl he habitually wore was deeper than usual as he walked up to the white-haired coach.

"What's the idea?" he demanded. "What's this business of putting me with those line dopes? I told you I wanted to be a backfield man. I had enough of shovin' and pushin' and gettin' all the beatin' and none of the cheers."

Heinie surveyed the indignant young man calmly.

"So it's cheers you want, eh?" he asked. "You won't play football unless the gallery is clapping hands, maybe."

Joey flung out a hand in furious gesture.

"Rats to the gallery," he said. "Those creeps that wave banners and go rah-rah-rah don't mean a thing to me. I just don't like the idea of doin' all that work so's somebody like that Wheeler guy or Samuelson or that big phoney, Iglehart, can show off with them long runs."

Heinie nodded understandingly, a faint smile on his lips.

"I know how you feel," he said, sympathetically. "Whenever a boy comes to me and tells me that line work is too tough for him, I tell him I know just how it is because I was a lineman myself and I know how hard the job is. I give him a pat on the back and no hard feelings when he quits."

Joey Wilson wrinkled his battened nose in derision.

"Hard work!" he jeered. "Listen, Coach, these guys don't know what hard work is, none of them. Put any one of these jerks in the oil fields for one week and they'd have to be carried out on a stretcher."

"Maybe," Heinie said, briefly, "but I don't think they'd quit before they tried."

A dull flush rose in Joey's wide face. "Who's talkin' about quittin'?" he asked. "I just told you I wanted to be a backfield man, not any dumb lineman."

"And I," Heinie said, with a whip-crack of authority sounding through his words, "say you're going to be a lineman or nothing. I've watched your work out there, Wilson, and I say you're too slow for the backfield I want. You're probably even too slow to make a tackle, maybe not. But you ought to make a good guard and you might make a good center. I need a good center. So unless you want to call it quits now, with no hard feelings, suppose you get back there with the others and go to work."

Joey glared at the craggy features of the veteran coach. Heinie's blue eyes stared back. Wilson's glance moved to the side of the field. There, on the bleachers that bordered the practice field, were half a hundred men and girls, all watching him.

It was an Algonquin tradition that each student attend at least one practice session a week, to let the team know that the school was with them every day during the season and not just on game Saturdays. Rain or shine, there always was a group in the bleachers, dividing their time by watching the more or less boring activities on the field, studying and carrying on mixed boy and co-ed bull sessions.

Joey had no doubts about his voice having carried to that small crowd in the bleachers and he had the idea that Heinie Metchler's ultimatum hadn't been missed by many onlookers, either. There they sat, watching him, waiting for him to make his move—every one of them, he suspected, hoping that he'd quit so they could spread the word around the campus that Bolo Wilson had quit the football team.

His lip curled. He knew what kind of a story some of them would make of it. They'd twist things so that it would look like he had dogged it, turned in his uniform because the going got too tough. Those punks and their pretty-pretty dames would make with some yarns that would give all the people who hated his nerve a chance to yuk-yuk to their heart's content.

Well, he had something to say about that, didn't he? They might get a kick out of him knuckling down under this old goat who was coaching the team, but they wouldn't be able to spread fairy stories about him dogging it. Not while Joey Wilson had anything to do about it, they wouldn't.

"Okay," he told Heinie Metchler, sullenly, "so I go out for the line. I guess you're supposed to know what you're doin'."

"And," Heinie added without raising his voice, "you can do three laps around the field, after practice, for that crack."

Joey Wilson bit back his retort, turned and jogged on down to the end of the field where the linemen were straining and pushing at the heavy blocking machine. Wordlessly, he took his place in the line and bent his broad shoulders to the padding. Grunting, he began to shove at the obstinate, cumbersome vehicle.

HE HAD a pretty full schedule, did Joey, that fall. His studies were coming a bit easier but there was still plenty of grinding to do to keep at the top of his class and there were too many nights when midnight bonged itself into history finding Wilson still huddled over his books. Every free daytime hour was taken up with football practice. It was not a schedule conducive to the light, gay pleasures of undergraduate life. Under this regime, Joey grew more grim, more dour, more unfriendly. His voice grew louder, his jeering remarks grew more biting, his belligerent swagger more offensive. Day by day, he grew more completely the bolo.

"Some day," Ross Iglehart said, in the field house after a scrimmage, "I'm going to lay one on that bird. He's been asking for it ever since that first day we caught him walking across the lawn."

"Relax," Irv Samuelson counselled. "The guy just doesn't know any better, that's all. He was born a bolo and a bolo he'll be till he leaves here. Which won't be long."

"I hope!" Iglehart added, fervently. "I'm sick of looking at that ugly mug and listening to that nasty tongue of his."

"Still and all," somebody said, thoughtfully, "that mucker is playing a heck of a lot of center. You've got to give him that."

"Yes," Ross Iglehart said, reluctantly, "I guess you've got to give him that."

CHAPTER III

The Sportsman

THEY had to give that to Joey, every man on the squad. For, hate the position though he might, Wison was developing into one of the best centers that ever had put on an Algonquin uniform. He seemed to have a natural talent for the job, both on offensive and defensive.

With his team handling the ball, Joey could send the pigskin streaking back, straight and true, to the hands of the man elected to carry the oval. And hardly did the ball leave his hand—he was a single-handed snapper-back with wide, splay-fingered mitts—before Joey was digging ahead, those stubby, powerful legs churning; those wide shoulders ramming, carrying everything before them; his head down and tucked in the belly of the opposing guard.

On defense, Joey played roving backer-up man with a cold, cruel singleness of purpose—to get the man with the ball and to get him hard. Let the other side's backs feint and maneuver, Joey was nearly always on the play, following the ball, shoving aside would-be blockers, diving in with a crashing tackle that almost inevitably stopped the ball-carrier in his tracks. Joey seemed to take a vicious pleasure in spilling the man with the ball a little more roughly than the occasion demanded. In the most informal practice session, he made each tackle a thunderous, jarring explosion. And his face wore a grin that was a little wider, though no warmer, whenever the man he dumped on the turf was Ross Iglehart.

If there was any reason for Joey's bitter malignity against Iglehart, it probably was that the big back had been one of the three Juniors who had descended on him when he was crossing the grass in front of Ashley Hall that first day, just after Joey's session with the Assistant Registrar. That and, perhaps, the foregone conclusion that Igelhart would be named captain of the next year's team. Or perhaps it was that Ross was one of the most popular men on the campus, certainly the most handsome and, reputedly,

the wealthiest.

Iglehart was everything that Joey Wilson was not. He had an easy, pleasant manner that had made him a host of friends from his first day at Algonquin. His wardrobe set the pace for all clothes-minded Algonquins. His studies came easily, giving him plenty of time for the social life that Joey viewed from afar. Ross's feminine conquests were equalled only by his successes in student politics.

Joey Wilson came close to hating him. During practice sessions, it was Joey's delight to stand up behind a line defending against Iglehart's backfield and yell:

"Pretty-Boy gets it this time, guys! Let's smear Pretty-Boy!"

Coach Metchler put in a word on one occasion. "Let's save the chatter for the other teams," he said. "I want plenty of pepper but we can do without any name-calling within the club."

That subdued Joey, but not for long. Within a couple of days he was back at yelling "Pretty-Boy" in Iglehart's general direction. Ross tightened his mouth until his lips showed white at the corners but he never replied. And Iglehart's silence, his acceptance of Joey's jeering, bothered Wilson more than the bolo was willing to admit to himself. And that, subconsciously made him detest Ross the more.

Algonquin opened against Trelawny Agricultural that year and Joey Wilson was in the starting lineup. Nor did he take to the fact that he had beaten out the previous season's center for the job gracefully.

"I could've told you, Morrison," he told the veteran, "that you oughta gone out for guard or something besides center. I could've told you I was a cinch for the job, once Coach stuck me in there."

Morrison regarded Joey soberly.

"Good luck, Wilson," he forced himself to say. "It couldn't have happened to a nicer guy."

Joey laughed. "Yeah," he said, "I know what kind of a nice guy you birds think I am. But I'm not losin' any sleep over that, either."

TRELAWNY received and carried the ball to their twenty-eight. The visitors had a light club and a small squad.

"You don't have to be too rough out there today," Heinie had told the Algonquins in the dressing room. "Trelawny's weak on substitutes. The way I get it, they've got some kind of epidemic going on in their cattle barns and most of the boys couldn't get away. I offered to cancel but they insisted on going through with it. Win the game, but I'm not looking for any record score."

Joey had listened, the old twist on his mouth. That was the hooey, he told himself, privately. If these hicks insisted on playing football, they had to expect what they got, didn't they? What kind of a coach was it that told his men to go easy on the other team on account of some cow catastrophe? The devil with that stuff.

Trelawny huddled and went into a single wing formation. Joey, backing up the line, waited, his arms tensed and hooked, his thick body balanced on his toes, waiting for the play to break. The ball went back. A Trelawny wingback took it and headed for a tackle spot. The Aggies' line worked valiantly at making a hole for the back, but they didn't have too much success. Joey was waiting when the Trelawny man came through.

Now, the tackle was hard, but it was clean. The Trelawny back was a lightweight, a man who had no business trying to crack a line as heavy as Algonquins. His interference had dissolved in the clash at the scrimmage line and the back was alone when Joey gathered him in, to send him smacking down to the ground with one of his driving tackles.

Joey got to his feet and turned away. Then he saw his team-mates looking past him and he turned. The Trelawny back was on the ground. From the looks of things, he would be a long time getting up.

Somebody called: "Time out," and the Trelawny captain signaled to his bench. Joey saw two men, one of them carrying a little black bag, start toward the knot of jerseyed men on the field. The stands stirred with a rippling murmur. Joey, when he looked at his teammates, was chilled by the hard look that shone from their eyes.

"I didn't do anything but tackle the guy," he protested, although nobody had spoken. "If the guy can't take an ordinary tackle, he oughtn't to be out here on the field."

Nobody answered him. The other Algonquins turned away, walked apart

from Joey Wilson and dropped to the ground in a tight circle. Joey looked after them, the old sneer on his mouth. Okay, so they thought he'd roughed up the Trelawny guy, did they? Everybody in the stands thought that because he was Joey Wilson, a mucker, he'd given the Aggie punk the knee or the twist, huh? Well, let 'em think what they wanted to. The referee had been in on that play, hadn't he, and he hadn't seen anything wrong, had he?

He watched, with disinterested eyes, as the Trelawny doc and the coach worked over the unconscious man. Ross Iglehart and Jerry Tring, the Algonquin captain, walked over to the side of the injured Aggie. Joey stayed where he was. What was this, a football game or a tea party?

They helped the Aggie back off the field, with the Trelawny stands sending up a brave cheer, and a substitute came on. Smaller and lighter than the man that had been hurt, Joey told himself, and a cinch to send flying when it came time to tackle him. Because if these Joes thought he was going to ease up, just because the first man he'd tackled happened to get hurt, they had another think coming.

Time was called in and Trelawny huddled again. This time it was an end sweep, with the Aggie back's interference going down like tenpins as the Algonquin line sifted through. Joey danced along behind his own scrimmage line, his eyes on the ball-carrier, waiting for the lateral that looked like it was in the works. The Aggies had sent out a flanker and this man was pacing himself with the ball-carrier for either a lateral or a fake, with a cut-back.

It was the pass and Joey was on the flanker fast. He almost made the tackle, but not quite. Ross Iglehart came up, passed him and dove at the pass receiver, nipping the Aggie's feet from under him cleanly. Joey felt a hot flash of anger rise within him. It had been his tackle. He had followed the play right through and he had a clear shot at the pass receiver, and then this big Pretty-Boy had to barge in and take the tackle away from him.

AND the other Algonquins, they were taking it big, slapping Ross on the shoulder and saying something about it being a nice tackle. Rats, a baby couldn't have missed that one, with the Trelawny man off balance, reaching for the bad pass. If he had made the clutch, he would have sent that Aggie back sailing a couple of yards before he landed.

Trelawny elected to kick on third down and Irv Samuelson took it on his thirty-eight. A fast Aggie end had him before he had travelled five yards. Algonquin huddled.

"Try Number Four-A for size," Samuelson said. "Make it good."

Number Four-A was right through the middle and Joey braced himself. He slapped the ball back to Iglehart and churned forward. These Trelawny creeps sure folded fast, he thought; faster than even the Algonquin third-string line that he had worked against in scrimmage. Even Morrison could punch a hole in this line.

He kept on going, broke into the secondary, spilled a Trelawny back with a hard-flung block. He got up to see that Iglehart was down, a foot behind the line of scrimmage!

Well, that was good; that was dandy! Here he'd opened up a hole a Sherman tank could have gone through and that big Pretty-Boy had to get tackled behind the line, somehow! The big phoney must be giving him the business; trying to make it look in the stands as though Joey hadn't opened up any hole.

He stamped back to the huddle, leaned into the circle.

"What gives?" he demanded. "I clean out the whole middle of the line and this guy—"

"He slipped," Samuelson cut in. "Same thing, Four-A."

"He slipped, huh?" Joey asked. "Maybe he'll slip this time, too, to make me look bad."

"Check," said Samuelson. "Shut up, Wilson. Four-A. Let's go."

His pass to Iglehart was perfect, he knew. He went forward again, ramming another hole in the center of the Trelawny line. He didn't get through to the secondary this time, but he flattened his section of the forward wall before he lost his feet. He lay there, waiting for Iglehart to thunder over him. There was the thud and grunt of bodies colliding and the squeal of the referee's whistle.

He waited for whoever was on top of him to get off and then climbed to his feet. Ross Iglehart had made a bare yard.

That settled it. Iglehart might not answer back when Joey threw those Pretty-Boy cracks at him, but Iglehart had another way of getting hunk. Iglehart could refuse to gain any ground through Joey's holes and that would make Wilson look bad to the people who never followed the line of play but just the man with the ball. Those experts up in the stands wouldn't see the holes Joey had smashed in the Trelawny forward wall before they closed up. They'd think that Wilson, the mucker, was getting slapped back by those Aggies.

"Listen," he grated, from between clenched teeth. "I don't know what I can do to get yardage for this Pretty-Boy. I already—"

"Shut up," Samuelson said, tonelessly. "Mike, you let that end come through that time to get Ross. Watch that stuff."

"Yah," Joey jeered. "If Pretty-Boy had wanted to, he could've—"

"I said shut up," Samuelson said. "I'm running this club."

"And a swell job you're doing, too," Joey said. "I don't think."

"Time out," Samuelson said, with a sigh. The quarterback looked at Jerry Tring, the tackle captain. Jerry nodded slowly, straightened himself and looked toward the sidelines. He raised a hand and Joey, turning, saw Morrison, the man he had supplanted in the tackle spot, come out onto the field, fitting a helmet to his head. Furiously, Joey turned back to Samuelson and Tring.

"Listen, you guys," he said, "you can't get away with this! I played my spot better than anybody on this club played his position! It ain't my fault you didn't gain through me. And that tackle that knocked the guy out wasn't dirty."

"Sure," Jerry Tring said, evenly. "But if we're going to have an argument with every huddle, if you're going to talk back to the man who's calling the plays, we might do better with a second-string center."

Joey opened his mouth to reply, but Morrison was there by that time, reporting to the referee: "Morrison for Wilson at center." Joey tore his headgear off and slammed it to the ground. Then he picked it up and began running toward the bench. There were no cheers to greet him as he neared the Algonquin sideline.

HEINIE METCHLER was waiting for him. The coach handed Joey a parka, touched his shoulder briefly for the benefit of the stands, and said:

"When you get to be quarterback, you can call the signals too, Wilson. Till then, you'd better keep your mouth shut."

"But did you see that guy Iglehart?" Joey asked. "Twice I made a hole for him and twice he fell down on the job, on purpose."

"He slipped the first time," the coach contradicted. "The second time, Mike Young let the Trelawny end sneak past him. The end made a shoestring tackle. Ross didn't fall down purposely either time."

"Ahhhh," Joey snorted. "Maybe he made it look good, but that's what he did."

"You might try keeping your mouth shut on the bench, as much as on the field," Heinie said, calmly. "Otherwise I might forget you were sitting there."

Wilson stamped off to the bench and took a seat apart from the others. He watched, his gorge still high in his throat, as the Algonquin team reeled off two runs of fifteen and eighteen yards on two successive plays. He was still there, his chin sunk deep in the folds of his parka, when the quarter ended with the score, Algonquin, 14; Trelawny, 0.

"All right, Wilson," Metchler said, as the teams changed goals. "Let's see what you can do in there. And this time, keep it buttoned."

Joey went in, with a flock of substitutes. On his way to the scrimmage line, he passed Ross Iglehart, coming out. The two men gave each other level stares as they passed, Joey's accusing, Iglehart's almost blank. It was as though Ross were seeing somebody who was faintly familiar but who wasn't well enough known to risk the exchange of a greeting.

"The phoney," Joey told himself, bitterly. "The high-hat jerk."

Trelawny had the ball, third down, and deep in their own territory. Later on in the game, the Aggies would pass from similar positions but now, with the game only a quarter old, the visitors still were trying to maintain some semblance of logical football, in spite of the obvious hopelessness of their cause. A punt was a virtual certainty and Joey edged up close to the scrimmage line. He went through the Trelawny center with the snap of the ball and he was on the kicker

before the Aggie had fairly caught the pigskin. Too slow for the backfield, huh? Joey guessed that that would show Heinie how slow he was!

The Trelawny punter swung a desperate kick and Joey turned in midair to escape that foot. The ball slammed into his shoulder and bounded straight up into the air. Joey, falling, tried to twist himself back so that he would land on his feet, giving him a chance at that loose ball. He landed in a heap on top of the Trelawny back and the two of them went down in a lump. And as they hit the ground, Joey heard the sound of a crack, something like a stick breaking.

He knew what it was, at once. He had heard that sound before, when a man working with him on a collar bound pipe had fallen, catching his leg between two joists of a fourble board. The guy beneath him, Joey knew, had a busted leg.

He cautiously got to his feet, being careful not to jostle the Trelawny man with the broken leg. He had just straightened when he became conscious of a furious whistling in his ear, a hand at his shoulder. Curiously, he looked at the red-faced referee.

The guy was making the unnecessary roughness sign! Joey's eyes widened as he watched the official in the striped shirt and white knickers gesture furiously toward the scoreboard, stoop, pick up the ball and begin pacing off the penalty. There was a low sound from the Algonquin stands, an ugly sound that never could be mistaken for cheering.

Bewildered, Joey stared after the referee and then looked down at the Trelawny back who still lay where he had fallen, his face gray under the green leather helmet. Wilson turned to another Aggie man who came up to his injured mate and said:

"He busted his leg. I heard it crack when we hit."

The Trelawny man turned a bleak and pinched face toward Joey.

"You ought to know," he said, "you were the one who fixed him up."

"Me!" Joey said. "Listen, I didn't rough him up. I just blocked the kick, that's all, and he fell wrong. Ask him if I roughed him up!"

The Trelawny man turned away, without speaking, knelt by the man on the ground. The Aggie coach and the man with the black bag were coming out on the field again.

"Honest," Joey protested. "I didn't mean to hurt him. He—"

There was a hand at his elbow, pulling him away, and Irv Samuelson was talking in a low voice.

"Don't make it any worse than it is," Samuelson said. "That bunch is pretty sore. First thing you know, you'll be winding up in a fist fight and wouldn't that look nice!"

"Listen, mug," Joey flared. "I'm tryin' to tell you I didn't rough that guy. Maybe it looked bad because he was off balance and so was I, but I didn't rough him. That referee's wrong."

"Sure," Samuelson said, coldly. "One tackle and one blocked kick, and two men laid out. Both of them accidents."

Joey wrenched his arm out of Samuelson's grip and stalked away, rage making a seething cauldron of his brain. These guys, these mugs who were supposed to be his team-mates, were ready to think the worst of him, sure enough. If it had been somebody else who had had the bad luck to lay out those two Trelawny guys, they would have been yammering about tough luck and don't let it get you down. But seeing that it was him, Joey Wilson, they were all treating him like he was a murderer with a bad case of leprosy.

Well, let 'em, he told himself, fiercely. He'd gotten along by himself too long to need the likes of them to help him through. If they wanted to think he was a guy who'd deliberately cripple another man to win a dizzy football game, that was their business. He'd walked alone too long to let whatever they thought worry him.

But just the same, he hoped that the coach, Heinie, didn't think he'd given those two Aggies the works. The coach was getting old and maybe his eyesight wasn't as good as it had been and perhaps he didn't see what had happened just the way it had happened. If these guys right up on the scrimmage line thought he'd pulled a roughing-up job, who could expect the coach, on the sidelines, to think differently?

CHAPTER IV

This Above All

SUBSTITUTES carried the Trelawny back off the field on the stretcher.

Both stands gave him a big cheer. Yeah, Joey thought, that would do him a lot of good. If, instead of a cheer, they'd have given that guy some instruction on how to fall without busting his leg under him, it would have been worth a lot more. But just the same, he was sorry it had happened.

He caught himself up at that thought. Sorry? Why the devil should he be sorry for a guy he'd never seen until that afternoon and probably never would see again? The jerk was out there playing football, wasn't he, instead of tending those sick cows back at the school, wasn't he? He took his chances, along with the rest of them, and if bad luck tapped him, that was just tough lines for him.

If Joey had been the one who had fallen wrong and cracked a gam, who would be feeling sorry for him? Hah! That was a laugh.

Time was in again, with another, smaller, frailer Trelawny man in the backfield. The roughing penalty against Joey had given the visitors one of their few first downs that day and now they were spread in an open formation that spelled pass to Joey. He danced around back of the line, rubbing the palms of his hands along his thighs to dry them for a possible interception. The ball went back, a Trelawny man began to fade, and Joey went through, into the Aggie backfield.

He almost made the interception, but the ball slapped his fingertips and careened off to one side, wide of its target. Second and ten. The Trelawny club made a stab at tackle and Joey was right in there, waiting for it. This time, he went down under a block from a Trelawny tackle, but the block left the ball-carrier open and somebody else got him just past the line of scrimmage. Third and eight.

It was another pass coming up, Joey knew. It was almost as though he were huddling with the Aggies, so certain was he that there was a pass play in the offing. He danced around again behind the line, dried his palms, waited for the pass from center and streaked for the left side of the line, where the wingback receiver was drifting.

This time, he made the grab, leaving his feet to catch the ball cleanly in his big hands. He landed running and he risked a glance around him, in search of any interference he might pick up. There was none and he struck out for the Trelawny goal line alone.

Too slow for the backfield, huh? All right, he said, silently, watch this, Coach. Watch the guy you stuck in the center position show up those dumb backs who slip on dry turf and let ends sneak through to catch them. Watch Joey Wilson show up that big jerk, Ross Iglehart.

That goal line looked an awful long ways away, at that, and it didn't seem to be getting much closer in a hurry. He kept running, stretching those short legs of his to their limit, throwing back his head to get air. He heard footsteps thumping behind him, then the crash of two bodies meeting in a block and the footsteps weren't there any longer. The goal line, suddenly, was close at hand. He went over standing up.

He waited, panting for breath, while the others came down the field to him. And as he waited, he was conscious of a strange thing. The stadium, the entire stands, were silent! For that sixty-odd yard run he had made, nobody in the place had a cheer. He looked over toward the Algonquin side of the field. The three cheer-leaders in their white sweaters with their maroon megaphones were standing there, unmoving, looking at him as silently as though he were a Trelawny man who had scored the winning touchdown against Algonquin.

As he watched, he saw one of the hooded figures on the players' bench stand up, face the crowd and wave his arms. The lethargic cheer-leaders came to life, slowly, reluctantly. Then, from the Algonquin stands came a ragged, dispirited cheer. It ended with:

"Wilson, Wilson, WILSON!"

Thanks very much, Joey said to himself, his mouth twisting. Thanks a heap for nothing. If you mugs have to have one of the players get up and beg you to give me a cheer for a touchdown, you can keep your cheers. You can keep your cheers and your football team and your school. Joey Wilson doesn't have to have anybody beg cheers for him. Down where he came from, Joey Wilson didn't have to have anybody put on an act to beg cheers, when he brought in Gold Medal Number Six, single-handed. They were all ready to cheer then, and wham him on the back and offer him drinks and tell him what a great guy he was. And

the people down there were worth ten times what anybody in those Algonquin stands were worth. They were real people down there, not stuck-up phonies that thought that the tie a guy wore was more important than anything else.

Sure, they were. Sure.

JOEY kept his head down as the other Algonquins came up to the goal line. Of all of them only one man, Jerry Tring, had anything to say. All he said was a brief: "Nice work" and the tone of his voice showed plainly that he was saying that only because he felt called upon, as captain, to make some acknowledgment of the fact that Joey had scored for his team.

"You can save that," Joey said, in a gritty voice. "All I want to know is who was the guy that got up from the bench and finally made those creeps in the stands give me a cheer."

Tring looked at him dispassionately.

"Didn't you know?" he asked. "That's the man you've been so nice to, all along. That was Ross Iglehart."

Joey's mouth dropped. Well, he thought, that was sure a funny one. Here he'd been needling Ross with that Pretty-Boy stuff for weeks, he'd accused Iglehart of dogging it on those line plays to make him look bad, and now Ross was taking it upon himself to get up and tell those silent stands to give him a cheer.

What, he asked himself, was Iglehart's angle? Was he playing the big shot, the "good sport," the fellow who turned the other cheek? That must be it, he decided. Ross Iglehart didn't have a reason in the world to do anything for him, of all people. Iglehart should have gotten a big bang out of the fact that Joey Wilson had run sixty yards for a score and had been given the silent treatment.

Joey shook his head. He couldn't figure it.

It bothered him for the rest of the period, while he ran and tackled and snapped the ball back to his backfield. It was still bothering him when he went off the field with the others at half-time, with Algonquin leading, 28 to 0. In the field house, he sat in a corner, his eyes on big Ross Iglehart, trying to get something from the other man's face that would give him an answer to that puzzle. There wasn't any indication in Iglehart's face that the back knew he had done anything unusual. Ross stayed with his backfield friends and he never once looked in Joey's direction.

Arhhh, it was a grandstand play, Joey decided. Ross Iglehart had thought he'd look pretty big, standing up there in front of that crowd, calling for a cheer for a guy everybody knew hated him.

"We'll start the third team in this half," Heinie Metchler was saying. "This game looks pretty well on ice. Trelawny looks about done in and there's no use in beating them up any more."

There was a silence as the coach looked around the locker room.

"And I want to say right here," the old-timer added, "that both those injuries in the first half were accidents. I had my eye on both plays and I saw what happened. The referee happened to be wrong when he called unnecessary roughness on that blocked kick. I say that, because I'm afraid some of you boys have gotten the wrong idea. Is that plain?"

He waited for an answer that wasn't forthcoming. Over in his corner, Joey bent his head to look down at his feet. It was pretty decent, he admitted grudgingly, for the old boy to come right out and back him up like that. Not that it would make any difference with the other guys, but just the same, it was something to know that the coach had seen what really had happened.

At the start of the third quarter, Joey sat at one end of the bench while Ross Iglehart sat at the other. If they had been sitting side-by-side, Joey thought, he might be tempted to mutter a couple of words of thanks for what Iglehart had done in getting that feeble cheer started. But, naw, he decided, it would look corny for him to be doing anything like that. Besides, he hadn't asked Iglehart to beg for the cheer, had he?

He saw a couple of minutes of play late in the last quarter, when Heinie decided to try out some pass formations that needed smoothing out. Iglehart wasn't on the field then, so there wasn't a chance to speak to the back, even if Joey had wanted to, in the huddle. The game ended in a lop-sided score for Algonquin and they went to the showers.

After supper, Joey was bending over his books—Saturday night was just another night to him—when he gave in to the annoying urge that had been bothering him for hours. He had rather take

a beating than do it, he admitted to himself, but he had to look up Ross Iglehart and thank him for what he had done. He couldn't have himself owing a guy like Iglehart anything, even though it might look like he was crawling around, asking the mug's pardon. He had to balance his books, and thanking Iglehart would do that, even if Ross laughed at him, behind his back.

THE fraternity house where Iglehart lived was practically deserted by reason of the usual Saturday night exodus. The Freshman pledge who answered Joey's ring gave him a strange look and jerked a thumb toward the wide stairway that curved up from the lower hall.

"He's up in his room," the pledge said. "Second door to the right at the head of the stairs."

Joey hesitated outside the door. He wanted to turn back, walk down the stairs and out the front door. He thrust his jaw forward, raised his knuckles and rapped.

"Come in," said Ross Iglehart.

Joey turned the knob and walked in. Ross looked up from over the open suitcase that lay on the bed, a pile of shirts in his hands. His eyebrows went up as he saw who his visitor was and he dropped the shirts into the case.

"Hello," he managed.

"Hello, Iglehart," Joey said, miserably. "I—I came around to say thanks for—well, you know—you got the crowd to give me a cheer after that run and I—I wanted to say thanks."

"That's all right," Ross said, uncomfortably. "It was a swell run. The crowd—well, the crowd didn't understand about what happened before."

"It was an accident," Joey said, with a trace of his old belligerence. "It was an accident, pure and simple."

"Sure," Ross Iglehart said, easily. There was a second's silence and then he waved at a chair.

"Sit down?"

"I—I can't stay," Joey said. "I've got to be going and I see you're going somewhere for the week-end."

Ross Iglehart looked down at his half-packed bags and laughed briefly.

"For more than a week-end, I'm afraid," he said.

"What do you mean?" Joey asked.

Ross made a gesture of hopelessness with a hand.

"I'm quitting school," he said. "Got a wire from home today, just after the game. The old man—well, he took a chance that didn't turn out so good. To put it mildly, the Iglehart family has gone bust with a loud bang."

Joey sank into the chair, his eyes fixed on Iglehart.

"And you've got to leave school?" he asked, in a dazed voice. "You've got to leave Algonquin?"

"Afraid so," Ross said, his face wry. "The old man's wire sounded pretty grim."

Joey considered. If Ross Iglehart left Algonquin, it would mean the loss of the one man who had even come close to being a friend. And, although there had been a time when Joey had been scornful of the thought that he needed a friend, he knew now that a man had to have friends as much as he had to have food and sleep.

"It's—it's just money, isn't it?" he asked quietly. "I mean, if you got the dough somewhere to stay here, they wouldn't need you at home or anything, would they?"

Ross shook his head.

"Why, no," he said. "They wouldn't need me at home. But where would I get the money? You're not thinking of lending it to me, are you?" And he said that last with a laugh.

"Sure," Joey said, calmly. "I'll lend it to you, at two percent."

Ross Iglehart stared.

"You're not serious," he said.

"Why not?" Joey asked. "Maybe I don't look it and maybe I don't act it, but I've got dough, lots of dough. My old man left me leases on some property that turned in Gold Medal Number Six and is going to turn in a lot more wells, before it's through. I guess I'm a couple of times a millionaire; maybe ten times a millionaire."

It was Iglehart's turn to sink into a chair, his eyes glued on Joey.

"Sure," Joey said. "So when I got that dough I headed for a place I wanted to go to all my life, Algonquin. I'd been reading about this place ever since I was a kid. I used to make up dreams about playing football for Algonquin. But when the dough finally arrived and I managed to pass my entrance exams tc get into this place, after doing all that correspondence school work, I—well something happened to me."

He ran his fingers through his coarse, black hair.

"I don't know what it was," he said. "I guess it was just that I knew I was—well, different than the rest of the people here and I figured they'd laugh at me on account of the way I dressed and the way I talked and all, so I—well, I just decided I'd get the jump on 'em. So I laughed at them, I let 'em see I didn't care what they thought of me. I wouldn't give 'em the satisfaction of seeing that I—I wished I was like them."

WILSON raised his head and looked across the room at Iglehart.

"Oh, I could've got a big car and bought expensive clothes and showed everybody I had a lot of dough," he said, "but I was afraid of the kind of friends I'd get that way. I've seen plenty of that down where I come from—chiselers hanging around rich guys and slapping their back just to get what they can out of them. I didn't want that. So I came just the way I was and—"

He spread his big hands in a helpless gesture.

"Well," he said, "you saw how it worked out. I acted so bad, because I was scared to death, that nobody would have anything to do with me and that made me hate them and they hated me worse and—oh, it was a devil of a mess. And today you—you got them to give me a cheer. It was the first break anybody ever gave me at this joint, and it had to be you, of all people. The guy I've been riding worse than anybody else."

He leaned forward in his chair.

"Sure," he said, "I'll lend you the money. Two percent. I'd give it to you, but I know you wouldn't take it. This way, it's strictly business."

"No. No, Joey, I couldn't."

"I know what you're thinkin'," Joey said. "You think if I lend you dough, I'll have you over a barrel. You think I'll figure that loan will be worth your dragging me around with you, trying to get people to take me for something else than a bolo—a mucker."

"No, I—"

"Well, I want to promise you, Ross," Joey said, "that nobody—*nobody*—will ever know one thing about it. And all I ask is that—that once in awhile, when maybe you pass me on the sidewalk or meet me in the locker room or something like that, you'll give me a hello, like you would to Tring or Samuelson or somebody like that."

He looked down at his feet again and his face twisted.

"Y'see, Iglehart," he said, in a low voice, "this lone wolf stuff is the bunk. I might've thrown my weight around and got in everybody's hair, but really, I've been an awful lonely guy."

He heard footsteps crossing the room and then Ross Iglehart was near him.

"Loan or no loan," Ross said, "you won't be lonely any more, Joey. I'm going to take you up on that money proposition, because I want to stay here at Algonquin. I did anyway, of course, but now I've got a special reason. I think—I know—you're going to be a pretty nice sort of a guy to get acquainted with."

He was right, too. They'll always hold Joey Wilson's name up there with Big Boy Drew's, on Algonquin's football roll of honor, but more than that they'll remember Joey as the bolo, the mucker whom everybody on the campus grew to love, even though nobody except Ross Iglehart knew that the man with the flattened nose and the crooked mouth was anything more than an oilfield gaffer struggling for an education so that he might better himself intellectually but, especially, financially.

A New Kind of Football

EIGHT kinds of football are listed in the current Encyclopedia of Sport. Outside of the regular American game, they include six-man football, Australian football, Canadian football, Gaelic football, Rugby football, Association or soccer football and Austus football.

This last is the newest type of football, being a combination of the Australian and American games drawn up by sportswriter Ern Cowley of the *Melbourne Sporting Globe* in 1943, when there were plenty of American troops in Australia and hosts and visitors found it hard to play together.

The Australians could kick the Americans dizzy but had never heard of the forward pass—so the game Cowley devised features both kicking and passing in copious quantities. It is probably the most wide-open form of football yet invented.

True Stories of Exciting Gridiron Action

By JACK KOFOED

Famous Sports Commentator

ONE AFTERNOON THAT MADE ZANY FOOTBALL HISTORY!

OCTOBER 26, 1947 will go down in football history as "Upset Saturday!"

It's tough enough for experts to guess winners, but on that date, the smart boys had a field day in missing selections.

There were strange and dramatic upsets, but the queerest, from any point of view, was that of the Pittsburgh Panthers over

Ohio State. Pitts had been overwhelmed, literally smothered, by lopsided scores, tallying only 12 points against 154. Even the student body had given up on the team, and jeered it. Ohio State was rated an easy three touchdown winner.

Regard, as the French would say, what happened. The game, but slightly manned Pittsburgh team, went berserk. After holding State scoreless in the first period, the Panthers took a poor punt on the 29 yard line, and with short bullet passes, marched to the five, from which point Tony Dimatteo went over for a touchdown.

Much the same thing happened, when another wabbly punt started Pittsburgh on a drive from Ohio State's 30 yard line, and wound up with a second tally that made the final count 12-0.

No one can ever figure that one out. Pittsburgh had a weak team, yet, after all the bashing around it absorbed, it suddenly became an inspired one for an afternoon.

Then, there was unbeaten Baylor and thrice whipped Texas Aggies. No one should have had trouble figuring out who would win that one. Baylor's was a smoothly functioning machine. Suddenly, it became an inept one.

A contributing factor in the astounding 24-0 victory the Aggies scored was the kicking of a fellow named Hollmig. Ten times this kicking specialist booted, and seven times he placed the ball inside Baylor's 12 yard line. Once it went out of bounds on the two, once on the four, and again on the six. That accuracy kept Baylor back on its heels, and the passing of Baty and the running of Dusek turned opportunities into touchdowns.

But, there was another factor even more important. Baylor had been sure handed in previous games. This afternoon they couldn't keep hold of the ball. Four fumbles occurred at crucial moments, and the Aggies recovered every time. Twice they converted fumbles into touchdowns.

This reversal of form was almost as astonishing as the sudden renaissance of those crushed Pittsburgh Panthers.

Then, there was the case of the Mississippi Rebels, headed by Charley Conerly, top offensive man in intercollegiate football. There was nothing wrong with Conerly that day. He was a top performer against the Razorbacks of Arkansas . . . but there was another fellow on the field, Clyde Scott, of

Smackover, who had more than a little to say about the result of the battle.

For most of the game it looked as though Mississippi would keep out of the upset class. With six minutes to go the Rebels led by 14-12, close enough, but apparently all the margin needed. It would have been save for Scott, of Smackover.

Arkansas was on its 33 yard line when Scott looped a 41 yard pass . . . and on the next play cut over left guard for a 23 yard gallop that wasn't stopped until he had reached the three yard line

From that point Looney plunged over, and the game was won, 19-14 . . . won on three perfect plays.

How can even experts figure such things will happen on any given afternoon?

HOW ARMY'S THIRTY-TWO GAME WINNING STREAK BROKE!

THE rampaging cadets of Army had not been beaten in thirty-two consecutive games. Blanchard, Davis and Tucker were gone, but a great line remained, and fine, if less publicized backs, carried on the Army tradition.

Their game with Columbia was considered a breather. Lou Little's men had done well against stiff opposition, but offered none of the trouble that might be expected from Notre Dame, for instance.

The first half seemed to prove the experts

were right. Army rolled over the Lions, and held a 20 to 7 lead. Only heartbreak highway was ahead for the Columbians. They couldn't expect anything from Fate. And Army's Rip Rowan had proved he might be a fine substitute for either one of the Touchdown Twins.

When the second half started, the crowd in Baker Feld was under no illusions about what the Lions might do. They figured to be beaten by three or four touchdowns at least. But, Little's men didn't seem to know they did not have a chance.

They had a couple of fellows named Rossides and Swiacki, a pitcher and a catcher, if you want to call them that. He started a 57 yard drive by passing and passing again. Columbia reached Army's 29. That is where they should have stopped . . . but they didn't. Bill Swiacki drifted into the end zone, and Rossides hit him with a peg that looked like one of Walter Johnson's fast ones. Yablonski booted one through the uprights, and that made the count 20-14.

Even at that, you couldn't have found many people in the stadium who would have risked a bet on Columbia. Chances were the Army would explode as had become an Army habit. Again, someone forgot to tell the Lions what the pattern was.

The Cadets began a drive that finally stalled on the Lions' 34 yard stripe. They had been moving, but they lacked the last furious drive that might have been the big difference. Columbia took over, but faced a lot of territory between them and a touchdown.

There wasn't much for Little's men to do but take to the air. They couldn't make headway against a bruising Cadet line. But, Yablonski hit center, and picked up eleven surprising yards that caught everyone off balance. The second guessers weren't fooled, though. No one was going to make gains like that often. Rossides dropped back to pass. Everybody, including Army, expected a forward. The defense was spread wide. The only trouble was that Rossides couldn't spot a receiver. So, there was nothing for him to do but run for it. Fortunately, everything was wide open, and the fleet back sprinted all the way to Army's 33 before he was dragged to earth.

By this time Columbia had caught fire. It's strange how suddenly the flame can burst forth. No one can tell how or why. Kusserow cracked the line for four more yards, and Fate was in the saddle, spurring the Lion on. The Cadets had not been beaten. They couldn't be beaten . . . but they were back on their heels, and rocking.

Swiacki sifted through, and once more Ros-

sides hit him with a perfect pass. In their best days, Baugh or Luckman never shot 'em over better, and Swiacki was another Hutson in grabbing 'em. The frantic Cadets brought Bill down three yards short of pay dirt, but time was running out. If the Lions made a touchdown now there wouldn't be much time for further play.

There have been many great goal-line stands in football history. West Pointers had them before, and these boys meant to make another. You don't let a streak of thirty-two games go without fighting. The little forward passer picked up a yard . . . and then Kusserow hurled himself in the fighting, clawing mass that was the Army line, and scored the touchdown that tied the count at 20-all.

Now, it all came down to the conversion. If it were made, one of the great victory runs of all times would be smashed. If it were missed, the streak would continue.

Big Yablonski walked out from the bench. He had booted two other points, but this was different. The whole weight of the game rested on his shoulders. The thought of such things kick a man's nerves around. They make him lose his sense of timing, if he lets emotion get the better of him. There was no expression on Yablonski's face, as he took his place behind the crouched Columbia line.

There was apparently no quivering nerves in him, either, for when the ball soared back from center, Yablonski very calmly kicked it between the uprights for the point that enabled Columbia to tally the greatest upset in a decade of football.

The Army's winning streak had come to an end at last.

HERE'S ANOTHER UPSET FOR THE RECORD BOOKS!

ILLINOIS, like Army, had a winning streak of its own. Not a staggering one, perhaps, but no one had beaten the Illinois in ten straight games. They were a two touchdown favorite over the Boilermakers of Purdue on Upset Saturday.

But, betting odds in football don't mean a thing. Early in the first period Dwight Eddelman punted from his eight yard line. Eddelman usually boots the leather a long way, and this kick wasn't a bad one at all. As a matter of fact, it hit at midfield, and then one of those freaks of luck cropped up. The ball landed point down, and instead of rolling ahead, or to the side, bounced straight back toward the Illini goal. It was downed on the 31 yard line. That's a lot of difference.

Bob DeMoss flicked a fifteen yard pass to Adams, and then Jack Milito plunged across for a touchdown. The point was converted, and Purdue led 7-0. Not that the Illinois backers thought this would make any difference. Their boys would soon wipe out the deficit, and pile up a fat lead.

The idea didn't work out. The Boilermakers set up a five man backfield on defense, and raised the very deuce with Perry Moss, ace Illini passer, but at the start Purdue was fooled on the ancient, and completely outmoded, Statue of Liberty play.

Bernie Kreuger dropped back, and posed like Gypsy Rose Lee. Eddelman took the ball out of his hands, and went fourteen yards before he was snagged. Then, Moss laced a pass into the hands of Joe Buscemi, good for thirteen. He added a twenty-four-yard flip to Chick Maggioli, for a touchdown. The score was tied, and at that moment not many would have been willing to risk their money on Purdue.

But, Moss, who had been getting his passes away against every team except Army, found himself stopped cold. When he had to succeed, the Purdue defense refused to be pierced.

In the third period Eddelman punted out

of bounds on his own 34 yard stripe. Considering that the Illini had been unable to function as everyone had expected they would, this was too close for comfort. As it turned out, there was no comfort at all.

Illinois knew DeMoss would pass whenever he had a chance, just as the Boilermakers knew Moss heaved 'em at every oppor-

tunity. They spread their defenses; looking for what was scheduled, but unable to stop it just the same.

It was like the Luftwaffe trying to knock down the Eighth Air Force, when the bombing of Germany started.

The lanky quarterback practically threaded a needle with a toss that landed in Adams' arms on the six yard stripe. But, a first down on the six yard line is bright and cheerful news to the team that has the ball.

Four chances to make six yards. You can hammer the line, or try the ends, but those things were farthest from Bob's mind. He shovelled one to Bob Heck, and Heck went over for the touchdown that beat Illinois 14-7.

So, another upset was written into the books. The collective records of Army and Illinois represented forty-two games without a loss, and they were both whipped on the same bright October afternoon.

BOB YOUNG THROWS TWO PASSES—AND ONE BEATS HIS TEAM!

WE MIGHT also have a look at the game between Northwestern and Indiana. The result was contrary to what the experts expected, but the upset angle concerned one of the players. Not George Taliaferro, the widely heralded triple threat halfback star of the Hoosiers. The upset guy was Bob Young, also of Indiana.

In the first quarter Young threw a 59 yard touchdown pass to Bob Ravensberg that gave the Hoosiers a 6-0 lead at half time, since the conversion was missed. It's nice being a hero. You not only get the cheers from the stands, but the adulation of your mates, as well.

When the teams trotted out on the field for the third quarter Young felt pretty good. Why not? His arm had been as valuable to Indiana as Hugh Casey's was to Brooklyn during the world series.

But, in that third quarter . . . 'way back in his own territory, and with no other score having been made . . . the quarterback passed again. This time Worthington, of Northwestern instead of the intended receiver, leaped into the air, and circled the ball with his arms.

Nobody was in the way when Worthington started goalward. He picked up his interference, and with the aid of good downfield

blocking, raced all the way for a touchdown.

Jim Farrar place kicked the extra point, and Northwestern won its first Big Nine Victory of the season. It isn't often a player throws two touchdown passes . . . and one is the play that beats his team!

FOUR BREAKS CHANGE THE RESULT OF A CRUCIAL GAME

IT WOULD seem that when a team wins by a margin of 28 to 7 it has demonstrated its superiority beyond any cavil. But, take the game between the University of Miami and George Washington as an example. Exactly four breaks made the difference.

At the start of the second period the Floridians were pushing toward a touchdown. Hal Johnston faded back, and passed. Pete Labukas leaped into the air, and intercepted. No one would consider that a break for the offensive team, but actually it was.

With the Miami defensive pulled in tight, Spangler tried a quick kick. It was excellent strategy, but Hurricane linesman De Marco smashed through the Colonial forward wall, leaped high, blocked the kick . . . and recovered on the 10 yard line. Johnston fumbled, and lost five yards, but on the next play flicked a forward to Whitey Campbell, who was nailed inches from pay dirt. From that point Ghaul plunged over for a touchdown.

A few minutes later, deep in his own territory, Spangler tried a pass. It was a good one, straight at the potential receiver, but Bob Sutter seemed to come out of nowhere, grabbed it, and raced 29 yards for a touchdown. Intercepted passes are frequent, of course, and perhaps should not be classified as breaks, but that is exactly what they are. The demarcation between a catch and a miss

under such circumstances is almost too thin to classify.

George Washington scored a touchdown on some flashy passing of their own. Then,

they kicked off. Bowman took the ball back to the 26; added another 10 at the wing. Then, Campbell, who had been a defensive back until this game, went off left tackle.

This normally isn't a scoring play. Whitey wriggled away from two potential tacklers. Then, Butkis, George Washington's outstanding giant linesman, cut in to nail the ball carrier. He was deadly on defense. But, just as he lunged for Campbell, he slipped, went down, and the ball carrier squeezed past. Then, he was out in the open, and going like the wind. The Colonial safety man was the only man between him and a touchdown, but Hurricane end, Yovocin, took him out with a flying block . . . and there was another tally.

The last touchdown came on a punt return, and that is even more rare than a long run off tackle. Injaychock took a kick on his own 26 yard stripe. In the 74 yards between him and the double stripe were eleven opposing players all determined to stop him. You can write your own odds against a man getting by all of those. Yet, that is exactly what Injaychock did, with the aid of some fine downfield blocking by his mates.

The slightest switch of fortune on any of those plays would have told an entirely different story.

ALL-AMERICAN

A NOVELET

Chug Hadden had started for Dutch with blood in his eye when the other fellows grabbed him

CHAPTER I

Stubborn Dutch

PERSONALLY, I hereby wash my hands of the whole thing. I mean I'm supposed to be one of the operators on this campus, one of the sharpies who can always come up with an angle when needed. I don't know—all we wanted was our unbeaten season. We didn't exactly ask for a three ring circus. But that's what we got.

I can remember how Tubby flew off the handle, up in his field house office, that day Dutch strolled in and casually announced he wouldn't be playing this season.

"Tubby" Dawes is a red-faced, popeyed little geezer who waddles when he walks and weighs fifty pounds more than he ought to. Believe it or not, he was once All-American mention at Prescott, same as Dutch last year. Tubby eats too much and has high blood pressure, plus a hot temper, which is not a good combination.

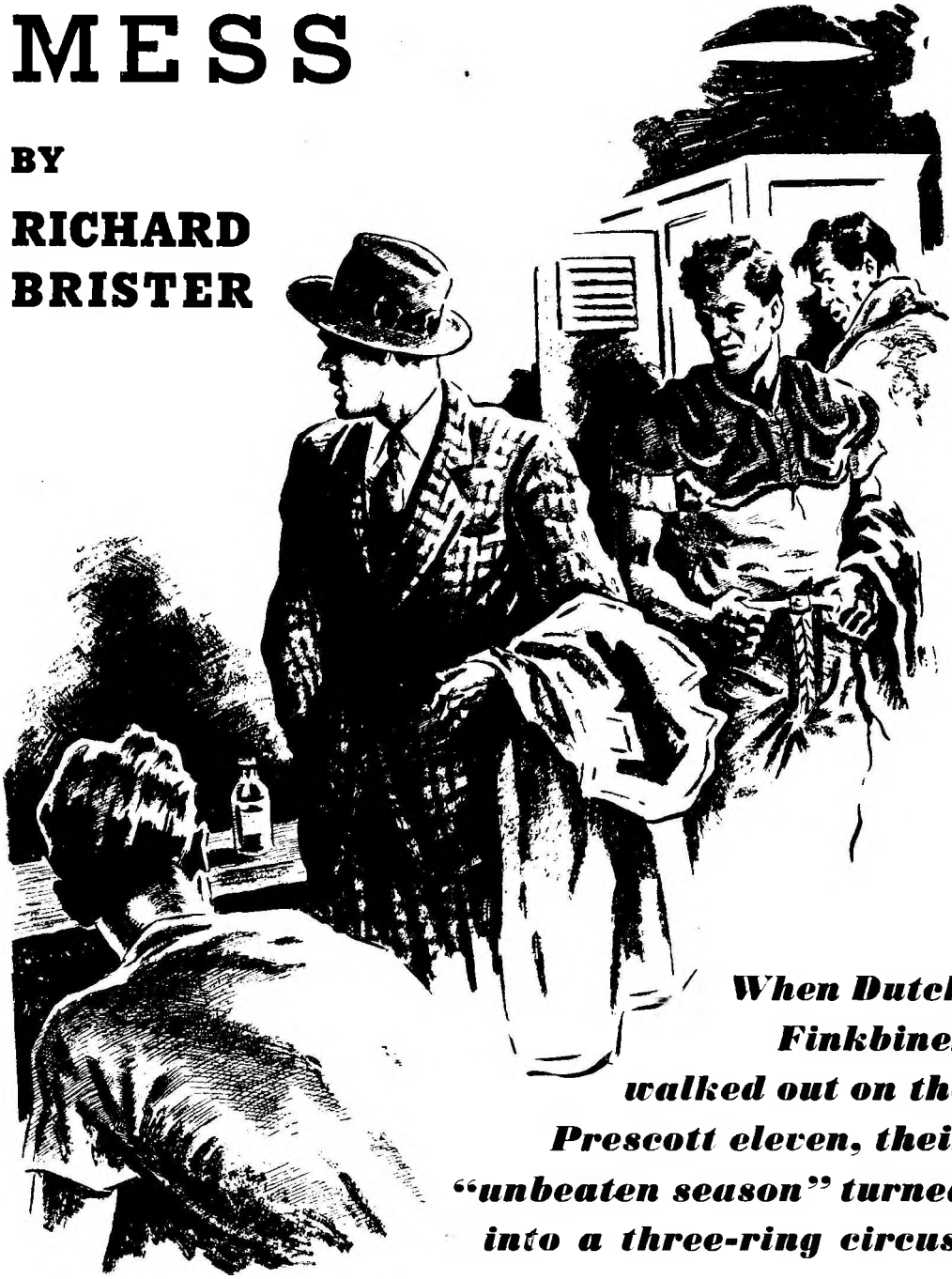
I remember he looked at Dutch, and his little mouth opened a couple of times, and his sunken chest heaved.

Suddenly he reared up in back of his desk and hollered, "What kind of a gag

MESS

BY

RICHARD BRISTER



When Dutch Finkbiner walked out on the Prescott eleven, their "unbeaten season" turned into a three-ring circus!

is this, Finkbiner? Have you gone crazy?"

"Why didn't you call in the county farm agent?"

"Mebbe it's funny to you," said Dutch.

Dutch just stood there with his big hands behind him, all two hundred and sixteen pounds of him, looking as solid as a young oak, and as immovable when he'd made that mind of his up to something.

"I ain't crazy, Coach. I'm just telling you I ain't playing this year."

Dutch could use better English than that. I remember once I gave him the needle for expressing himself like a hick —I'm student editor of the *Prescott Herald* and the kind of grammar a man uses

is more or less down my alley—and Dutch fastened those bland blue eyes of his on me.

"I *am* a hick, Skeeter. When I graduate out of this place, I'm headin' straight back to my pop's farm, and I mean to stay put there. I'm up here at Prescott to learn what I can about the new farming methods. But I ain't over eager to learn a way of talking that will make my neighbors say, when I get back home for good, that I'm putting on airs."

I told Mary Jane Whitcomb, the redheaded coed I'm grooming to take over the editorship of the *Herald* when I graduate next year, what Dutch had said, and her reaction surprised me.

"That's the practical way to look at it, Skeeter. Maybe he's right."

"He is wrong," I pronounced loftily, leaning heavily on my prestige as editor of the *Herald*. "There is good grammar and there is bad grammar. And then there is the kind our phenomenal fullback uses, which is downright punko."

Mary Jane crinkled her freckled nose at me. "Honestly, you're so clever, Skeeter."

BUT getting back to that day in Tubby's office, I was keeping my eyes peeled on Tubby, for fear the quick-tempered little guy would pick up a paperweight off his desk and start pitching indoor forward passes. Little Skeeter is very allergic to hits on the head.

But Tubby was hanging on to himself pretty well, all things considered. He wasn't even looking at Dutch. He spoke toward the ceiling in one of those quiet voices that always make me kind of nervous.

"So you ain't playing this year. Now ain't that just ducky? You come straggling in here a week and a half late for practise, and then you have the colossal gall to tell me you figure you'll just skip the game this year."

"Listen, Coach—"

"You listen, Finkbiner! You realize what you've done to me? You realize what you're trying to do to your Alma Mater?"

"What?" said Dutch, in a voice that said he'd like to be reasonable about this thing if Tubby would let him.

"You mean," gulped the coach, "you have to ask me that? You know this is the year we're going after that unbeaten season, Finkbiner. You know we've never had one in the forty-seven years we've played football. You know the kind of teams we've got on our schedule this year. State, Northern, Tech, Western Teachers."

"Sure, I know all that, Coach," Dutch said. "I'll admit it sounds real important, the way you tell about it. I look at things kind of different, I guess. Way I look at it, it ain't goin' to change the course of history none if we don't get that unbeaten season."

"What's come over you?" said Tubby, choking his words out. "You didn't used to talk this way." His jaw suddenly snapped shut and he glared at Dutch. "What you think about the game doesn't concern me, so long as you can get out there and pitch those payoff passes to Chug Hadden. Now I've wasted enough time listening to your goofy notions. Get downstairs!"

"Nope." Dutch shook his head, and that big jaw of his tightened. "I said I ain't comin' out this year, Coach."

"What? Now you listen to me, you muleheaded young idiot, I—"

"I ain't kiddin', Coach."

Tubby slumped heavily in back of his desk, and started to beat a rat-a-tat-tat with his fingers. He flung a disgusted glance in my general direction.

"Hear the man, Skeeter? He says he ain't kidding. You wanted a story for your newspaper. You've got it."

"Well, at least," I said, "it was a beautiful dream while it lasted."

Tubby glared at Dutch. "Why in Sam Hill didn't you let me know about this beforehand? So I could make plans."

"I didn't know where to get in touch with you, Coach, the first part of the summer. The last few weeks, me and Pop have been too blame busy with harvestin' to draw a deep breath, much less take time out to worry about football. Pop don't hold a very high opinion of me playin' football."

"Oh, he don't, don't he?"

"Fact is, Coach, I never cared too much about it myself. I'm here to learn farming. I ain't learned anywhere near as much as I should, up to now, account of being wore out, spring and fall, practising football. I ain't a quick learner, like Skeeter for instance. I been passing my courses all right, but when Pop asked me to test his south forty for a winter wheat crop this summer, I didn't have no idea how to set about it."

"That's tough," said Tubby, sarcastic. "Why didn't you call in the county farm agent?"

"Mebbe it's funny to you," said Dutch. "Not to me. Pop's payin' plenty to send me up here to Prescott, and if I ain't learnin' what I should, Pop's gettin' cheated out of his money. Football's the fly in the ointment, it seems like. I figure to give her the go-by, this final year, and really learn somethin'."

"Now listen," said Tubby, and I could see beads of sweat begin to pop on his forehead, "you don't want to decide a thing like this all of a sudden."

"Never did. Been thinking her over pretty near all summer."

"But blame it all, kid, do you realize what you're turning down? You're in line for All-American this year."

"Taking a purely practical view of it," said Dutch, "that don't stack up for a row of beans. Like Pop says, he sent me up here to learn farming."

"Now hold up a minute," said Tubby, losing control. "Do you realize that if you made All-American from a small college like Prescott, you could practically write your own ticket in the pro game? Why, you could buy a farm like your pop's with your take from one pro season."

"You mean," said Dutch innocently, "I could earn eighty thousand?"

I WHISTLED. This was the first indication I'd ever heard that Dutch's old man was that kind of a farmer. You'd never guess it from the way Dutch watched his nickels around campus, or from his country fed wardrobe.

I could see that Dutch's question had taken a fall out of Tubby, too. He quit trying to tempt Dutch with the prospect of big dough in the pro game.

"Listen, kid," he said, "where's your school spirit? You can't let the old college down this way. You've got to come out for the team."

Dutch stood there shaking his straw-thatched head, and again I was reminded of a solid young oak tree.

"Nope," he said. "It's no use, Coach. I'm going after them lessons."

"Get out!" yelled Tubby.

"Hey?"

"Get out of here, you muleheaded young nitwit, before I throw something at you!"

Dutch got out of there. Not that he was scared. In fact, I noticed he was grinning sheepishly, as he closed the door.

Tubby swore violently under his breath, and lighted a stogey with trembling hands. I looked at him and tried to keep things light and pleasant.

"Love those Dutch," I said. "A wonderful people. But stubborn."

"What's so wonderful about bein' stubborn?" growled Tubby.

"It depends on the point of view, Coach. But I see what you mean. I'm afraid we're going to have a bad season."

Tubby winced. Fear lurked in his eyes, and shone upon his weathered brow. It was embarrassing to see this man in his hour of trial. He lost all pride. He looked at me and said in a voice that was almost a whine:

"Listen, Skeeter, you're a brainy kid. You're supposed to be a slick operator on this campus. Everyone says so. Think of something."

"Now?"

"Look," he said, "this isn't for publication in that campus rag you're running, but—" He hesitated.

My nose crinkled. Curiosity throbbed within me. "Yes?"

"Can you keep a secret?"

I crossed myself.

Tubby looked at me. "You know where I been promised a job, if I can pull off this unbeaten season this year?"

"Notre Dame. Michigan. Harvard—"

"Don't be funny. Tech. A three-year contract, at almost double what this jerkwater—what good old Prescott is able to pay me."

I whistled at him. "Velly nice."

"So you can see," said Tubby, "why you've got to do something about that big mulehead screwball!"

"Why do I have to do something! You've got your signals mixed, Coach."

Tubby folded his hands and looked at the ceiling, as if he was praying. He was not praying. He was in the act of inserting the knife in my back.

"Let me see, kid, you run a newspaper, don't you?"

"Huh?"

"And what's the big news on campus this year? Football, hey?"

"You can't blackmail—"

"That bein' the case," said Tubby, "a smart newspaperman would take care to stay on good terms with his source of supply. Which is me. Right, Skeeter?"

"Listen, Coach, that's not fair."

"Skeeter," said Tubby, with a glance out the window, "I got to get down there and take over the practise. I'll see you around." He went away.

CHAPTER II

Editorial Blast

I STOOD there at the window. After a moment, I saw Tubby's globular figure emerge from the chute that led from the dressing rooms on to the field, and I stuck my tongue out. *"Et tu,* Tubby," I paraphrased Julius Caesar. I was bitter. I was as mad as three thousand drenched hens, and then I found myself watching the scrimmage players outside there.

Tubby's "A" team had the ball. They were a big rangy bunch with plenty of that old drive that counts in the clinches. They were, in fact, the best aggregation of players we'd ever had during one season at Prescott. With Herman "Dutch" Finkbiner in there at fullback, to sparkplug the machine, we'd been almost a sure shot for that unbeaten season Tubby had his heart set on.

As I watched, Center "Pudge" Podoff flipped the ball back to Wes Pierce, our fleet-footed left halfback. It was a delayed buck off the right tackle. Ed Galloway and Hank Pordall, our right end and tackle, cleared the way nicely. Wes flashed through the hole, took three plunging strides in the scrub secondary, then went down under an avalanche of eager second-string tacklers.

I could see Tubby Dawes burning up, even from my vantage point way above the field, and in a way, I couldn't blame him. The gang wasn't coming along as well as they ought to, at this stage of the season. It was as if Wes Pierce knew that none of these drills really counted, knew that once Dutch turned out, the workouts would really add up and make sense.

Until Dutch turned out, in other words, the mood that prevailed out there was the mood that would prevail at a dress rehearsal on Broadway, with the show's one big star among those absent.

I watched another couple of plays. The A squad manhandled the scrub line at will. They always got their plays launched nicely, but they lacked that extra something to keep the ball rolling. They lacked Dutch Finkbiner.

Suddenly I wasn't sore at Tubby Dawes any more. I was sorry for him. After the buildup about the wonderful year we were going to have, it was going to cost Tubby his practically hairless scalp if we couldn't get Dutch out there. The team would be a flop without the big fullback. There seemed to be no question about it.

I walked out of Tubby's office and went looking for Dutch. I didn't know what I was going to do, but I knew I had to do something.

"It is a time," I told myself as I trundled down the circular steps, "for greatness."

I made a tactical error. I looked for Dutch up at the Commons, when in fact he had not left the field house. I finally doubled back on myself and found Dutch in the dressing room talking to old Matt Supplee, the rubber. Dutch had been waiting for the team to come in from practise, as he said, so he could "explain his position."

I decided to sit tight, when I heard that, and await developments before personally going to work on the problem. If you can force the enemy to make the first move, you can sometimes beat him without lifting a finger. And besides, this promised to be entertaining.

It was. The team finally trooped in, hot, tired, and in a sour mood as the result of Tubby's verbal lambastings. Dutch stood on a bench in his street clothes, fresh as a daisy, and said, "Look, fellows, do you mind if I say something?"

They didn't mind. Tubby hadn't told them anything yet. They couldn't imagine what this was about.

"Go ahead, Dutch. Spill it," Ed Galloway said.

"Thanks," Dutch said. He looked at Tubby. "I can see Coach hasn't told you guys anything yet. I'm not playin' this year, and I just wanted to make sure you guys understood why, before—"

"Not playing this year?" said Chug Hadden. "Why not?"

Dutch tried to tell him. About the lessons, how he wanted to concentrate this year, and really learn about farming. Chug Hadden kept butting in. He was a beefy guy with a broken nose, and he could be counted on to look out for Chug Hadden.

"Listen," he said, "you can't pull off a crazy stunt like this on me, Dutch. I won't stand for it."

DUTCH fastened those innocent blue eyes on him. "You won't?"

"You realize what a rep we made for ourselves as a forward pass combo last year?" Chug said. "There toward the end of the season we were the talk of the country."

"What of it?" said Dutch, frowning a little.

Chug looked embarrassed, and at the same time, sort of sour. "I never said anything to anybody about this, because I don't blow my whistle until a thing's all wrapped up and delivered, but there was a Buck scout smelling around here when we played Teachers last year."

"I never saw any Buck scout at that game, Chug," Tubby Dawes said thoughtfully.

"You weren't supposed to. He was under wraps. He happens to be a friend of a friend of mine, and I was the only one that he tipped his hand to."

"Get to the point," Tubby said.

"Sure," Chug said. "The guy liked me. That's the point. He said if I looked good again this year, I'm a sure thing for that number three spot with the Bucks. Gleason is fading. They're going to need a guy who can hang on to Walter's passes, next season."

Tubby said, "Ambition has its place in the world, Chug, but how's about giving a little thought to the welfare of the team?" Right then, his eyes met mine, and the coach looked sheepish. It was kind of funny, him lecturing Chug, when all the while his main idea was to get Dutch out so he could have his unbeaten season and go up to Tech next year at a fat stipend.

"You worry about the welfare of the team, Coach," Chug said. "You're gettin' paid for it." I don't think he would have had the courage to talk that way, except that he was mad as hops at Dutch for walking out on him. "You can't do this to me, Dutch. You're trying to chouse up my whole future."

Dutch's jaw had that stubborn slant now, and he said, "Maybe I can't, Chug. But I am."

Chug runs a close second to Tubby when it comes to being hot-tempered. He suddenly ran at Dutch, swinging a wild right hand. Dutch stepped back off the locker bench, and Chug cracked into it with his shins. He stood up, yelping with pain. I think he would have killed Dutch, about then, if there'd been a lethal weapon handy.

But Wes Pierce, Tipper Belonski, and Hank Pordall grabbed him, while Tubby Dawes fumed at him.

"Any more of that from you, Chug, and you're off the team," said the coach.

"Yeah? Maybe that ain't such a bad idea. As long as His All-American-Mentioned Highness has decided he's too good for us this year."

"You want that, Chug? I'll do it, you know. And once you're fired, you'll stay fired, all season."

Chug had been bluffing. He looked at the floor like a sullen four-year-old for a while.

"Aw, let's forget it," he said.

Dutch said, "I'm sorry I stirred up so much excitement, Coach. I just wanted the gang to understand—"

"Get out," Tubby said.

"Huh?"

"Get out of here. Go somewhere and think about what you've done to me. I've had all I can stand for one day. If I look at that stuborn Dutch chin for another five seconds, I'm liable to take a swing at it."

Dutch sighed, shrugged, and walked out. Tubby Dawes looked at me and said pointedly, "Today's big football news just walked out, Skeeter. No use in your hanging around here, is there?"

I grinned limply. "I see what you mean."

I ran out and caught up with Dutch on the way up to the Quad. He looked at me gravely, "If you're after a statement, Skeeter, I'm not making any."

"Look, forget I'm with the paper. Man to man, Dutch, as one friend to another, are you sure you know what you're doing?"

Those bland blue eyes bored at me. "Seems like you and me got friendly real sudden, Skeeter. But about the football, I know exactly what I'm doing. And nothing's going to change my mind, either."

"You sound pretty sure of that," I suggested.

"Down in the Dutch country where I hail from Skeeter, we got a saying about ourselves. Mebbe we ain't as quick as some folks. But there ain't a man of us who doesn't know his own mind."

I KNEW it was futile to talk him out of the position he'd taken. I just said, "We'll see," and walked away. I thought, you asked for it, friend. I went up to the *Herald* office.

Mary Jane Whitcomb was perched at an upright typewriter, pecking out her *Distaff Data*, a column for coeds. There was a smudge of ink on her nose, another on her cheek, and still she managed to look tempting.

"Hello, Skeeter," she said. "Drop that anchor and try to walk like a man. Why so grave? Is the world coming to an end?"

"Worse than that, baby."

Mary Jane tucked her chin in one hand. "Let's see, what could be worse than that? You don't love me any more."

"I never did." I was lying. I loved her dearly. But Mary Jane is the kind of girl who must never know. It would cool her ardor for me, which I sometimes suspected was cooling of its own volition.

"What, then?" she said.

"Dutch refuses to play football this year." I sat down at a typewriter, pushed up my sleeves, and brushed aside her volley of questions with a world-weary:

"Not now, baby. Wait'll I get this red hot lead out of my system. Dutch Finkbiner is about to get a lesson in the power of the press."

If I say it myself, I lambasted Dutch in that editorial. I mean, I really sailed into the big guy with both barrels, from every possible angle. I am a little guy weighing maybe one-twenty with a fur coat on, and it is possible a psychiatrist would have found something of interest in the pleasure with which I tackled two hundred and sixteen pounds of Dutchman on paper.

I said who does he think he is, putting his own piddling personal interests above the welfare of his college. I said his whole argument was silly and as full of holes as a sieve. If he really wanted to learn about farming, he'd study harder and he'd find time to do it, football or no football. He could study on trains when the team traveled, and in his hotel room. I said he was acting plain childish. I said if it wasn't this particular year—well, I said plenty.

Our paper hit the campus the next day like a bombshell. A half hour after the *Herald* had been delivered around to the dorms, an angry group of students was collected out on the Quad, grumbling and growling about the dirty deal Dutch was giving the college. You'd've thought he'd sold the school franchise to some prep school. You'd've thought he was Benedict Arnold.

CHAPTER III

Stubborn Holdout

LATER I was behind my big desk, with my gold lettered name plate and my big box of ten-cent stogies on it, when Dutch came in. I lighted up one of those cigars, and then nervously offered Dutch one.

"No thanks, Skeeter."

I waved him into the guest chair, and sat looking at him. He had me guessing. Apparently he wasn't going to get violent, though, and bounce me off the ceiling. I choked on the cigar, but I felt better. Besides, Mary Jane was across the room, wasn't she? Murders don't get committed with pretty redheads present, who can later tell all to a jury.

I waved the cigar and said, "Hope you're not going to be sticky about that editorial, Dutch. You know how it is in the newspaper business."

"How?" said Dutch.

He could be disconcertingly direct.

"A story's a story. I had to write something."

"Yeah," Dutch said. "I guess you did."

He was looking at Mary Jane. She got up and started out of the room.

"You don't have to leave," I said quickly.

But she did.

Dutch grinned. "She's real good-lookin'. Don't look so scared of me, Skeeter. I ain't going to bite you."

"You're not?"

"I ain't sore. Us Finkbiners can stand a lot before we lose our tempers. Then watch. I ain't sore at you, though. What I come up here for is to make a statement."

"A—a statement?"

Dutch nodded. "Seems like I'm in bad odor around this place since the news broke, Skeeter. Funny, how folks'll make a hero out of you one minute, and a scapegoat the next. I never realized, till I walked through that crowd down there on the Quad, and heard 'em grumbling

at me under their breath, and saw the dirty looks they threw at me, I was so important. Fact."

"Let's forget the hot stove philosophy, Dutch," I suggested, getting my nerve back, "and get to the statement."

"Sure," said Dutch, and scratched at his standup straw hair. "Tell 'em for me. Tell 'em."

"Yes?"

"Down on my old man's farm," said Dutch slowly, "when a milch cow runs dry, we try to remember her good years, when she was givin' a bucket a day. We let her stand on her record. We don't beat up on her for runnin' dry."

I looked at him for a thoughtful moment. "You didn't run dry, Bossy."

"For all practical purposes, it's the same," Dutch said. "I ain't going to argue it with you. Just you print what I said."

He went out.

I printed what Dutch had said in the next day's *Herald*. I didn't attach much significance to it, one way or the other. A couple hours after we'd hit the street, I got a summons to Prexy Jamison's office.

The president of Prescott College is a tall, stoop-shouldered man who wears horn-rimmed glasses and enough dignity for the whole Supreme Court. I was trembling at the knees as I went into his office, but he waved me to a chair and acted so friendly that I soon relaxed, though I couldn't imagine why the old boy was unbending.

"Skeeter," he said, and then actually smiled, "In the interests of informality, I'll address you by your nickname, as everyone else appears to on this campus."

"A-all right, sir."

"Skeeter, I'm afraid I must enlist your help."

"Yes, sir?"

"This Finkbiner affair now. I wish you hadn't printed his statement. That business of the cow running dry—very effective figure of speech, I must say. I've sent my office people out around campus to take a sampling of the student reaction."

"You have, sir?" I didn't get this.

"It appears," said Prexy, "that a lot of the students agree with him. Next thing we know, they'll be talking to him again, acting as if nothing has happened. We can't have that, you know."

"We can't, sir?"

AGAIN he smiled at me. I was going to have something to tell my grandchildren. "No, we can't. I believe it will come as no surprise when I tell you the college has been losing money these last few years, in the face of our rising expenses."

"Yes, sir. I knew that, sir."

He peered at me over the rims of his glasses. "Can I trust you with a confidence, young man?"

"Yes, sir."

"We're practically bankrupt. In fact, if my fund-raising tour next month is not extremely profitable, it appears altogether likely that there will be no Prescott College this time next year."

I whistled. "Gosh, sir. That's—that's pretty awful."

"Precisely my feeling. In sixty odd years this school has built up a rather enviable tradition. I would hate to see that tradition stop during my tenure—" His voice seemed to choke up a little. "Perhaps now you can guess at my motive in asking you up here."

I could. Little Skeeter doesn't generally need a diagram to get the idea. "You want the team to do well this year, sir. So the alumni will fork ov—will contribute willingly to the college. You want to see Finkbiner back in the lineup. You want me to keep the heat on him, through the *Herald*."

He winced. "You state the situation rather bluntly, Skeeter. It seems rather unethical to crucify this young man. I must confess that in less trying times I have heartily concurred with his feeling toward football. This year, I shall pray for our team. This year we must worship at the shrine of success."

"I understand, sir."

"Remember," pontificated Prexy, "the philosophy of Utilitarianism, Skeeter: the greatest good for the greatest number of people. The end will justify the means. Yes, I do want you to put the heat on Finkbiner!"

I went out of there feeling dizzy. Talk about wheels within wheels, I was thinking. Dutch had started something when he decided to be reluctant this year. Tubby Dawes' coaching future swung in the balance. Chug Hadden's chance to go up to the Bucks appeared to have fizzled.

Prexy Jamison was not able to sleep nights, for fear the whole kit and kaboodle was about to go to the wall.

And who did he turn to in his hour of need but little Skeeter? It was tragic, but it was also inspiring. I mean—it certainly pointed up to the importance of football.

Also, it pointed up the importance of Skeeter.

I went straight up to the *Herald* office, sat down at my typewriter, flexed my brain, and wrote:

There is a traitor among us, and his name is Benedict Finkbiner.

According to the classical tradition, a traitor is supposed to slink about, cringing under the accusing eyes of honest men. Dutch wouldn't play according to the tradition. He didn't slink around campus. He walked, with his straw-topped head up high, his shoulders back, and a slightly amused gleam in his normally placid blue eyes. Doggone if I don't think he was enjoying the situation.

He'd always enjoyed a good scrap on the football field, and this was a bigger scrap he'd engaged in.

"Honestly," said Mary Jane Whitcomb, "I can't understand him. It's almost inhuman, one man standing up against the whole college. It's magnificent, in a way."

"What way?" I said. "Do you realize we're opening against Fulton this weekend? They're no setups."

"But I mean the way Dutch—"

"That traitor!"

"But he probably thinks he's holding out for a principle," said Mary Jane. She was like that, always taking the other side of a question, to stir up a discussion. "Why, it's like a crusade, Skeeter. After all, he did play for us those other years, and instead of being the least bit grateful to him for that, we've all crucified him."

"We crucified him! How about our unbeaten season? Fulton is going to tear us to pieces. If you ask me, the college is taking a licking."

"Yes, but look at his side of it, Skeeter. Why should you throw stones at him? Why should I? We never played football."

"We're not supposed to, baby. We don't have his muscles."

"I see," said Mary Jane. "Then you mean—what we have, we ought to be willing to give, to the college."

"Huh?"

MARY JANE stared at me for a moment, then nodded her red head vigorously.

"Skeeter, let's take that ten dollars we were going to spend for the prom Saturday night and give it to the college."

"Now wait a minute, baby. It isn't the same. Giving your talent is one thing. Giving good dough away is another."

"Maybe Dutch figures he's wasting money by spending so much time with the team when he ought to be learning about farming, Skeeter."

I did a double take at her. I was remembering that day up in Tubby Dawes' field house office, when Dutch had explained himself precisely that way.

"Look," I said, "drop the needle, baby. I don't want to see his side of it. My job is to put pressure on him."

"But if we're wrong—"

"Hey," I said, "wait a minute." I was looking at her, and I didn't like what I was seeing in her eyes. "Since when are you worrying so much about the guy, baby? You're not beginning to get soft about that big hulk, are you?"

"Don't be an oaf.'

"Then stiffen up, baby. Act tough. Act like a newspaperman around this office."

"With your permission, Mr. Editor-in-chief," said Mary Jane, "I propose to become a newspaper*woman*."

I always thought Dutch was an unimaginative sort, without much flair to him, but apparently there is something in the old theatrical bromide that a great role will produce a great actor. Butch showed up at the Fulton game, alone, but just as self-assured as a showhorse, his big, muscular frame seeming to shoot off sparks of defiance.

He started up into the grandstand in a frozen silence, a slight grin on his face. Somewhere over to the right a thoughtless frosh let go with a little razzberry, then the silence was broken by a low murmur of resentment, and the booing started.

Dutch's face was red now, but he was still carrying himself like a seasoned trouper. He got up to where Mary Jane and I were sitting, and looked for the seat that matched his ticket, across the way there, but it seemed to be taken. Apparently whoever had it was not in any hurry to move and have Benedict Finkbiner sitting beside him throughout this ball game. Dutch stood there, not

knowing what to do.

I was grinning, then the grin washed down off my face in a hurry.

"Here, Dutch," Mary Jane suddenly said, and patted the seat alongside her. "Do you folks mind moving down a bit, please?"

They did mind, but what are you going to do, at a football game, when a beauteous redhead gives you that old pretty-please? Chances are you are going to move down, and take up the matter with your wife some hours later, while trying to get out of the parking lot.

That's what happened here. Dutch came in and sat down at the place Mary Jane had finagled and he looked very relieved.

But he did not exactly spill over with gratitude toward her, I noticed.

"Thanks," he said, somewhat shortly, and since she was my date, would have ignored her, if she'd let him.

"How are the studies going, Dutch? Are you learning a lot about farming this year?"

"Plenty!"

Mary Jane has a large bump of curiosity under that thatch of dramatic red hair, and as a newspaper gal, she does not hesitate to ask questions. She says, rightly enough, that nobody has yet invented a better way to get information out of people.

"How do you honestly feel, Dutch? Wouldn't you sort of like to be down there with them?" And she waved at the field, where the gang was warming up now.

"No," Dutch said. It seemed to me he was being unnecessarily surly about it.

"Why not?"

"They're going to lose." He didn't bother to lower his voice, and I could see people stiffen in the crowd around us, and start to whisper among themselves. It was traveling down toward the bottom tier of seats like wildfire, and heads were turning for a quick scowl at Dutch.

"Why are they going to lose?" said Mary Jane. She was getting a little brittle herself now.

"Because," said Dutch blandly, "I'm not in there."

"Well! Of all the conceited—"

"Little girls who ask questions without thinking," said Dutch, "shouldn't. You asked for my opinion. But it appears like you didn't want it."

CHAPTER IV

Losing Team

FROM then on, he ignored her, and she ignored him. Or they both pretended to. The crowd didn't ignore Dutch, though. They'd heard what he'd said, about the gang losing because he wasn't in there. I could see it going around the big stadium. I could see it being passed over the parapet down there and out on to the field, among our players.

I wondered how badly it had become garbled, before it reached our bench. I saw Tubby Dawes glance up bitterly to where we sat with Dutch in the stand, and I could imagine the version of it that had reached the ears of our mercurial coach.

I saw him talk to Ed Galloway, Tipper Belonski, and Wes Pierce, just before the gang lined up for the kickoff. Chug Hadden was glaring up at Dutch, looking mighty disgruntled about that pro job he claimed Dutch was doing him out of.

Then they lined up, the ref's whistle tootled, and they were moving in a wavering line down toward the ball which Pudge Podoff was holding. Chug's foot crashed against it and it soared down the field nicely.

Fulton had a guy named Raintree, "Chief" Raintree they called him, because he was said to be one-eighth Cherokee, in their backfield. He was a big, hunch-shouldered, barrel-chested product of the western plains, and he could go like an antelope once he got into the clear.

They were doing a nice blocking job for him, but Ed Galloway and Hank Pordall were both down there like streaks. They nailed the big breed before he got himself fairly untracked.

I noticed that both Hank and Ed shot a look up at the grandstand as they got up from making that tackle, and I could see how the wind was blowing. They were out to show Dutch he wasn't quite as indispensable in there as he seemed to think.

They all felt that way, and with Chug Hadden it went deeper. It was a nice little grudge angle, and for a while they played their heads off in there. They

flung the Fulton tide back several times when it seemed the enemy was about to drive over our goal line. They were showing Dutch he wasn't so much.

It went into the second quarter, with no score by either team, and our rooting section began to chant at them. As I say, Fulton was tough, for an opener. We'd never have scheduled such a toughie to start the season, if we'd anticipated not having Dutch in there. Our next two games, with little Updyke and Severn, would be cinches to win, even without our reluctant star's services at fullback.

But nobody'd dared to hope we could stop Fulton. We were getting by with them so far, and you could feel that tension building up all along our side of the stadium. If we could just continue to keep them from scoring, and then get off a fluke score of our own, somehow—well, why not? Things like that do sometimes happen.

I could see people beginning to dart those covert little glances toward Dutch again, as if to say, "You spoke a little too soon, Mr. Big Shot. They may beat Fulton without you."

Dutch just sat there with an impassive expression on his big-jawed face, watching the play on the field without any visible emotion. He was certainly one cold potato. What I couldn't understand, about then, was how such a phlegmatic, muleheaded, dumb-headed Dutchman had ever learned to play such inspired fullback as he'd played for us last year and the year before.

Down on the field, the Fulton bunch tried a pass from the midstrip, Chief Raintree to Spreckles, their pint-sized signal caller. Chug Hadden came rushing up in the nick of time and snatched it practically out of Spreckles' hungry hands. Chug always did have sticky fingers, and the guy could run the mail pretty well, on occasion.

He ran it now. He had our side of the stadium standing on its collective head, as he swept over the midstripe, darted across the field toward the opposite sideline, reversed himself to elude a clique of Fulton tacklers, and charged over the twenty with only safety man Raintree between himself and paydirt.

THE Chief wasn't having any, though. He spread those big arms like an eagle spreading its wings, and Chug couldn't escape that enveloping gesture. He went down on the seven, and our Prescott crowd flopped down with a sigh of exhaustion, almost as if we'd run the ball down there.

"Pass," somebody was saying. "Now, if they only had Finkbiner in there!"

I was sure Dutch had heard it. I was watching his face, and so was Mary Jane, but we might as well have been watching a mummy. His face didn't crack an inch, and we looked back to the field.

They had to pass, of course. Wes Pierce went back, made his sharp angled fade, and flung one at Chug Hadden. Wes was all right pitching them, but he didn't have the speed Dutch had, nor the uncanny ability to place them where a receiver could reach them and the enemy could not seem to lay a mitt on them.

It was no good. They batted it down. The crowd groaned. More dirty looks at Dutch.

Tipper Belonski called another pass play. It went to Ed Galloway this time. The big end leaped high, managed to get the tips of his fingers behind the ball, and deflected it upward.

Chug Hadden came racing over from the side, caught the ball with almost casual ease, and plunked it to the ground, grinning.

You never heard such a hubbub as went on in our stands then. Even the muffed kick for conversion point didn't dismay us. It was 6-0, Prescott's favor.

People were turning around in droves now, to grin banteringly toward Dutch. He sat there like a stone, and ignored them. Maybe he knew something at that. Maybe he'd had a forewarning. Two minutes later Chief Raintree took the ball from his own twenty-eight, on a tricky spinner, and ran all the way up the field and into our end zone without a hand laid on him. It was just one of those things. It was worse than just one of those things.

The guy also ran it over for the point. It was 7-6 against us, and so it remained at the end of that opening half.

You know how it is between halves of a close one. All of a sudden you remember your tummy, and your throat, which are demanding attention. The man of the hour was no exception this day. He looked at me and Mary Jane.

"Guess I'll go down below and buy me a bottle of pop and a hotdog," he said. "How about you two? Can I bring

you something?"

"No, thank you," Mary Jane said. She leaned down hard on it, she made it sting.

"Okay, okay," Dutch said, and managed a grin. He started down the aisle, and it was funny, the way the crowd separated to make a path for him, as if he was a leper and they might catch it from him. His ears were burning, I noticed, and Mary Jane noticed too, because she said:

"Honestly, why doesn't he give in? He can't fight the whole college forever."

I said, "Excuse me, baby," and started out, meaning to follow Dutch down there. "That guy," I said, "is news, and Little Skeeter's nose is itching."

I caught up with the big news of the day in front of the refreshment stand inside the stadium. Dutch had gotten his dog and his bottle of pop and was just turning away when he almost bumped into a tall, dignified man who wore horn-rimmed glasses. It was—you guessed it—Prexy Jamison, in person.

I don't know what got into Dutch then. I suppose he was concentrating on filling his stomach. He had just taken a big mouthful of "dog," and was washing it down with pop, when his eyes locked with those of our prexy.

As I say, the old man is a dour old party, and I don't think Dutch was looking for him, down there in that milling mob.

It surprised Dutch out of his iron control, just for a moment. And during that moment, his hand came up involuntarily, as if to shield him from the bitter old man. That hand held a hot dog that was generously smeared with mustard, and Dutch managed to transfer a good deal of the yellow stuff to Prexy's black topcoat before he realized what he was doing.

"Gosh, I—I'm sorry, sir," he said. He whipped out his handkerchief, and wiped at the stuff, succeeding only in rubbing it in.

PREXY JAMISON lost control of himself for one brittle moment. "Stop that, Finkbiner," he snapped.

"I don't know how it happened," Dutch mumbled. "I—I guess I just wasn't thinking."

"If you ask me, young man, you haven't been thinking since you returned to college this year," said Prexy, and walked away, a tired, drooping old figure with the mark of defeat in the sag of his thin shoulders.

Dutch looked at me and said, "What'd he mean, Skeeter? You're good at solvin' puzzles."

I took him aside, then, and told him some things. By then I was pretty disgusted myself. I could see the way it was going to be outside there, this second half. Our unbeaten record wasn't going to last even past the opening game of the season. I told Dutch just what it all added up to, for the college.

He looked at me as if I'd just told him the plot of some movie. "Kind of a complicated setup, hey, Skeeter? Why tell me about it?"

That did it. "Listen, you big goof," I railed at him, "did it ever occur to you that you could still go out there and help those guys beat Fulton? In training or out of it, you could still make mincemeat out of them for at least one quarter. You're a football player, Dutch, though I hate to admit it. Why don't you wise up to yourself and go talk to Tubby?"

"Don't talk nonsense, Skeeter. I'm in no shape to play. Even if I was, I wouldn't think of changin' my mind." He grinned. "Case you ain't noticed, I'm kind of bullheaded."

I looked at him. "I've got a surprise for you, Dutch," I said.

"What?"

"I've noticed," I said, and walked away from him.

CHAPTER V

That Traitor

THAT second half was sheer mayhem. Tubby had whipped our gang up to a fury, in the dressing room, as I learned later. His major theme was Dutch. He told them to get out there and show that conceited, donkey-headed Dutchman they could do without him. It was the right angle, at that. They came out and during the third quarter, they played like a bunch of Marines hitting a beachhead. I mean, they were pouring it out all the way.

They kept Fulton from scoring. Once

on a long gambling pass from Wes to Ed Galloway, we got down to the Fulton eleven-yard-line, and the stands turned topsy turvy. Then on the next play Chug Hadden tightened up and fumbled the apple. Fulton recovered, and from then on you could see the fighting spirit ooze out of our team.

They had poured it all out there and it wasn't quite enough. They'd been outweighed, outplayed, but not outdriven. It was still 7-6 against them, however, and Fulton's greater staying power was beginning to tip those scales toward another enemy touchdown.

We sat fascinated, through that final quarter, watching our gang get forced back to the shadow of their goal line, then stiffen at the last ditch, stemming the tide, and prolonging the agony till Fulton got possession once more.

"This is murder," Mary Jane blurted. "It's almost like watching a snake get ready to strike. If only we could score —kick a field goal or something."

"Uh-uh," Dutch said. "Not a field goal. That wouldn't be enough."

I knew what he was thinking. We were definitely going to be scored on again. The only thing that could help us, that could even offer us the hope of a tie, was another touchdown. Mary Jane didn't get the idea. Mary Jane is one of those dames with whom hope springs eternal.

"I'm sure," she told Dutch, "you must know all about it, *Mister* Finkbiner." She is an emotional girl. The gang was getting smeared down there on the turf, and here beside her sat the man personally responsible for the massacre being committed by Chief Raintree and his Fulton tribesmen. "Nobody asked for your opinion."

Dutch looked at her. "What's got into you? You got a burr under your saddle?"

As I say, Mary Jane is a redhead, and she runs true to type in the matter of temperament. I do not think she enjoyed Dutch's figure of speech. No matter how you twisted his question, Mary Jane ended up being compared with a horse.

"Honestly, Dutch Finkbiner," she said, "you can be the most aggravating person I ever saw."

"Now look here, honey," Dutch said, "if you don't want me to sit here, come right out and say so. I don't hang around where my company ain't appreciated." He stood up.

Right then, Wes Pierce was fading behind his own forty, to pitch another pass. Dutch was a big boy, as I say, and opaque—you couldn't see through him.

"Sit down," a fan yelped behind us.

"Down in front!" the age-old chant started.

Dutch hesitated, just for a moment. I was watching his face and I saw that big jaw start to thrust forward.

"For heaven's sake," Mary Jane scolded him, as she tugged as his sleeve, "sit down. Don't make a scene."

Dutch shook her hand off his arm, and walked out to the aisle. He had started down the steps and gone about ten yards before the crowd became fully aware of him, and realized what he was doing.

"What's got into him? Where's he goin'?"

"Who's that big mug think he is, walkin' out on this ball game with ten minutes to play yet?"

"Yah, you bum, go on. You wasn't needed as bad as you thought. They ain't exactly gettin' skunked out there."

That started it. It was as if the crowd had suppressed its true feelings too long. Now the stopper was out and they poured insults at Dutch in a flood tide. Boos, catcalls and razzberries anointed the air. The noise was tremendous. The officials had to call a time out as the players could not hear their whistle signals.

DUTCH turned around when he reached the bottom tier of the grandstand, and looked up at the crowd, which was pouring its invectives upon him. He waited a moment, grinned up banteringly at them, then cupped his hands in an insolent gesture of defiance. They screamed bloody murder at him, then. I was afraid they'd actually mob him.

I saw the special cops for the game beginning to hover around him, but I don't think Dutch did. He just wasn't scared. He wasn't letting any sports mob have the last word with him, either. As a parting gesture, he waved that big right arm of his toward the field, where his erstwhile teammates were valiantly trying to hold back those Fultons. And his left hand pinched his nose.

It was the last word, all right. It was the final insult. It was his way of saying, *"Phooey!* I should stick around to

watch those bums stumble around the gridiron!"

You should have heard the crowd yell at him then. The cops were smart. They formed a cordon around Dutch and hustled him out, before something serious happened.

Down on the field I could see our team talking it over. Or I should say exploding it over. Mad! You never saw so much high blood pressure on one ball team. I could see Chug Hadden holding on to his broken schnozzle, yapping away a mile a minute and pointed to himself. Dutch said they smelled. Dutch walked out on them, did he?

So he didn't think they had a chance to pull this one out of the fire, hey? They'd show him.

Time was back in. We had it, on our own thirty-six. I watched the ball go back from Pudge Podoff to Wes Pierce, on a spinner, and I could almost smell the fighting spirit down there on that gridiron. Wes took the apple, faced around and handed it to Chug.

Chug lived up to his name, this time. Ed Galloway and Hank Pordall had cleared a beautiful hole for him in the right side of the Fulton line. Chug went through about sixty miles an hour. He crashed headlong into their halfback, and bowled the man over. He cut to the right, went over the midstripe, got a rider in the person of the Fulton quarterback, and carried his man all the way down to their forty.

The crowd was going out of its mind now.

"Go!" we were all screaming. "Go. Show Finkbiner. Show that Finkbiner."

The cheerleaders picked it up, and it became a chant. A victory chant, we hoped.

Wes Pierce pitched a pass. They had Chug bottled up, but Tipper Belonski got clear, and nailed it down on the Fulton fifteen. He went on to their six before Raintree turfed him, and it is a safe bet that this play alone shortened the lives of every spectator present. I mean, we were all out of this world now.

Poor Fulton. They didn't know quite what to make of it. While they were still trying to figure out what had happened to our suddenly insane team, Tipper called a quarterback sneak, and slid through the center of the line, darted into the clear, and raced it out with Chief Raintree on an angled slant, sliding into paydirt just before he hit the sideline.

We missed the point. But we had our touchdown. It was 12-7. We froze that ball, then, playing for time. Fulton went crazy for passes. We kept intercepting. We held them. It ended that way. We had a ball game.

I steered Mary Jane on to the field, where the students were snakedancing, and left her outside the fieldhouse. I wanted to get into the dressing room, where I might pick up an inside story on the game.

I had a jolt when I stuck my head in there. Dutch was on a bench, talking to them, same as that day he'd "explained his position." As I came in he pulled up his shirt, revealing an incision scar down low on his abdomen.

"Hit me two days before I was due back here for practise," he was saying. "Pop rushed me to the hospital, and they had to operate right away. The operation went all right, but the doc warned me football was out till at least the end of this month. You just don't go out and play football right after an appendicitis operation."

"But why in the name of the devil," cut in Tubby Dawes, "didn't you just come out and say so? Instead of puttin' us all through the wringer this way?"

Dutch looked hurt. "Can't you guess, Coach?"

THERE was a silence, while we all stared at each other.

Tubby said, "Well, of all the crazy, idiotic— You mean to say this whole thing— You planned it. Right from the beginning. You made a bloody martyr out of yourself, and got us so hopping mad we beat Fulton. But why, Dutch? Whatever put you up to a stunt like this?"

"I have my share of school spirit," grinned Dutch, "even if I never talked it up much. I—uh—I can start light workouts on Monday, and I ought to be able to play some, against Severn, and full time the rest of the season. I kind of hanker to be on that first unbeaten team, Coach."

"All that stuff about your studies—"

Dutch looked sheepish. "I'm doin' all right with the books. I had to cook up some reason for walkin' out, or it would of looked fishy."

"I'm sorry, Dutch, about that little

set-to we had," Chug Hadden said.

"Why, that wasn't nothing. Forget it, Chug. I have."

Everybody wanted to shake hands with him, all of a sudden. Dutch finally squirmed out, and I got in a word with Tubby Dawes.

"Looks like you'll be earning big dough at Tech next year, thanks to that muleheaded young idiot, as you once called him."

"I wasn't taken in as much as you think," Tubby said, looking wise. "I always knew Dutch was too nice a boy to pull anything that raw on the college."

"Yes, you knew," I scoffed at him. I was thinking of the college, and of Prexy Jamison's fund raising tour. "Dutch is all right. And come to think of it, I better go find him and apologize to him."

"For what?"

"Calling him Benedict Finkbiner."

Tubby was staring out the dressing room window. "Maybe you were right."

"Huh?" I said. Then I looked out the window. Mary Jane Whitcomb was standing by the spike iron fence at the back of the field house, where I'd left her waiting. Dutch was standing there with her, and she was staring up at him with that funny expression I'd noticed on her face the day she'd told me what a magnificent stand he was making against the whole college.

Little Skeeter doesn't need a diagram to get the idea. "That traitor!" I muttered.

Heisman Trophy Winners

ONE of the most coveted awards in American sports is the John W. Heisman Memorial award, given annually to the outstanding college football player of the year by the Downtown Athletic Club of New York City. The prize—a huge silver mug—is in memory of one of the most likable and smartest of football coaches, a graduate of Penn in 1891, who played sideline mentor for 36 years thereafter and did much while running football at such schools as Auburn, Georgia Tech, Penn, Washington & Jefferson and Rice to develop the modern game.

It is awarded on a basis of leadership, character and personality as well as on yardage gained or blocked and its winners constitute a unique football honor roll. They are—

1935 Jay Berwanger, Chicago
1936 Larry Kelley, Yale
1937 Clint Frank, Yale
1938 Davie O'Brien, Texas Christian
1939 Nile Kinnick, Iowa
1940 Tom Harmon, Michigan
1941 Bruce Smith, Minnesota
1942 Frank Sinkwich, Georgia
1943 Angelo Bertelli, Notre Dame
1944 Les Horvath, Ohio State
1945 Felix Blanchard, Army
1946 Glenn Davis, Army
1947 Johnny Lujack, Notre Dame

All of these boys were great football players—and all had that little bit extra that counts for so much in life.

Benedict did a skater's overlapping stride, still moving downfield with blistering speed

SUPERNATURAL ATHLETE

By PERRY DIXON

The Mills College Maulers find timid Gene Benedict an uncanny mental asset but also a physical handicap to the team, until—

THE Mills College varsity broke from their huddle, and the strident, "hup-hupping" voice of quarterback Clay Daniels spurred them to action. Over by the sideline, Coach "Red" Recker watched tensely, flanked by a dozen kibitzing students.

Just before the ball snapped back from Ogie Kane, Red's giant center, a strange voice mouthed one syllable behind the harried head coach.

"Root," the voice said.

Red swung about on a grass-grinding heel, and irately searched the bland faces of the rubber-necking students for the man who had spoken. Pat Ryan, his freckled, sawed-off assistant, grabbed Red's arm and cautioned, "Hey! Blow that whistle, Red!"

Red swung back toward the scrimmaging players, saw that Clay Daniels, who'd failed to find a hole off right tackle, was being piled on by a half dozen gleeful scrubs. Red blew a piercing blast on his whistle, ending the play.

Pat Ryan's broken nose crinkled at him. "You keep turning your back on the play like that, Red," the little man

said worriedly, "and someone'll get hurt. What's wrong? Got the jitters?"

Red drew Pat Ryan aside from the kibitzing students. Ryan had once been a pretty good welterweight fighter, with the result that his face was flattened, his ears cauliflowered and he was a bit hard of hearing.

"There's a smart Alec somewhere in that bunch of students," Red gritted into his assistant's ear. "Somebody keeps barking out goofy words behind me, just before every play breaks."

The ex-fighter's mouth hardened. "Tryin' to wear down your nerves, hey? What kind of goofy words, Red?"

Red made a wry face. "'Root. Si. Lug. Loot. Rig.' That's all I remember. It don't make any sense All I know is, it's not funny. Look, Pat, suppose you drift around behind me and keep your eyes open. Maybe you can spot the comedian that's trying to mess up my practise. I'd like to have a word with that apple."

Red watched the new play unfolding, while Pat Ryan unobtrusively drifted back among the group of haphazardly clothed students. With the ball on his own nineteen, third down and six to go, quarterback Clay Daniels lined the varsity up in fake kick formation.

The ball snapped back between center Ogie Kane's massive legs. Daniels took it, meaning to run it around the right end for first down. Red scowled at such unorthodox signal calling. His scowl deepened when that heckling voice spoke up once again, somewhere behind him.

"Ree," came the voice's nonsensical contribution.

RED spun toward the sound with bitter impatience. Here in the final week of pre-season practise, his Mills College Maulers were refusing to shape up like a college ball club. Clay Daniels lacked the brain power for quarter-backing, and Red's light, fast team was dangerously weak on defense. Red was in no frame of mind to put up with hecklers. He smiled grimly as Pat Ryan pointed a stubby finger at one of those poker-faced students.

Red stalked straight toward the one indicated. "All right," he said harshly. "What's the big idea, kiddo?"

The boy had a nice, rangy build, Red noticed, but he wore thick glasses and his cheeks had that pale, pasty look of the scholar, the type that spends too much time indoors. The kid had a shy, half-frightened manner.

"The—the b-big idea?" he stammered weakly.

"'Ree. Root. Lug. Si,'" Red quoted angrily. "What kind of doubletalk nonsense is that?"

"Oh, that!" the kid smiled uncertainly. "That's a sort of a code, Mr. Recker. 'Ree' stands for R. E. R-right end, you see? 'Root' is R. T.—or right tackle. 'Lug' is left guard. 'C' is for center, and so forth."

Red Recker shot a weary glance at Pat Ryan, before growling at the kid. "So all right, it's a code. Then what?"

"Why," the kid announced simply, "I was using the code to predict where the varsity would send their plays. F-for instance, that last time, when Daniels tried to run around end, I said—"

"Ree!" Red cut in weirdly. "That's right. So you did, son." Red's mind whirled backward dizzily. "And the play before that, when he tried off right tackle, you said, 'Root!' For right tackle. Say, what the—"

"It—it's just a game we were playing, Mr. Recker. Some of the others were betting I couldn't foretell where the plays would break, and I just wanted to show that I could. I'm sorry, if we've been a bother."

Red Recker had the faint pitching sensation he'd felt years ago, when he'd visited an alleged mind reader at the World's Fair and she'd actually told him the names of his two kid sisters.

"You've been calling the shots ever since scrimmage started," he said numbly, and then addressed himself to one of the other students. "How's he been making out so far?" he asked, jerking a thumb at the pale-faced, spectacled kid.

"He's only missed three times," the student said promptly.

Red gulped. "Holy smoke, son, how do you do it?" the coach asked. "What's your name, by the way?"

"Eugene Benedict, Mr. Recker. Gene, f-for short. I—uh—I just sort of feel it in my bones, I guess. I mean—feel what play's coming. Y-you see, my dad makes his living as a mind reader. Benedict, The Great, he is known as. This sort of thing s-seems to run in our whole family. M-my mother conducted seances, too, before she married my dad, and — well, they've sort of tried to train me in mental

telepathy. The-there's no great trick about it. Just sort of concentrate on a fellow and follow your hunches."

"Holy sufferin' catfish, boy!" Red swallowed. "You mean you could go out there in a game, look at the opposition, and nine times out of ten you'd be able to guess what play's coming?"

Pat Ryan, taking in the scene with a sour expression, put a warning hand on Red's shoulder. "Slow down now, Red. You always were a soft touch for this supernatural hokum. Don't get your hopes up about—"

Red sent a scathing glance at his cynical little assistant. "You realize what this'd mean to us, Pat," he asked excitedly, "if Benedict could really—"

"He can't," the ex-fighter said darkly. "That's all poppycock, if you ask me." He turned grimly toward the bashful kid. "Maybe you'd like to get out there with the scrubs and prove you can hunch the varsity plays, kiddo."

The kid looked scared. But like most bashful, retiring youngsters, Red thought, watching, young Benedict took a positive pleasure from being the center of attention at the moment.

"A-all right," he stammered.

Red rubbed his hands as he called the scrub team over and explained Benedict's code words to them. They looked doubtful as they heard what the kid meant to do, but they went out there with plenty of curiosity about the outcome.

Red Recker gave his varsity possession of the ball and told quarterback Clay Daniels to mix up his plays.

As the varsity lined up for offense, young Gene Benedict watched carefully from a point behind the scrub backfield.

"Ree!" he said through cupped hands, just as the varsity play broke.

Clay Daniels grabbed the snapback from Ogie Kane and scooted eagerly around the scrubs' right end. But the scrubs had shifted automatically, the moment they'd heard the code word from Gene Benedict. Daniels was met by a solid phalanx of scrubs at the line of scrimmage, was dropped for no gain.

NOW the stocky, rosebud-mouthed signal caller looked baffled as he called the next play. He sent right halfback Bo Eggleston on a spinner through the scrubs' left guard position.

"Lug!" yelled Gene Benedict, just as the ball snapped to Eggleston. This time, the scrubs put a bit more faith in Benedict's hunch. There wasn't even the hint of a hole at left guard. Eggleston was grabbed by a dozen gloating scrub hands and tossed back for a loss.

"Holy suffering Jehoshaphat!" Red was chortling from the sideline. "Think of it, Pat! With that kid to call the shots for us—"

"Take it easy," warned the skeptical Ryan. "He's been lucky, so far."

But when Gene Benedict succeeded in calling the next three plays without a miss, and the scrubs had pushed the varsity back to within two yards of their goal line, Ryan was forced to the grudging admission: "It is kind of amazing, Red. Mind, though, I still don't believe in that mind-reading nonsense. There've been plenty of men who could read signs and hunch opposition plays. Somebody's pointing these plays, if you ask me."

"Who?" Red challenged.

"Shucks, Red," Pat Ryan said warily, "if I could see who, I'd speak to him about it. That Benedict kid's just more alert."

He continued to be "more alert," as Pat Ryan put it. In ten plays, Gene Benedict only once failed to predict correctly what play was coming. Clay Daniels, twice pushed over his own goal line for a touchback, was darting surly glances in Benedict's direction. Red Recker decided he'd seen enough of Gene Benedict's particular brand of "alertness" to reach a decision.

Leaving Ryan to supervise the continuing scrimmage, he called Gene Benedict aside and talked turkey to the self-conscious youngster.

"Any football experience in high school, Benedict?"

"Y-yes, sir," Benedict stammered. "I quarterbacked for the high school team, m-my last year. B-but I didn't show much football aptitude, Mr. Recker. Don't suppose I'd've rated a spot on the team even then, if the coach hadn't wanted me in there to call signals."

Red noticed the kid's intelligent eyes for the first time, behind Benedict's glasses. Apparently, the kid was one of these mental wizards, more adept at flipping facts and figures about in his head, than at handling the pigskin. That might explain the kid's reticent personality, his painful shyness. It was often that way with the too-studious youngsters who bypassed all sports at college.

"How'd you like to call signals for my bunch?" Red asked bluntly.

Gene Benedict removed his specs and blinked at Red in amazement. "Gosh, it'd be swell if I could, Mr. Recker. But I'd be worse than useless out there. I can't run the ball worth a hoot, and I'm just fair at blocking and tackling. I d-didn't really rate a first-string job in high school, much less here in college."

Red felt a glow of hope warm his middle. It looked as if he were going to have a better season than he'd dared hope for.

"Suppose," he said happily, "you let me worry about that part of it, Benedict. You can run along into the field-house and tell Eddie De Courcey I want you fitted out with a suit, if you care to."

"Gosh!" The kid's pale cheeks took on a glow of pleasure. "Thanks, Coach." He turned away.

"Don't thank me," Red called after him warmly. "Something tells me you'll be in there when we take on Haddon this weekend!"

"Hey!" cut in Pat Ryan's grumpy voice from somewhere behind Red. "You going crazy, are you?" the little man asked. "How can you use that screwball kid against Haddon?"

Red sighed at his pessimistic little assistant. "Fairly obvious, isn't it, Pat?"

"Listen, Red, if you're goin' to gamble on that kid's fool hunches," Pat Ryan moaned, "you'll be laughed right out of football. Whoever heard of—"

"We'll be laughed out of the league anyhow," Red cut in darkly, "if we don't do something. I'm not going to overlook any chances. No use talking about it until we see how the kid pans out in a real ball game."

BENEDICT didn't get in a real ball game however until the final few minutes of the Haddon opener. Red Recker had his own worrisome doubts and a coach's natural reluctance to pull off something silly in public, so he hesitated to send Benedict into the fracas.

Haddon was more or less of a setup for Mills, anyhow. Red's gang piled up a comforting 19-0 lead in the opening half. Red bit his lips when Haddon collected six points with a long pass in the third quarter, then scored again as the final frame opened, making it 19-13.

"They're bigger through the line than our bunch," Red groaned to Pat Ryan. "Our gang's fought plenty hard, but they're tiring too fast. I've got a mind to send Benedict in."

"You do," Pat countered bleakly, "and you'll look awful silly. The kid's in no shape to do anything but call signals and spot plays, out there. Suppose he accidentally gets hold of the pill, and those big Haddon bruisers smack him down. They'll break him in half."

"The kid's not that soft," Red said impatiently. "He's had a couple of days' drilling and calisthenics. He played some in high school. He seems to handle himself fairly well, all things considered."

"They'll murder him, Red!" Pat Ryan insisted stubbornly.

"But if he obeys orders, and stays out of the plays—"

"It's easier said than done," countered the cynical Irishman. "They'll smear him, I tell you."

Red sighed gently. Pat Ryan still refused to believe in Benedict's ability to read the minds of the opposition, to foretell the plays. The little man had no use for such "supernatural nonsense," as he called it. His pessimistic outlook was contagious. Red forgot about Benedict and watched the rampant Haddonites march steadily downfield into home team territory.

When they scored a first down on the twenty-three, with no outward sign of a let-up, Red took a deep breath of decision.

"Benedict!" he snapped out grumpily.

Bashful Gene Benedict was standing before him, helmet in hand, almost before Red got the name out.

"In for Clay Daniels," Red told him tersely. "You've got your instructions. Good luck, son."

The kid stood there excitedly a brief moment. Red knew what a big moment this was in Gene Benedict's young life. He'd found out what he could about the strange, tongue-tied youngster, since their first dramatic meeting at Tuesday's practise. Benedict's painful shyness had cut him off from the social life here at Mills. He'd taken his loneliness out in long hours of study. Half of his classmates had him pegged as a grind; the other half said he was a genius. Neither impression had won the kid any real friends.

But if he could help their football team win this game, he'd have more friends in five minutes than he'd know

what to do with. It was as simple as that, Red knew, and as tragic. He didn't honestly approve of the idolatry lavished upon his squadmen on campus, though he had to admit it was helpful. And a little idolatry right now would be a godsend to shy, retiring Gene Benedict. Might pull the poor kid out of his self-imposed shell, teach him to mix with his classmates, to get rid of that awkward stammer.

Red watched tensely as the kid lined up in the Mills backfield. Benedict was staring fixedly over the line of scrimmage while the Haddonites huddled.

A second before the new play unfolded, the kid cupped his hands and called out his code word. The distance was too great for Red to overhear it, but it must have been "Root," he decided. Because the Haddon fullback was plunging recklessly through Sam Finney's right tackle spot. And half of the Mills bunch were waiting there grimly, to meet him. They slammed the big fellow down for a three-yard loss.

"Now who looks silly?" Red chortled at his sour-faced little assistant.

"You will," Pat Ryan promised. "One play don't mean anything."

Again Haddon unloosed their power in a plunge through center. And again Gene Benedict's strange knack of foretelling their intention doomed the effort to failure. Ogie Kane, knowing what was coming, dumped the Haddon center neatly, and charged in to spill the ball runner for a five-yard loss this time.

Haddon tried an end run, as Red chuckled on the bench. They got smeared for another loss. The desperation pass play they uncorked next fared little better.

Gene Benedict's warning spread the Mills defense, but even Benedict, Red reasoned, could have no way of guessing where the pass would be thrown. After all, that's something only the passer knows, and he only after looking over his field of possible receivers.

The Haddon left end pulled a coyote-like sneak into the end zone, then made a brilliant cut toward the left sideline. Gene Benedict, perhaps reading the passer's mind, darted over swiftly to cover. The Haddon left halfback, who was down near Benedict as the kid started his frantic spurt, left his feet in a blistering block of the youngster.

PAINFULLY, the kid caught the impact of the block, right in the solar plexus. He doubled over painfully as he hit the turf, rolling, and slapped both hands to his middle.

Red groaned, watching, but his smile of triumph returned as he saw Bo Eggleston leap like a jack rabbit and bat that long pass down.

"Good," he said shortly. "There goes their touchdown chance. Our ball on the twenty. So we freeze it awhile, stall for time all we can, and then kick out of danger."

"Your white hope don't look too full of sand out there," Pat Ryan cut back darkly.

Red watched Benedict. The kid kept rubbing his ribs as he called the plays, as if that blistering body block he'd absorbed had left its painful aftermath with him. But he called his plays exactly as Red had predicted. They finally kicked out of danger, and Haddon took over on their own forty-one, with only a minute or two left to tie up or win this ball game.

Their first play was a long pass to the left end. Red groaned as it broke, watching his team converge at the right side of the line, expecting an end run around there. Gene Benedict's tip-off had been false, had misled them.

To make matters worse, the pass connected up on the Mills thirty-one. Red wasn't surprised when Gene Benedict called a time-out to think things over. He was surprised when the kid loped to the bench.

"Better warm up a new quarterback," Pat Ryan said slowly. "Your white hope's yanking himself, Red. Guess his tummy aches where that Haddon guy blocked him."

Red sent his third-string quarterback in. He was too intensely absorbed in the game's closing minutes to have things out with Gene Benedict at the moment. When the gun banged, less than a minute later, with Mills still ahead by that precious six points, Red looked for the kid, to have a word with him.

But Clay Daniels had beaten him to it!

Red's searching glance found the pair down at the far end of the bench, facing each other in brittle anger, like a couple of fighting roosters. Drifting down that way, Red reflected that Clay Daniels would naturally resent the kid's taking

over his quarterback spot. And he had seen previous evidence of Clay's violent temper.

Clay'd been sullenly antagonistic toward the kid all along and, as Red approached the pair, he could hear Clay gritting at Gene Benedict: "I wouldn't mind stepping down for a real football player. You quit cold out there, Benedict, just because you got smeared on one play, and hurt your tummy a little. If you can't show more spunk than that—"

"Maybe—" Gene Benedict's face was tight with anger "—you'd like to test me personally, Daniels."

Red took the kid's arm, just then, and broke up the squabble before it could get fairly started. "Get into the showers, Clay," he ordered curtly, then looked hard at Gene Benedict. "What happened out there?"

"I—uh—" The kid looked at his feet. "After I got blocked out of that p-pass play, Coach, m-my ribs hurt like blazes. I c-couldn't hunch 'em any more, s-so I figured s-somebody else'd be more use to you in there."

"You did a fair job of quarterbacking," Red reminded the kid, "while your ribs were hurting." The kid winced at that. Red groaned inside. From all indications, Pat Ryan and Clay Daniels had the kid pegged right. When the going got tough, Benedict couldn't take it. No moxie.

Monday, both Clay Daniels and Gene Benedict reported for practise sporting epic black eyes, bruised knuckles, and various minor cuts and abrasions. Though still far from friendly, they seemed to have a great deal of newfound respect for each other.

"Wonder when they had it out?" Red mused. "Wish I'd been there to see it, Pat. And I was wrong, about the kid lacking moxie."

The little ex-welterweight read the scars of battle on Clay Daniels' face with a connoisseur's eye. "Maybe I've had Benedict pegged wrong," he admitted grudgingly. "Clay's no pushover." Coming from Pat Ryan that was, Red knew, a terrific concession.

He used Benedict in the Lebanon game, mostly on defense, and Benedict's weird ability to second-guess the enemy quarterback won the game for them, at 13-7. The next week, the kid helped them lick Darnell at 12-8. They kept rolling along, like a river at flood-tide, right through their tough schedule. Red craftily refrained from using the kid unless he was absolutely needed out there. Why advertise the kid's importance, after all?

A TREMENDOUS crowd jammed the home stadium for the windup against Claremont. Red started Clay Daniels at the quarterback spot, and squirmed excitedly all through the first half. With an unbeaten, untied record to date, he would win his first league title in eight long years, if he could just squeeze past Claremont.

He had decided to hold Gene Benedict for an ace-up-the-sleeve, for use in the game's first real crisis. The kid had worked like a Trojan all season, in an effort to fill the gaps in his football education. Under Red's watchful eye, he'd developed as a fairly well-rounded performer.

In the last several games, Red had changed his instructions, told Benedict to get in there and mix things up a bit with the opposition, instead of keeping aloof from the action as he'd been forced to, at the season's start. Red hoped in that way to camouflage the kid's main function from the scouts of the opposition.

Near the end of the opening half, Claremont got a drive started at midfield, and ground their way steadily toward the Mills goal line. Red squirmed worriedly as the enemy made a first down on the Mills forty.

"Benedict!"

Eagerly, the kid ran down from his end of the bench to him. "Yes, Coach?"

"Now, look, son," Red explained gently, "I know this is tough on you, but don't try to do too much blocking or tackling out there. Get in enough mix-ups to keep 'em guessing but don't risk getting hurt. We're going to need those hunches of yours plenty before this one's over."

It was tough, handing out such instructions. The kid's classmates knew that Benedict's only use to the team was his hunching ability. The kid wanted desperately to make them respect him as a player, and his bleak response showed it.

"Okay, Coach," he sighed weakly. "Y-you're the doctor."

He loped out to his spot in the back-

field. Claremont huddled, and deployed for action. The play was close to where Red sat on the bench, and he could hear Gene Benedict bark the coded warning to the eager Mills squadmen.

"Lee!" the kid snapped.

It was pretty. The ball snapped into the Claremont backfield, their mail carrier grabbed it and swept wide toward the far sideline. Fully half the Mills team was around there to greet him. The fellow looked for a hole with frantic eyes. Sam Finney, Ogie Kane, and Bo Eggleston forced him back seven full yards and threw him hard on the forty-seven.

"Oh-ah," Pat Ryan was groaning. "Look at the kid, Red."

Red pulled his eyes back that way in time to see two Claremont bruisers get up, grinning, from atop the prone figure of Gene Benedict. The kid got up creakily, and walked toward his place in the Mills backfield.

"What happened?" Red asked quickly.

"They ganged him," Pat said gruffly. "Those guys must have the kid's number, Red. He wasn't anywhere near the ball runner, when they piled into him."

Red debated a moment, then sent his third-string quarterback in for Benedict. "I'm not taking chances," he muttered. "We'll need Benedict later."

And then he was swearing futilely, as the next play unfolded, watching Claremont uncork the old statue of liberty play. Their triple-threat fullback pitched a looping, long pass. Bo Eggleston failed to bat it down. The Claremont right end snared it on the ten yard line, and romped into paydirt.

The enemy made their point-kick good. The gun banged for the half hour recess, right after the new kickoff. 7-0, Red thought disgustedly, on the way into the field-house.

Pat Ryan's pessimistic "There goes our league title," didn't help Red's mood any.

"We'll make 'em fight for it yet," he countered grimly.

But his blistering pep talk failed to bear fruit in the third quarter. Going into the final frame it was still 7-0. Red called Gene Benedict down the bench and said worriedly. "You can warm up, son. I'm not going to use you again unless I have to, but you might as well be ready."

"I—I'm r-ready right now, Coach," the kid answered promptly.

"They're wise to us, son," Red said and sighed. "They'll smear you, try to knock you out of the game, the minute you show your face out there."

"I'm not worried," said Benedict grimly.

Red felt a thrust of admiration for the spunky youngster. And he'd thought this kid lacked moxie!

Claremont again started a fresh drive into Mills territory.

"All right, son," Red said. "This is it. Try to avoid too much contact out there."

"Do I have to?" the kid pleaded.

"You'd better," Red warned darkly.

RED RECKER could feel his nerves tighten as the kid joined the first play. A plunge through center, the kid hunched it correctly, and it was stopped for no gain. But both Claremont wingmen lanced into the Mills backfield and hurled themselves through the air at Benedict in a vicious block. It was entirely legal. It was not even dirty football. But the kid got shaken up plenty.

He got up with both fists clenched, bristling with anger. And the kid's next hunch was sour! He sent the Mills defense across to the right side of the line, but the play broke around the left side. The enemy fullback made it clear down to the twenty before Bo Eggleston finally ran him out of bounds.

Gene Benedict took another manhandling on that play. He got up fuming with rage, and made no attempt to hunch the next Claremont play for his teammates. Instead, the enraged kid lanced into the Claremont secondary, grabbed the man with the ball and threw him so hard that he fumbled the apple!

Ogie Kane flopped hungrily on it, and the crowd roared lusty approval. Mills' ball, on their own twenty-six. Gene Benedict took a long time calling the next play, peering intently at the enemy line-up before deciding.

Red leaned forward eagerly on the bench. "The kid's acting too sore to think straight out there, Pat. Should I yank him?"

"Let's see what he's up to, first," his assistant answered.

It was their number twelve, a tricky double-reverse. Red gasped as it broke. "Holy cow!" he groaned. "The kid's toting!"

It was the first time Benedict had tried to run the ball in this game. Maybe that was what the kid counted on, Red thought weirdly, the surprise element, to carry him up past that scrimmage line. It worked. Benedict flashed into the enemy backfield like a sizzling comet. He was up to the thirty-five almost before the surprised Claremonters knew what the play was all about.

"Hey!" Pat Ryan was yiping. "Look at 'im go, Red. That kid's a sprinter!"

Red looked, feeling his heart thump with tension. He'd been aware the kid could run, but he hadn't pegged Benedict as this kind of speed merchant.

The kid flashed down over the midstrips, cut narrowly between two converging Claremonters, and kept on rolling. The crowd was lifting him now, seeming to carry him bodily down into enemy territory by the sheer force of their vocal thunder.

A speedy Claremont back threatened to cut the kid off from an angle, force him over the sideline. Benedict's hair-trigger brain came through in the crisis. He did a skater's overlapping stride, still moving downfield with blistering speed, and cut behind the would-be tackler.

On the twenty, the Claremont safety man made a lunging drive at him. The big fellow got hold of Benedict's jersey and tried hard to hang on. Benedict twisted his body in a hard pivot, wrenched loose, and raced straight ahead into paydirt.

Red sat limp as a wet sponge on the bench. "Holy Mackerel, Pat!" he gasped finally. "That kid's a ball-toting demon! He's taught himself plenty, in one short season. And me, telling that fool kid to stay out of action!"

He groaned with the rest of the bench as the point-try foozled, but two minutes later, after the new kickoff, Gene Benedict warned the Mills bunch that a pass was forthcoming. They all rushed in at the harried passer like scurrying rats. Sam Finney leaped high, tipping the intended pass straight up in the air.

A scampering blue jersey knifed through the Claremont secondary, grabbed the foozled pass at a dead run, and raced down through the frantic Claremonters like a flushed rabbit. It was that crazy kid again—Benedict!

Red's jaw sagged as the kid slammed over the end stripe for a second time, pushing the score up to 12-7, Mills' favor. A league title, after eight long years! It was hard to believe it.

A moment later, when the gun banged, Red Recker and Pat Ryan lost no time in corraling Gene Benedict.

"Good gravy, kid!" Red gasped. "What happened to you, out there?"

The kid smiled happily. "The same thing that happened when I got hurt, playing Haddon, Coach. Only today, I got sore."

"Getting hurt and getting sore aren't the same," remarked Pat Ryan.

"The effect was the same," said Benedict promptly. "It's no easy stunt to try to read minds. I mean, I have to concentrate like the dickens to get that 'feel' of what the opposition's going to try next. It's never a very strong reaction."

"I get it," Red cut in thoughtfully. "That's why most mind-readers demand absolute silence, and cooperation. So they concentrate better. And when your ribs ache, or you're hopping mad—"

"You can't concentrate worth a hoot," said the kid soberly. "That's why I yanked myself out of the Haddon game, Coach. I tried to tell you."

"But I jumped to conclusions," Red admitted bleakly. "Sorry, son." He sent an accusing glance in Pat Ryan's direction. The sawed-off cynic looked properly guilty. "About today's game," Red continued. "You figured—"

"I just thought I'd run the pill once, to see how far the surprise element would take me." The kid blushed a little. "Guess I must have shaken off some of the old awkwardness that bothered me, back in high school. It's a lucky thing you worked me hard, though, right through the season. I never knew I could really play football!"

"Neither did I," Red groaned, mentally kicking himself for not realizing it sooner.

When the kid finally excused himself for the triumphal romp to the showers, Red watched thoughtfully, mumbling, "It's been a great day, Pat."

"You mean winning the title?" Pat asked him. "Gosh, just think, Red, we're goin' to have him back next year."

"That's not the important thing," Red mused. "Didn't you notice a change in the kid, while we were talking to him?"

Pat squinted at him. "Like what, for instance?"

"He's cured, Pat," Red said, grinning. "He's lost his stutter!"

PAYOFF ON PANIC

By MATT LEE

They were beautiful plays and should have worked like a charm, but—

HARLEY QUINN, head football coach of Manning University, watched young Jud Leonard race onto the torn stadium turf to report to the referee. For a moment or so he bit hard on the stem of his jug-handled pipe, then took it out of his mouth and turned to Will MacDonald, his backfield coach, who stood beside him, just beyond the end of the bench.

"Do you think he can do it?" he asked tersely. His eyes strayed to the big stop-clock atop the scoreboard. It registered less than fifty-nine seconds to go in the final quarter of this climactic game which had packed the double-tiered oval with more than seventy thousand screaming spectators. The scoreboard itself revealed that Manning was trailing Crater University, its traditional rival, by a 13-17 total.

The backfield coach shrugged. "We'll soon know," he said. "It's a tough spot for a green sophomore. He might make it if he doesn't get panicked."

"He didn't panic when we used him in the early games," muttered Quinn.

"I know—but he's never been in a spot like this," his aide replied with a shrug. "I've seen veterans blow with a conference title hanging on the line."

The blue-and-gray-clad Manning eleven had the ball, first and ten, on the orange-jerseyed Crater team's thirty-eight-yard line, the result of a fine punt runback by Lou Riley, Manning second-string quarterback, who had been carried from the field after the play. With Bowles, first-string signal caller, suffering a broken leg in the opening period and Thompson, third in succession, down with flu, there had been no choice but to throw the green sophomore into the fray.

Jud's voice, hard and shrill, was barely audible above the roar of the crowd as he barked the signals for the first of the series of desperation plays Coach Quinn had ordered him to use. There was barely time to work the sequence—all off the single wing, fake-buck-lateral formation Quinn favored.

First Big Ben Farson, fleet Manning triple-threat fullback, was to fake a handoff to the signal caller and blast through, hoping to catch the Crater secondary back for a pass.

Then, on the second play, Farson was to hand off to young Jud Leonard, who was to fade and flip a short pass to Dude Gregory, the wingback, who was in the flat. This stood a good chance of going all the way if successful and would stop the clock if it weren't.

Then, on the payoff play, Farson himself was to jump-pass on a fake through the line to Ted Royall, brilliant, Don-Hutson-like Manning right end, who was due to cut wide of the Crater secondary toward the goal. With time almost run out, speed was essential.

The first play ran off beautifully—with Farson blasting through while Gregory, the wingback, decoyed the incoming Crater left end with a light block, intended to clear the path for the wingback when he took Jud Leonard's short pass on the second play in the sequence.

THE huge Manning fullback crashed through the sagging Crater line for

eight big yards—came close to breaking into the clear. The two coaches exchanged nods.

"He handled that one all right," said MacDonald to his boss, who nodded and looked again at the clock, which was still ticking away. There were less than thirty seconds remaining and Quinn felt as if his life blood were ticking away.

There was a yell of "Signals!" and the Manning mentor froze, teeth clamped tight on his pipe stem. Five more seconds went into limbo before order was restored. The field judge's whistle went to his lips to blast a call for a penalty for too much time—but at the last minute the ball was snapped to Farson, who went crashing into the line again after making an adroit handoff to the green substitute signal caller, who took the ball and whirled.

At that moment the pattern of play on the field seemed to develop a kaleidoscopic lunacy to Head Coach Quinn. Farson's fake buck turned into a sort of stumble as he hit the line. Jud Leonard, who by this time had the ball, faded but did not throw to wingback Dude Gregory, who, instead of charging downfield, again flattened the incoming Crater left end.

"What the devil?" shouted Coach Quinn, then spat out the bitten-through end of his pipe stem. The pipe itself had fallen unheeded on the grass at his feet. "The kid's blown his top!"

Leonard dodged and twisted, faded deep, then raced forward as he managed to split the inrushing Crater forwards.

"The crazy fool's going to try to run with it!" moaned Quinn. He knew without looking at the clock that there would be no time for another play after this one. It was taking up too much time and going nowhere.

Then, suddenly, his assistant was clutching at his arm and shouting, "Look at Ted Royall! They're going to pull FK-fifty-four!"

Even as he spoke the ball left the green quarterback's hands. He had returned it almost to the line of scrimmage before he jumped and threw and went down in a veritable squall of orange Crater jerseys. The ball wobbled but followed true to a trajectory that carried it high over the goal line.

Far downfield, Ted Royall, the brilliant Manning right end who had been ticketed to snag a short pass from Farson on the following play, raced into the end zone with a pair of Crater defenders dogging his steps. Coach Quinn moaned and wished he had the strength to cover his eyes with his hands.

FK-fifty-four was an utter trick play which Manning had never before used in a game. It was based on a maneuver of Don Hutson, the former great Alabama and Green Bay Packer flankman, was entirely new to college play. It was a hundred-to-one shot under the best conditions, demanding a perfectly placed throw and a receiver with a touch of genius. Ted Royall had the receiver but the throw, from the sidelines, looked slow and unsteady.

For a moment it seemed as if Royall had overrun the end zone, passing close inside of the right goal post at its rear. Then, without warning, one long arm was flung out, was a fulcrum with which he swung himself around the post, emerging just inside the zone and leaving his pursuers yards away and headed in the wrong direction.

He had to dive for the pass but he hung on for a touchdown just as the final gun barked its sharp summons to end the play.

The kick was fluffed but it mattered not to Harley Quinn. His team had won game and title and probable bowl bid by a score of 19-17. He ran out on the field to collar the substitute who had pulled the crazy play against orders, not knowing whether to kiss or hug him but determined to find out *why*.

"I was on a spot," the kid told him candidly. "Farson busted the elastic on his pants on that first plunge. So he couldn't make his jump pass on the third. So I pulled this one out of the hat on the second."

"Why in blazes didn't you call a time out and have his pants fixed?" the coach barked, noting that Farson, as he left the field, was holding up his pants with both hands.

"Because it would have meant five yards for too many time outs," he explained patiently, as if to a child. "Farson couldn't have passed the distance needed anyway—he's a short pass man—and I'm only good for forty yards."

He laid a hand on his stunned coach's overcoat sleeve. "You see, sir," he went on earnestly. "There was nothing to get panicky about. It was just a matter of figuring things out."

LETTER MAN

By ROBERT S. FENTON

An anonymous note sends State's star halfback onto the field to play like a demon in a fast, furious game to save his honor!

THERE are those days when a seemingly unbeatable football team discovers that it can do nothing right and when the man around whom the attack is built is sorely beset by mental hazards that slow him up quicker than the hardest tackles and make him forget, at the most inopportune moments, the simplest fundamentals of the game.

Coach Ray Bidwell, as he watched his spark plug, halfback Jim Cullop, try vainly to sweep little Athol's left end, knew that just such a day had caught up with his maroon and gray State team. The Athol linemen had broken through in a hurry, had smeared Cullop's interference, and driven the fast back out on State's own thirty-one yard line. And here it was half way through the second period and Bidwell's potential conference champions had not penetrated beyond Athol's twenty yard line. The

Jim Cullop stole the ball from under an end's nose and slashed his way to the Aggie thirty-six

stands were comparatively silent and State cheer leaders tried every trick in their repertoire to get some racket pouring out.

State lined up for another try. It was third down and there were still eight big yards to go. From a spinner, the maroon and gray fullback, Mike Hovac, smashed off tackle for four yards. Jim Cullop would have to kick.

The halfback had to take the bad pass from center off his shins and by the time he was in position to kick, Athol's tackles were in the backfield. Jim Cullop started running with the ball and was hit hard and dropped on the thirty-two. It was Athol's ball.

Bidwell quickly sent in a new quarterback. He snapped at the man who had been in there, "You ever hear of the charts, Hop? Try two running plays at that spot, and then kick! So you tried three! Look where we are with your master minding!"

"All right, Coach, so I gambled. Nothing else clicked. I thought it would cross 'em up," the quarterback said.

Athol, inspired, took the offensive. The signal caller faded back and threw a pass that was bobbled by a stringy end in a blue jersey, but the officials ruled interference. State dug in on their fourteen. Athol's most competent ball carrier immediately broke through State's right side and found State's Jim Cullop out of position and picked up an extra five yards to the home team's seven yard line.

Jim Cullop, when State's captain, Robeson, called for time out, dropped to one knee and shook the fog out of his head. He knew he had played the worst game of his career and that his bogging down had affected all the other players. The writers had been saying for almost two years, "As Cullop goes, so goes State." It would appear at the moment that they were right. Robeson came over and banged him on the shoulder. "Get your mind on the game, Jim. We can't let these guys score."

"That's right, Eddie," Cullop said, and hoped a certain co-ed had gone home for the weekend and was not up there in the seats. "We can't let 'em score."

SOME days a man's worries gang up on him all at once and he can't coordinate. Bidwell's star back had collected more than a few during the past couple of years, and they'd suddenly broken the bounds of restraint and snowed him under here on State's seven yard line. Old Man Worry was the twelfth man on the Athol team.

There was no overemphasis regarding football at State. The college offered no unreasonable inducements, and the two thousand dollars insurance money Jim Cullop's father had left behind was nearly gone. There was no revenue at the halfback's disposal via the G.I. bill of rights, for the army doctors had turned thumbs down on young healthy stock with punctured ear-drums. The going here at State had started getting tough and the clothes he had to wear certainly would not get the nod from the advertising consultants who had cooked up the Men of Distinction series.

Athol was not holding Jim Cullop. One of the mental tacklers was the thought that he had the inside track with Patricia McElwyn and could never do anything about it. Her father had five to ten million dollars and a string of newspapers and was even being mentioned as the next governor of the state.

And there was that agreement he had signed with Sam Steiner who owned the minor league pro team, the Canton Bears, before he'd ever dreamed he would shine so brightly at State. When he had signed his name to the paper it had never occurred to him that he would ever attract the notice of Packer or Giant scouts. Only a week ago one had stopped him on the campus and had asked him if he had ever considered pro ball. He'd had to admit that he had, but was not in a position to do business at the moment.

Time was in and Robeson banged him on the rump. "Get in there and hold these twerps!"

State threw an eight man line against the eager Athol team. It stopped the visitors cold the first two tries and then Athol's field general faded back on third down and fired into the end zone where Jim Cullop batted the ball out of the reach of an end's avid fingers. The thousands came up out of the doldrums and yelled for State to spoil the last Athol thrust. But it was not going to be a pass or a smash. The visitors deliberately took a five yard setback for too much time in the huddle, so that their place kick specialist would have more room in which to operate.

Athol's quarterback held the ball. The kick was high and true, and a massed groan soughed out of the stands. State was trailing 3-0.

The half ended that way and a bewildered State squad moved slowly toward the runway leading to the locker room.

Ray Bidwell let them peel off and towel the sweat from their husky bodies before he had his say. He was not a holler guy and despised dramatics. The first thing he did was to laugh. "This can't happen here," he began. "Athol 3, State 0. Northern beat that team that's standing you on your ears 48-6. I know every break has gone against you and that they've had them all, but a championship team wins in spite of the bad breaks. Athol isn't stopping you. You're stopping yourselves because the key man is having a bad day. What's the matter, Jim?"

"Can't get goin', Coach," the right half said and kept staring at the floor. "Maybe in the last half I'll snap into it."

Bidwell lectured his quarterbacks and assured them he would fire them all if they did not stick to the strategy charts. He pointed out mistakes on the part of his guards and tackles, then went over to the trainer to determine the extent of injuries. Hovacs, he was told, had a badly bruised knee. State would have to play the rest of the game without the number one pivot man, Mule Pederson.

"Next week, Iowa Aggies," the coach sighed. "I wish it was East Lynne."

Robeson said, "They must be having quite a winging in the Athol locker room. They'll be tellin' each other they can take us. Are we men or mice?"

THE old urge slowly made itself felt inside Jim Cullop's compact frame. He remembered certain tackles the Athol boys had made and certain things they'd said to him when they'd helped him up. The mugs—you'd think they were playing Pulse Normal or Dopey Teachers. All right, he'd leave his worries in the locker with his tacky sport coat. He grinned at Robeson. "Going to be too bad to ruin an upset."

Thorp, Bidwell's fullback in place of Hovac, threw three beautiful blocks to

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help Jim Cullop run Athol's kickoff back to his own forty-one yard line. Bellinger, quarterbacking for State, tried an air offensive that clicked to the Blue's twenty-seven. Here Jim Cullop started running the way he could run and he broke clear on the eleven and took the ball over for a touchdown. State's cheering section showered confetti enough to take care of a thousand weddings. Jim thanked the blocking back, Abe Golde, for wiping out the Athol safety man. Abe grinned and went out and kicked the extra point. State 7, Athol 3.

The Blue tried to roll back but Cullop, for the moment, had filed his worries away, and the rest of the team acted accordingly. Bidwell's spark backed up the line on a straight buck and threw the Athol ball carrier hard enough to shake the ball loose on the blue's twenty-two, where Robeson smothered it.

A cross-buck, an in and out run, and a romp around Athol's left end by Jim Cullop brought the leather just inside the five yard line where the visitors employed an eight-man line, their backs playing just behind the rumps of the forward wall.

"It would be Thorp on a straight buck," Athol's desperate quarterback probably thought. "Then, if they stopped him short of the last line it would be Cullop the pay-off man."

Bellinger crossed up the Athol brain trust, ran a few steps to the right and pitched to Linderman stepping into the end zone. And now the stands were roaring and the cockiness was fading from the wearers of the blue. Well, they'd had a right to dream. They tried to break through and spoil Abe Golde's kick but it split the posts. State 14, Athol 3.

It was all State the rest of the way, and Jim Cullop, with the score-board reading: State 34, Athol 3, was glad when Bidwell took him out for he was beginning to commit the mental lapses again. How could he cope with five million dollars and the power of the press? Playing for Sam Steiner's Class B pro team meant about three hundred bucks a game. The Packers—well, three seasons with those babies and a lawyer could have something to start practicing with. A library of books, the clients who were impressed with a man's record as an athlete. A couple of nice fat fees and he would have the crust to beard J. K. McElwyn in his den and tell him he was the guy with definite plans for his daughter's future.

Bidwell said, "Okay, Jim. But you've got to be sharper for the Aggies. We lose to them and the big game won't mean too much. How are your marks?"

"Good enough," Cullop said, and wondered if Steiner would agree to take the ropes off him. He wasted little time with the silly supposition and leaned forward to watch a bedraggled Athol team try to punch through the State reserve's line. At the gun he was thinking how incongruous he must seem riding in Pat's sleek sport coupe, and began to marvel at his own colossal cheek. The co-ed's allowance at State, he knew, was sufficient to support a middle class family of three, and her wardrobe was the talk of the campus wherever members of the distaff side met.

After practice the next Tuesday afternoon, Jim Cullop had about reached a decision. Until pressure cabins in the space ships were perfected so that men wouldn't fall apart flying faster than the speed of sound, he deemed it wise to stop reaching for a star. He was like that Athol team that had dreamed of reaching unbelievable heights, only to fall apart when class began to assert itself.

It was an object lesson he'd do well to remember. For the next two days he tried, deliberately avoiding the girl, and shunning the telephone at Garfield Hall. It was hard to take, and his game suffered.

BIDWELL called him aside after the final scrimmaging on Thursday afternoon. "If you've got a lot of worry on your mind, Jim, I wish you'd confide in me. Maybe I could help. If you need a little dough until—"

"I'll get along," Cullop ground out. "I've paid my way this far."

"That McElwyn number," Bidwell thought, and squirmed on the bench. "The kid is big and handsome and is a football hero. Period. When he peels off the suit—goodbye, Jim. Been nice to know you, really. If I lose that conference title, I'll strangle her." He said, "There's only two games to go, Jim. Try and give me all you have."

"Sure, Ray." Jim Cullop trotted toward the gym to get a shower, a cold one that might drive some of the warmth out of his chest.

He was walking down into town an hour later, crossing the macadam road that led to the railroad station, when the familiar warning blast of a horn spun him around. The long green coupe slid to a stop and Pat called, "Jim!"

He walked up to the car and looked into Pat's dark eyes and offered an apology before he found out if one was needed. "I've been busy, Pat. I—"

"Get in, Jim," the girl said. "Something's wrong and maybe you'll feel better if you talk it over."

"I don't know. I got things to do, Pat," he fenced, but got in the car and settled back on the soft leather upholstery. The coupe started movng, its powerful engine making very little sound.

"You've been off your game, they tell me," Pat said. "Bidwell blames me. I can tell by the way he looked at me last night when I met him near the chapel. He flatters me, Jim."

"You imagine that," the halfback said, and tried to find courage enough to break this association up for good and all. He guessed she liked him well enough, while the glamor of the gridiron lasted. She was not quite twenty, he figured, and so did not know her own mind, but would be smart enough to stay in her class when she was through at State.

"You believe it, too, Jim. Just a dumb co-ed with too much money, playing around." She thrust her lower lip out and stared at the road ahead. "You have your pride and want to bow out, I know."

"That's the way the cards fall, Pat," he said, thankful for the opening. "I could get in deeper and it wouldn't be good for me. You've been swell—"

"Thanks," she said stiffly. "Let's have a pepsi on that, Jim," and swung the wheel angrily. The coupe bounced as it hit a hole in the tarvia drive that wound up to the roadside restaurant and Jim Cullop reached up just in time to save his hat.

THEY were sitting in a booth and sipping the pepsis when a bulky man in

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a nice polo coat stopped and looked Jim Cullop over. The halfback drew in his breath when he recognized Sam Steiner.

"Hello, Jim," Steiner said. "Thought I knew you." He took off his hat and Jim introduced him to Pat McElwyn. The girl nodded, her eyes vaguely puzzled. "Down here for the Aggies game. They'll be tough to beat. You guys started slow against that setup team."

"You get days like that," Jim Cullop said.

"Get one when you play Northern, Kid. I've got a bale of hay on that one."

"You're a betting man, Mr. Steiner?" Pat asked with one of her best smiles.

"Honey, it's my only weakness," Steiner said. "Well, I've got to be gettin' along. Watch yourself, Jim. You know I'm countin' on you to—"

"Okay," Jim said irritably. "Let me worry about that."

"Where did you meet Steiner, Jim?" Pat swished what little coke remained around in the bottom of her glass, staring at it.

"Last summer," he said. "At a hotel in the mountains where I acted as bell captain. I carried his bags to the elevator and later he sent for me." He picked up the check. "Let's get out of here, Pat."

"I certainly must be slipping, Jim." She touched her lips up and snapped the compact shut. "This ought to take the snooty dame down a peg."

"I didn't infer—"

"No quarrel, Jim, please." She reached out and touched him on the arm. "It has been fun, I want you to know that."

"Everything is mixed up, Pat," he said. "It's all wrong, and you know it."

She let him out of the car later in front of the drug store in Bridgeton, held out her hand and wished him luck. She drove off before he could find an appropriate answer and he wondered if he imagined her eyes were much too bright.

Well, that was that! He would look back on this incident some day and admire the judgment he had used. Now, he couldn't be sure. She must know that he was in love with her and that the break would, for quite awhile, take the heart out of him. She had to know that a player would have to be alert men-

tally and physically to cope with the Aggies. Without a mind at ease, a man's efficiency is way under par, and if his heart is affected, too, he comes close to being a liability rather than an asset.

Jim Cullop all at once felt sorry for himself and made himself believe that a girl had clipped his pride, and State could win or lose as far as he was concerned. It was a football game that would have little effect on the Far-eastern rhubarb nor would it help feed the Greeks.

A kid he had never seen before handed Jim Cullop an envelope just as he left Garfield Hall at noon of the day State clashed with the Iowa Aggies. He ripped it open and took out the typed message. His stomach tightened as he read:

A couple of people I know saw you talking with Sam Steiner out at Jensen's, Cullop. Maybe the big shot has a big bet on the Aggies. He a friend of yours? If State loses will you blame us for thinking, especially if you show up lousy?

A Fan

He crumpled the note up and threw it over a privet hedge, and knew he had another worry on his mind. If State lost and this guy had a bet on Bidwell's team, he would sound off where it would do the most good or harm, depending upon which side of the fence you happened to be sitting on. The suggestion that he would, for even one moment, consider selling out Bidwell and the team filled him with cold fury.

It was possible that the Aggies could win and that he would have a bad day, he realized, and if it became known that he had made an agreement with Steiner, he could save his breath at an investigation. He would be through at State, everywhere. He suddenly remembered the way Pat had looked at him when Steiner took his leave, and he guessed he knew what had been going on inside her pretty head.

HE DID not hear them call his name as he continued on toward the big gym. Catching up with him, Robeson

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and Thorp said in unison, "What's eating you, Jim?" and they seemed worried. "Something's got you down," the captain went on. "Today we've all got to play our brains out."

"You'll be picking Aggies up all afternoon," the halfback said. "Don't worry about me!" He ground his teeth together and refused to offer another word until he got to the locker room. Yeah, she knows how I need dough. She has an idea I might not give a hoot where I get it. He stripped to the waist and dropped down onto an air mattress and let the anger drain out of him. The players kept coming into the locker room, and now the big stadium was becoming alive as early arrivals whooped it up. The roar of traffic increased in tempo and Cullop's nerves began to tighten. This game had to be one the fans would remember. When it was over, he mused grimly, they would remember him.

Bidwell came in with Spike Webber, the trainer. Big Hovac was grinning as he stood there clad only in his shorts. "No more housemaid's knee, Coach. I'm okay."

"Take a look at it, Spike," Bidwell said. "You never know about these big fakirs. How are you feeling, Jim?"

The right half sat up and grinned. "We'll plough those farmers under."

The coach announced his starting lineup. In the backfield would be Cullop, Hovac, Bellinger, and Abe Golde. His line would begin against the Aggies with two doubtfuls and he assured every member of the squad with two good legs under them that they would see action. He had no last minute instructions for he had taught them all he knew.

Out there the bands started playing. Jim Cullop adjusted his shoulder harness and pulled on the gray and maroon jersey, and was ready. He felt strangely alone as if this was his first day at State, and as though most of the players knew about the contents of the note he had thrown away. Always, after the games at home, he'd had a standing date with Pat. During the bruising battles it had been something to look forward to. All that was over. A man had his pride.

Pouring out onto the field the State team drew a tremendous ovation. To Jim Cullop the Aggies looked to be the

brawniest bunch he had ever seen. Their climax operator, Pete Nihos, seemed seven feet tall and a yard wide. Pete was the leading scorer in the conference and all-American the previous year. Northern had just managed to squeeze by the Aggies by a 7-6 score.

Finished with warming-up routine, the teams retired to the benches, and zero hour tension gripped fifty thousand fans. The officials stood on the forty yard line and waited for the captains to come out. Bidwell said to his quarterback, "Just remember to go by the book when you're in position C 30-40, Hike. You took liberties with that map in the Athol game."

Nihos kicked off to State and the spectators rose to their feet to watch the flight of the new ball. Jim Cullop picked up the low drive on his eleven, and with four blockers hard at work, battered his way upfield to his twenty-eight where he was hit hard. Hovac helped Nihos of the Aggies up. "It's goin' to be a great day, Pete," he grinned.

Bellinger, State's quarterback, considered the next play well. He was position B-10-30. He called for a strong running play. It was a slant off tackle with Hovac carrying, but the end missed a pivot block and the fullback could only get two yards. On the next play Jim Cullop dropped back. He booted a beauty that was helped along by a sudden gust of wind, and the Aggie safety man had to chase it to the twelve where it rolled out.

JIM CULLOP started operating here. Afterward, one sport writer said it was the greatest individual performance he had ever witnessed during his fifteen years of covering the college game. Pete Nihos came roaring in on a cross-buck and pierced the Sate forward wall, but ran into Jim Cullop.

The impact must have made the co-eds in the stands wince. Pete was lifted high and slammed down and the ball squirted out of his clutch. When the players were unpiled, Bidwell's left guard, Angevine, was over the precious leather. State's rooters tore up the corn patch.

Nihos got up slowly, kicked up turf with his cleats, and glared at the State

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right half. Aggie players quickly walled Pete in and calmed him down.

Jim Cullop got six yards on a double reverse. The Aggies threw eight men into the line and held Bidwell's ace to two and a half on a smash in the middle. With the spectators standing and yelling like crazy, Hovac scored on a reverse that started with a false spinner. Aggie rooters implored the white-jerseyed huskies to block the try for point. Abe Golde calmly delivered it for Bidwell and State led 7-0.

The Aggies, their white shirts grass-stained and muddied, started back after their quarterback had run the State kick-off back twenty-one yards. It was Nihos and Ombreski alternating in grinding out short gains to their own forty-one. Nihos passed to an Aggie end who took it just before he stepped out at mid-field. Pete Nihos got four yards with a tricky spinner play, and then he threw again. Jim Cullop stole it from under an end's nose and slashed his way to the Aggie thirty-six with Golde and Hovac tumbling the white shirts.

Bellinger could gamble here. He fired a bullet pass over the center of the line and hit Linderman, his right end, in the stomach. Seven big yards. On a reverse outside tackle with Bidwell variations, Jim Cullop followed Hovac and three linemen into the Aggie secondary. Ombreksi and big Nihos piled into the interference but Cullop romped off on his own to the eleven where he was driven out of bounds by the last Aggie defender.

Pete Nihos was taken out despite his angry protest. His right leg seemed a little unsteady under him. The Aggies, psychologically atomized by the loss of the star, vainly tried to hold back the thrusts of Hovac and Jim Cullop. They kept backing up, giving ground stubbornly. With the stadium one wild crazy roar, Jim Cullop smashed off tackle for State's second touchdown. This time Abe Golde's try for point was wide.

The Aggies tried again with Ombreski carrying the load. Cullop, number eighty-eight, the radio announcer shouted into his mike, seemed to be everywhere. You'd think he had a personal grudge against any man who wanted to be a farmer. He was backing up the line at just the right place every

time. Number eighty-eight was the outstanding performer on the field, both on offense and defense.

But the Aggies recovered and kept battering their way forward, yard by yard. On State's thirty-eight, Pete Nihos came back in and proceeded to rip straight through State's middle for another first down. Number eighty-eight tackled him.

Jim Cullop stopped Ombreski on the next play. The big Pole nearly got away. Bidwell bolstered his line with four fresh men and State started throwing the Aggie bid back on their thirty-one. Pete Nihos spread the State defense with two passes, one clicking for nine yards. He hit off tackle for another first down and it was Jim Cullop who stopped him on the eighteen after Hovac had bounced him off his feet.

The Aggie field general mixed his plays up well and Nihos and Ombreski smashed to the six. Pete pulled up lame

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again and his coach took him out and put in a two hundred and twenty pound plunging back named Plasch.

State was groggy. Thorp was in in place of Hovac when a time out period was over. Bidwell replaced Abe Golde with a big defensive back. Plasch, as fresh as a daisy, following two blockers, hit the gray and maroon in the middle and bulled his way over with Jim Cullop hanging on.

A minute to go before the half ended. A knicker trotted in for the Aggies and he immediately proved to the crowd that he hadn't missed an hour of practice up at Johnstown, Iowa. The gun went off with State hanging on to a 13-7 lead.

THE trainer looked Bidwell's first line operators over in the locker room, said that Hovac's knee was bad. Robeson's nose needed a swab and some adhesive tape. Abe Golde smelled nice of wintergreen when they got finished working a charley horse out of his right leg, and the big center, Minuse, felt gingerly at a chipped front tooth.

"Rugged," the coach said. "What's holding you up, Jim? No hurts anywhere?"

"In one place I hurt, coach," he thought. Out loud he answered, "Not where they show, Ray." He fell back on the air mattress and let all the exhaustion flow out of him.

"You played one aitch of a game," Hovac said, kneading his bad knee with his fingers. "What got into you since last week? You slowed up Pete Nihos and he's the difference."

"The second half will be the toughest," Bidwell said. "I've got nothing to say about the game you're playing. It ought to be good enough to see us through."

Half way through the third quarter, the Aggies, sparked by Nihos and Ombreksi, worked the ball all the way from their eight yard line to State's twenty-two, mainly because Bidwell was resting Jim Cullop. Hovac was through until the game with Northern and he sat on the bench digging his nails into the palms of his hands and sweating as much as if he had been working on the field.

Bidwell, when Nihos got five more yards on a cutback, said quietly, "Okay, Jim. Get the kinks out of your legs."

The crowd let loose with a grateful

roar when they saw number eighty-eight peel off his parka and start warming up. After the next play that netted the Aggies two yards, Jim Cullop trotted out to report. He wondered if Pat was lending her voice to the salvo of cheers, and if she was still thinking of Sam Steiner.

The Aggies huddled. They could tie it up here, or go out in front. Pete Nihos came roaring in after faking to Plasch and hit the left side of the State line, and Cullop, anticipating the point of attack, was waiting. He piled into a blocker and drove him against Nihos, and Pete tumbled head over heels and rolled off Robeson's big rump and was smothered by half the State team. No gain. Nihos got up and his leg buckled under him, and he was taken to the sidelines once more.

The announcer roared, "Cullop, number 88, stopped that play."

Too much time in the huddle cost the Aggies five yards. Ombreski plowed through the middle from a spinner and met three State tacklers who stopped him straight up.

The Aggie quarterback tried the air route, faded back to the nineteen with four State tacklers worrying him. He fired from the twenty-six when it seemed he would be smothered and Abe Golde knocked it out of a receiver's reach. Jim Cullop, defending on the five, drove forward and picked the ball up before it brushed the turf and miraculously kept his feet.

State interference formed and he streaked for the left sideline. The Aggie tacklers seeped through and he reversed his field, and foxed a pair of Aggies on the thirty-four with a change of pace. At midfield he began to accelerate speed. Thorp and Robeson were with him. The captain and tackle eliminated the safety man on the Aggie thirty-five and Cullop romped over for State's third touchdown.

In the end zone the State players horsed the right half around and Bellinger hugged him and called him sweetheart. Jim Cullop's feeling of triumph became a little frayed around the edges when he thought of Steiner. The big guy could have bet on the Aggies and he could be a bad loser and to protect

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his interests on the Northern game, could and might let it be known that Jim Cullop had signed an agreement to give the Canton club first call on his pro services. It would leave a sour taste in Bidwell's mouth. There was an old saying, "Whose bread I eat, his song I sing."

Abe Golde kicked the extra point for State and his team was out in front 20-7.

THE last quarter meant no quarter for either team. The going was rugged and penalties built up. The Aggies set themselves back twenty-five yards during an offensive that brought them to midfield. Bidwell took Cullop and Robeson out with two minutes to go. He yanked all but three of his first string, and Ombreski broke through for a thirty yard gain in answer to the insult. Plasch, in there for Nihos, broke before the ball on the next play and cost his team five yards. On State's twenty-six, Ombreski smashed off tackle and reached the six yard line but again there was an infraction, this time for illegal use of the hands, and the Aggies walked back to begin from scratch.

The Aggie quarterback faded back to his forty with State tacklers hounding him and got a long one away. The ball settled into the hands of a galloping end on the four but was thrown out of bounds on the two-yard line. Time for one more play. The Aggie coach stopped the clock by sending in a fresh tackle. Ombreski hit State right in the middle and there was a great pile up. The thousands were on their feet waiting while the host of players were peeled off the Aggie power back. They turned loose a deafening roar of sound when the referee signaled no touchdown.

The gun went off.

The State locker room was Bedlam. Players and sports writers, student managers and old grads bulled their way in to tell Jim Cullop what a great man he was.

Maybe. Wait until they found out he had been doing business, even legitimate, with Sam Steiner. There was another year coming up and everybody at State knew that Jim Cullop's finances were more than limited. If he'd have a bad afternoon against an important opponent, some guy like the one who had sent

him the note might spread a rumor. He wondered where he had left his brains the day he had scribbled his signature on that piece of paper.

Two hours later a pair of grinning State non-athletes barged into his room. "Jim, we were sent up here to ask you to make your appearance immediately on the steps of Garfield Hall. No, you don't have to make a speech. The celebration is over."

"What is this, you jerks? "Jim asked, and got up and hurried to the window. Down there was the long sport coupe with Pat sitting very patiently at the wheel. He had a moment of indecision before he reached for his coat.

Pat gave him her old smile as he got into the seat beside her. She drove him out to the shores of a little lake six miles from town, and parked in the lee of a clump of pine. She took something from her bag and handed it to him. It was the agreement he had signed with Sam Steiner.

"I went to see him last night, Jim. You know he'll bet on anything with anybody. He's no ordinary gambler and I'm sure you couldn't pay him to pull a fix. I bet him five thousand dollars, my whole next year's allowance at State, against that piece of paper. I know what you've been thinking, Jim. You threw away a chance to play with the Giants or Redskins before you proved you were the best halfback in the conference. You kept thinking of what people might say if they heard about that paper, especially if a big team like Northern beat us next week or next year—"

"Pat, you risked all that dough—on a bum like me?" He laughed the question off. "For State, sure—"

"I could slug you," Pat said. "You have to play with a big team like the Packers or the Redskins, Jim. If only for a year. My father is a rabid pro fan. A star in that league could do business with him. He has his own staff of legal advisers—I'm looking ahead, Jim, but—aren't you with me?"

He still could not quite catch on. He wondered if that last tackle Ombreski had made on him still had him loaded with radio-activity.

"You figured right, Pat," he said. "A guy sent me a note. Said he'd seen me

[*Turn page*]

talking to Steiner out at Jensen's. I had to play my brains out all afternoon."

Pat sighed and looked out over the lake. "What have I got to do, Jim? Make the first pass and risk having it grounded? I have my pride, too. Do you love me or don't you?"

He had her in his arms the next moment and felt her cling to him as if he were the last man alive after an A-bomb raid. She cried joyfully like a little kid getting her first rag doll, and nobody would have believed at that moment that she was an heiress to five million dollars and a string of first rate newspapers. This was shock number one for Jim Cullop.

Shock number two hit him between the eyes when he trotted into the post office to mail a letter she had given him. He was about to push it through a slot when he noticed the texture of the writing paper. The envelope, sure enough, was the same size.

Jim Cullop stood there for nearly a minute. Finally he slid the letter through the slot and grinned wide. A pretty smart mouse, he thought, who had needled him to playing over his head against the tough Aggies. Some day he would tell her it would be nice to have a wife who knew how to type. He waited awhile longer to clear a certain expression from his eyes and then went out of the post office to where she waited in the coupe. She wouldn't make a good quarterback though, he thought, as she drove him to Garfield Hall. Like those envelopes, she'd forget to mix her plays up.

THE FIFTY-YARD LINE

(Continued from page 8)

tackles four abreast behind the center and the ends.

Just before the ball was snapped they would leap, usually three to one, on either side of the center, touch fingertips to turf and be off, providing a pulverizing superiority of weight and momentum on the side of the play. It took a rule enforcing a one-second halt between shift and snap of the ball to check this one and the many variations evolved from it.

There's Nothing New!

So, for the most part, there is nothing new under the football sun. The supposedly newfangled T formation of recent fame was used for years by the Yale juggernauts. So, with certain changes, was the ever-recurrent lateral pass.

Outside of the constant increase in speed at which football is played and its ever-growing trend toward greater complexity and specialization, the one real lasting change in the offense was inaugurated in 1906—when Navy Coach Paul "Skinny" Dashiell, wearied with seeing his Midshipmen scuttled by Army bulk, managed to get the rules committee to "permit the ball to be passed forward." As a result Navy beat Army in 1906, scoring a 10-6 upset.

Old-timers—remember the game was then 40 years old—screamed that the play was "unsporting," that it made of the honest and bone-jarring sport a "sissy" game where brawn and muscle did not count. For years it was regarded as rather a shady maneuver—until, almost a decade later, an underrated Notre Dame team, sparked by Gus Dorais and Knute Rockne, upset a great Army eleven at West Point by means of the

[*Turn page*]

poorly regarded maneuver. Army, enraged at the defeat, came back with a passing attack of its own a year later to win much wanted revenge.

The forward pass was in—but it took a long time to penetrate coaching mentality. For years mentors preached that it was poor tactics to pass except on third down, that it was suicide to throw a forward inside one's own 30-yard line. Actually it was not until the teams of the Southwestern Conference began to rip things wide open via the air that the pass came into its own.

However, like the running guard, the pass seems here to stay and, far from making the game a "sissy" affair, it has made it much swifter, harder and more thrilling for player and spectator alike. Unreasonable restrictions have been removed from its use, which will probably continue to increase. Along with defensive play, which has had to develop amazingly to meet the aerial threat, it is perhaps the only department in which football has really progressed.

We hope it progresses further still.

OUR COMPANION MAGAZINES

YOU want still more football? Well, here is a line-up of sports fiction leads which should satisfy the most insatiable gridiron fan. Just visit your regular newsstand and take your choice from this all-star team—

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THRILLING FOOTBALL has another all-star novelet cast which lists YESTERDAY'S TOUCHDOWNS by Joe Archibald, THE JUNKMAN'S SON by Don Keene and LINE WRECKER by William O'Sullivan—all of these supported as usual by a galaxy of shorter stories and articles.

EXCITING SPORTS, while an all-sport magazine, takes cognizance of the season by presenting a pair of gridiron novelets, ONE DOWN, TEN TO GO by H. L. McNary and OLD MILLION BUCKS by Roger Fuller, along with plenty of other football material, as well as grand stories and features on other red-hot sports.

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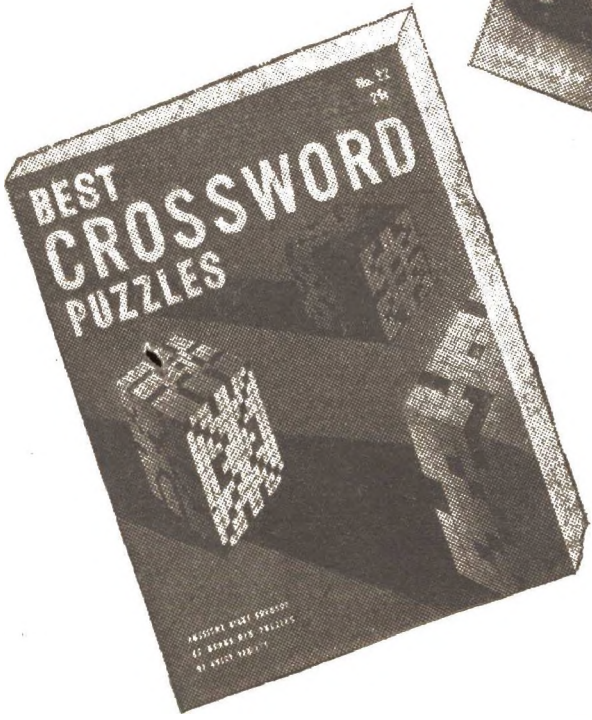

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