

# SPORTS LEADERS

APRIL *Magazine* 20¢

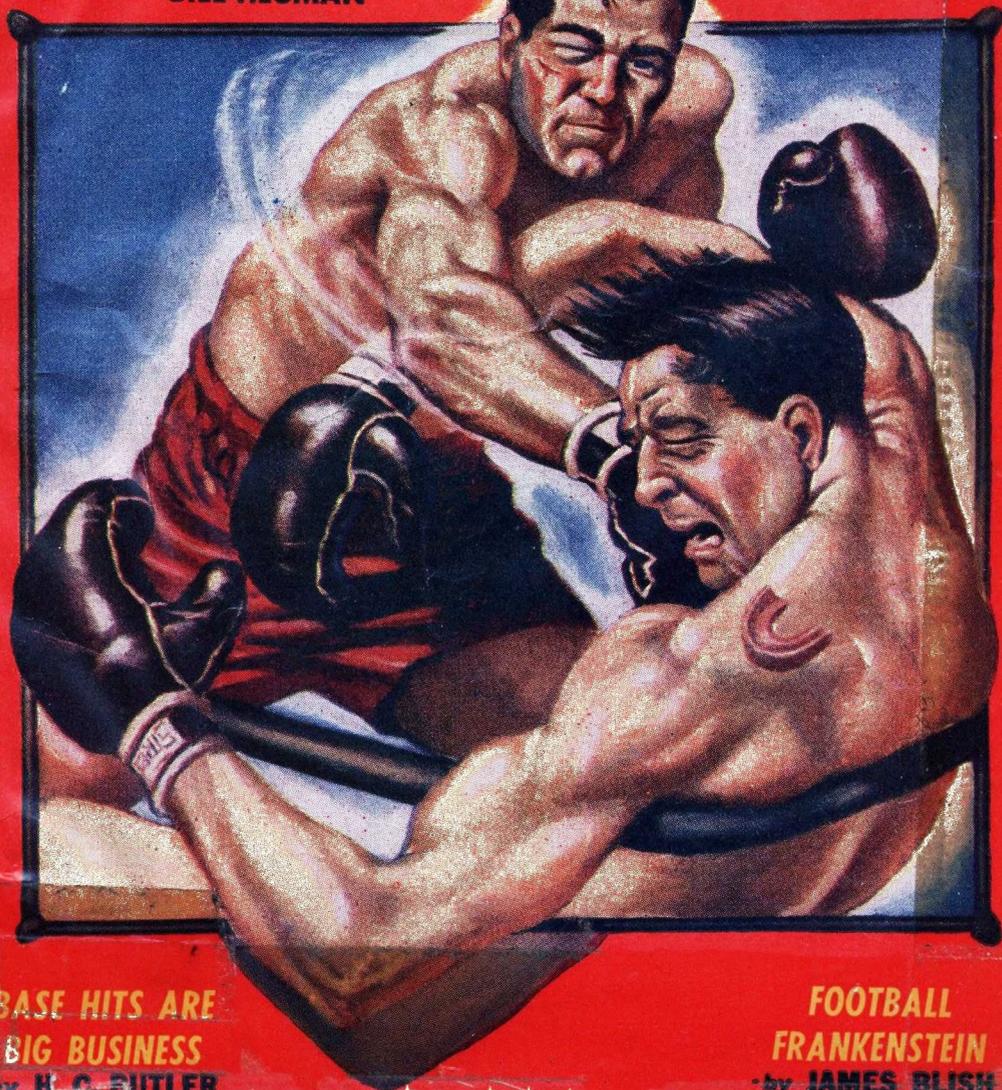
**FAST  
ACTION  
THRILLERS**

**7 ROUNDS  
TO REVENGE!**

*jolting ring yarn by*  
**BILL HEUMAN**



**HOOP-MARVEL'S  
HARDCOURT COMEBACK**  
*championship court novel by*  
**ROBERT TURNER**



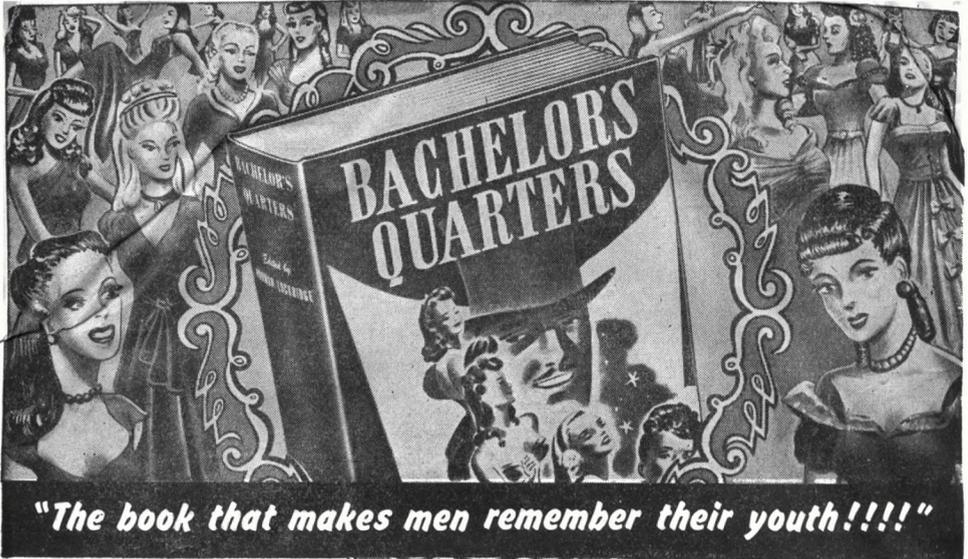
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**A  
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# SPORTS LEADERS Magazine

Vol. 1 — No. 1

April, 1948

★ ★ **BIG FAST-ACTION COURT NOVEL** ★ ★

**HOOP-MARVEL'S HARDCOURT COMEBACK (Basketball)** . . . . . Robert Turner 6  
Millionaire Ellington would spend a king's ransom to put Parkside on the basketball map—but all the king's horses and men couldn't put the team together after this basket bombshell hit the court!

★ ★ **FOUR THRILL-PACKED NOVELETS** ★ ★

**BASEHITS ARE BIG BUSINESS (Baseball)** . . . . . H. C. Butler 40  
The kids in the bleachers worshipped Ted Rockwell, king of clout, but the only thing Rocky worshipped was the Almighty Dollar.

**NO GLORY FOR A BALL-HOG (Basketball)** . . . . . Louis Trimble 50  
Feeding shots to high-scoring Marty Bowers had been Ted Driscoll's mission in life—but now he must outshoot this hoop hero he created!

**FULLBACK FRANKENSTEIN (Football)** . . . . . James Bligh 60  
The team needed an iron man, but this new fullback wasn't human—he was a cold mechanical scoring machine, whose mask of a face could show neither hate nor fear!

**SEVEN ROUNDS TO REVENGE! (Feature-Length Fight Yarn)** . . . . . Bill Heuman 70  
There was only one man in the world whose murderous right could jolt the Champ loose from his crown—the kid he called his son!

★ ★ **THREE GREAT SHORT STORIES** ★ ★

**BLUE-LINE SOLO (Hockey)** . . . . . Norman Ober 30  
Pro hockey may be mass manslaughter, but the toughest players draw the line when it comes to brother killing brother on the ice!

**DUEL IN THE STRETCH (Horse race)** . . . . . William L. Jackson 83  
Bringing in Colonel Raines' black a winner was this jockey's job—but that was about as likely as Ace-in-the-Hole's turning into the Ace-of-Spades!

**CHAMPIONS FOLLOW THROUGH (Golf)** . . . . . Eric Thorstein 92  
Jim Sanderson's golfing guisnights were trained on the hole ahead, but the game he was playing, was his brother's . . . eighteen holes ahead!

★ ★ **SPECIAL FEATURES** ★ ★

**SPORTS ODDITIES (All Sports)** . . . . . Phil Berube 4, 91  
More interesting highlights in the world of sports.

**OFFSIDE PLAY** . . . . . Walt Munson 95

**A TIMELY SPORTS MAGAZINE**

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# SPORTS oddities...

**THE ORIGINAL CELTICS, ORGANIZED IN 1918-19 REMAIN VIVID IN HISTORY AS THE GREATEST BASKETBALL SQUAD EVER ASSEMBLED... THE CELTICS ENDURED UNTIL THE END OF THE 1928-29 SEASON WHEN AMERICAN LEAGUE MAGNATES DECLARED THE TEAM TOO STRONG! THIS RESULTED IN THE TEAM DISBANDING.**

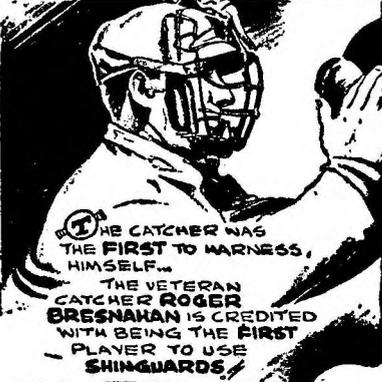
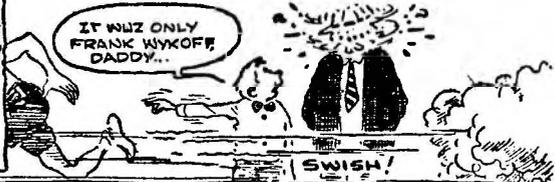


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THE "SCOTCH WOP"...

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IT WUZ ONLY FRANK WYKOFF, DADDY...



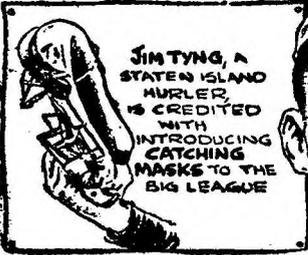
THE CATCHER WAS THE FIRST TO WARNER, HIMSELF... THE VETERAN CATCHER ROGER BRESNAHAN IS CREDITED WITH BEING THE FIRST PLAYER TO USE SHINGUARDS.



JOE GUNSON, WHO CAUGHT FOR KANSAS CITY BLUES IN 1888, CLAIMS THAT HE MADE AND WORE THE FIRST MITT!



FRANK WYKOFF'S 100-YD. DASH MARK OF 9.4 SECONDS HASN'T BEEN BEATEN IN 16 YEARS!



JIM TYING, A STATEN ISLAND HURLER, IS CREDITED WITH INTRODUCING CATCHING MASKS TO THE BIG LEAGUE

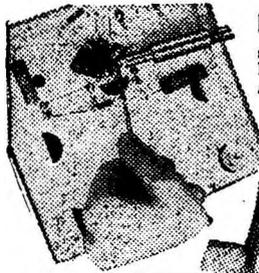


MAX CAREY OWNED THE COSTLIEST OF ALL SUNGLASSES... HE HAD THEM SEWED TO THE PEAK OF HIS CAP AND LIFTED THEM WHEN HE WENT TO BAT.



JOHNNY WEISSMULLER'S SWIM MARK OF 51 SEC. FOR THE 100-YD DASH HASN'T HAD A SUCCESSFUL CHALLENGER IN NEARLY 20 YEARS!!

\*(More interesting oddities on page 91)



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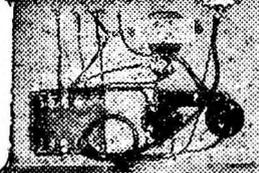
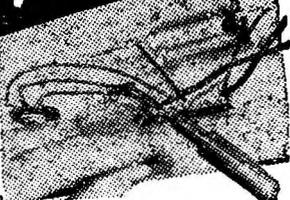
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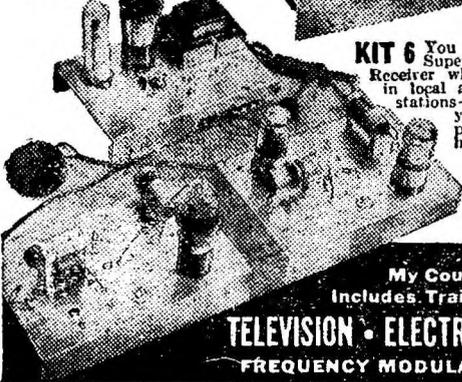
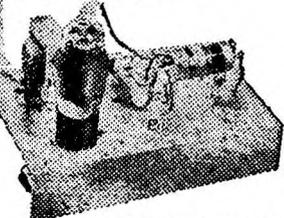
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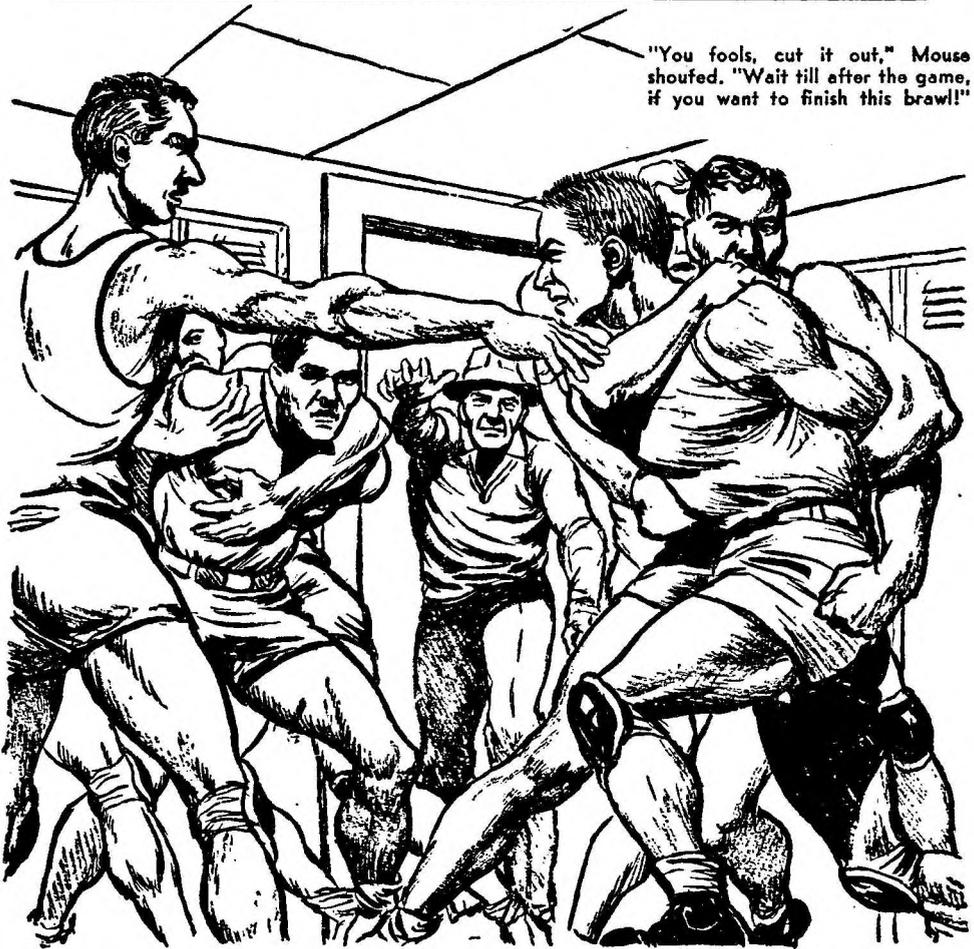


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# HOOP-MARVEL'S HARCOURT

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"You fools, cut it out," Mouse shouted. "Wait till after the game, if you want to finish this brawl!"

## CHAPTER I *For Hire—One Court-Wizard!*

**T**HIS town called Parkside you could put in a vest pocket of a big city like New York. Not that it isn't a nice enough little place. It's big enough to have a college, too. And Parkside College was just right for the town.

There were about five buildings and a few acres of campus, buried in trees and shrubbery and a row of old houses where the faculty lived and another small block of frat houses. All the buildings were red brick, except one, and that one, reared up in the center of the campus, all slick concrete and steel. That was the new Ellington Gymnasium. It was named after old Doug Ellington, Parkside's one rich and famous alumnus, who had donated the funds for it, with the stipulation that the building must be the largest, best equipped and most modern that money could buy.

**A HARD-FIGHTING HOOP FIVE AND A FAST-BREAKING**

# COMEBACK

by **ROBERT TURNER**

Author of "In This Corner—Murder!", etc.

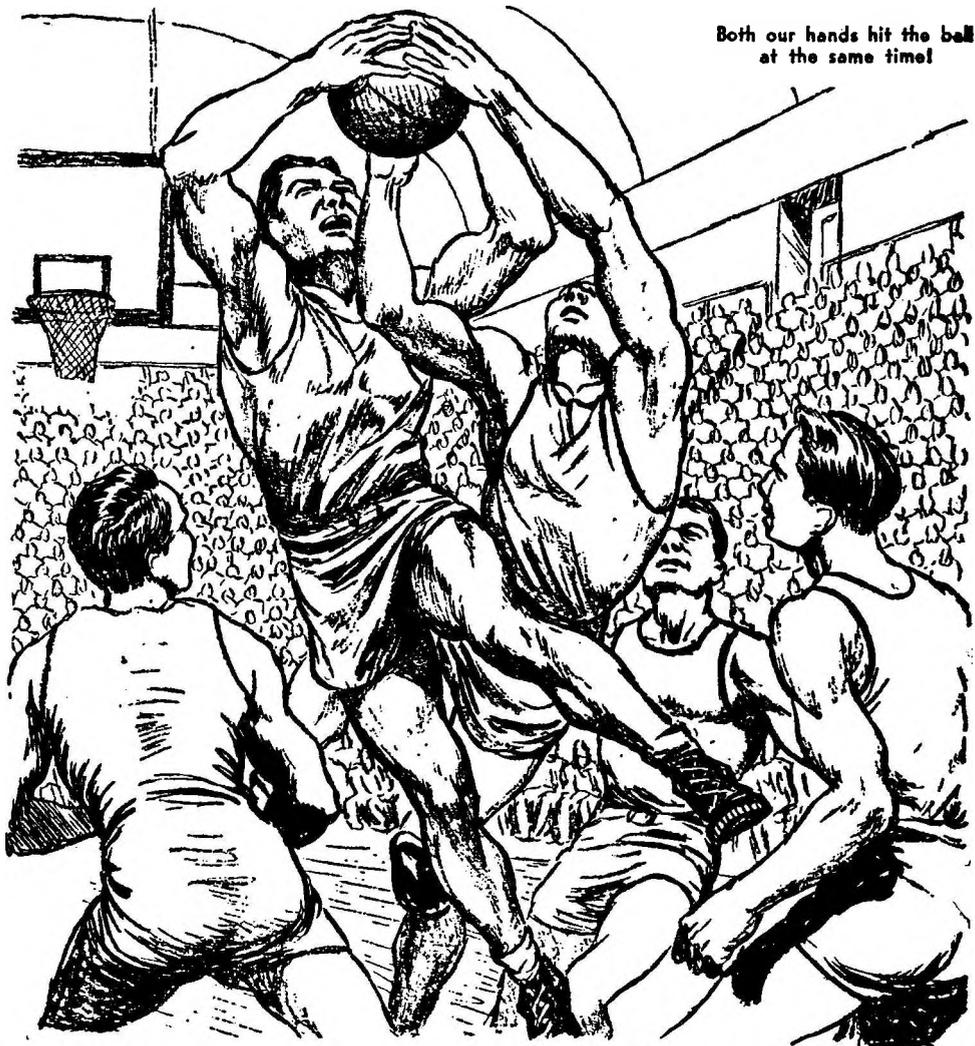
It had everything, an indoor track, a swimming pool, hot rooms, steam rooms, solariums and a basketball court. That was the thing, that basketball court. It was as fine as the one they have in Madison Square Garden. I know. I've played in the Garden. And the seating capacity was six thousand. I don't know where old man Ellington thought those six thousand people were going to come from; Parkside only had a population of seven thousand, including kids.

Anyhow, this night, as I walked up the hill from the town, toward the campus,

---

***Like a streaking comet this basket barnstormer came down in a burst of glory to spark this small-town five — but instead he started a hard-court conflagration!***

---



Both our hands hit the ball  
at the same time!

---

***FIREBRAND FIND THAT GREENBACKS CAN'T BUY BASKETS!***

---

I stopped for a minute and looked back. In the town square, I could still see the red glow from the bonfire where some of the students and some of the townspeople had held a small rally for tonight's game with St. Jo, a small upstate ministerial school. It was an important game on the Parkside schedule. Though their school was small, the St. Jo Deacons had a big-time basketball club and they'd toppled a lot of the well known schools on their schedule. They would furnish the first real test of Parkside's ability, this year. And so the townspeople and the students, although still a little dubious about the possibility of Parkside having a championship calibre team, this year, were willing to go along for awhile. And tonight's game figured to scatter a couple of thousand fans through the big stands around the basketball court.

Another thing that was boosting the attendance tonight, was the fact that this was my first game with Parkside. I don't mean they were coming just to see me play. But they *were* curious to see what effect my being with the team would have and how I'd make out without the rest of the championship Metropolitan U. team backing me up. Maybe they were figuring on seeing me get loused up and make a chump out of myself, I don't know. Not that I'd blame them, after all the buildup and phony publicity that had been put out about my coming to Parkside and how I was going to really make the team. That was so much applesauce, of course. No one man can make a good team. He might pot a few extra points for them, and spark their teamwork, but that's about all.

So I stood there on the hill, looking back at that dinky town and then I turned and started to walk up toward the campus again. Up ahead I could see the big new gym building ablaze with lights, and I could hear the music of the band and I shook my head and wondered what in heck I was doing here.

I was here because old man Ellington had snapped his ring-bedecked fingers and flouted his nice fat checkbook and now I was going to perform for my dinner like any pet poodle. It was a moment

I'd dreaded, but it was here now, and there was nothing to do but suck in my gut and dig right in!

I'd played two years of basketball with Metropolitan U, in New York, and you know how it is, when one of those big college clubs corners all the best talent in the country, they usually come up with a dream team. Well, that's what had happened and I was just lucky enough to be a part of it. And I had an eye for the basket and this miracle team kept feeding the ball to me at just the right time and first thing you know, I was high scorer in the East. So we took the championship those two years and I made the All-American hoop squad, both times.

But I didn't kid myself, brother, that I was any one-man ball of flame. I was a polished player with good footwork and a lot of eye, a little faster than some and that's about all. And without that team around me, I would have been just another slightly better than average basketeer. But the sports writers and the fans like to pick out the boy who makes a lot of points, skipping the guys who make it possible for him to do that, so I got a lot of credit I didn't deserve.

They were good to me at Metropolitan, too. I had my athletic scholarship and they gave me a job, in the campus post-office that paid for my room and grub, with a few bucks to spare. That was all right and everything was going along fine, but then back home, my old man had a bad fall and broke his hip. The doc tells us he won't be able to do any more hard labor for the rest of his life. Well, my old man has been a furniture mover all his life and doesn't know anything else. Eventually Pop got up and around and he was able to pick up an odd job here and there, but hardly enough to support my mother and kid brother. I felt like a heel, hanging around in college and playing basketball and stuff while they had it so tough. So I didn't go back that third year. I got an offer from a pro team for big money and I decided to take it.

The papers heard about the dickered over the contract before it was signed and spread it all over the sports pages and that was when I first got a call from

this rich old duck, Douglas Ellington.

I'd never heard of him, but I could tell right away that he was a guy worth plenty of rocks. He was a tall, lean, distinguished looking man, with a thick mane of long grey hair. He gave me his card and told me that he was president of his big manufacturing company and an alumnus of Parkside College.

"I never heard of it," I told him. I wasn't being smart-alec. I really hadn't. That was just a fact.

He took it all right. He laughed and showed me his gold eye tooth and said: "My boy, that's the idea. Nobody ever heard of it. But they're going to. You're going to make them hear of it."

"Me?" I said, tapping my chest with my forefinger.

He ran a fingernail along his close-cropped grey mustache. "Son," he said. "I'll give it to you fast and simple. Parkside, to everybody else, is just a jerk-water school. But to me, it's the only college in the world. Maybe I'm a silly old fool but I love that place. I'm determined to see it take its place in the college athletic world."

"What sport did you play, Mr. Ellington?" I asked him.

He coughed and got a little red. "That's the point," he said. "None. I—I wasn't the athletic type, son. I didn't have the physique. But I love sports. I got as close to it as I could. I was manager of every team they had, when I was in school. They weren't very good teams, though, son."

"How did they do?" I asked. I didn't really care. It was nothing to me what this old boy's alma mater did in the sports line. But I had to be polite. There was something about Ellington's manner and the smell of a million bucks that he had, you just didn't give him any rub-off. "How does this—this Parkside College stand in the collegiate sports circle?"

He laughed but it was not a happy sound. He said: "You know the kind of team the big-time. Universities start off their football season with? Their warm-up game? The one they usually win about 81 to 0. Well, that's Parkside. So football is out for them. Baseball, too. That left one thing, basketball. They've concen-

trated on that the last few years. I built them a big new gym and get them Marty Mitchell, the best coach available."

I remembered Marty. He'd been a star at Cayuga, had gone on from there to be an all-time great with the Jewels, America's greatest pro team. He'd had several nice spots coaching some of the big time collegiate fives and had made a good record. But then he'd dropped out of the sports pages the past few years. I'd wondered what had happened to him. I wondered how much it has cost Ellington to talk Marty Mitchell into burying himself at a school like Parkside.

"So things got better, then," Ellington went on. "The Parkside Ponies picked up a little. And last year, Mitchell put out a really good five. Of course, we had our usual small time schedule and they didn't get a chance to show too much. But they went through the season undefeated and they knocked off a couple of fair sized schools. On that record, we got them a really tough schedule, this year. The team has come along fine. It's one of those naturals that works well together. They need only one thing to make them a championship possibility. They need a star. They need you, Joey Adams. I want you to go to school down there and play some basketball with them."

He'd floored me. I didn't know what to say for a moment. Then I told him how things stood with me and the family, financially, and that I couldn't afford to play school ball any more.

"I know. I know," he said. And then he asked me what Metropolitan had done for me. I knew what he meant and I told him.

"That isn't enough, Joey," he said, fixing me with those sharp old blue eyes of his. "I—that is, Parkside—can do more for you." He made his proposition, then. It was this: He would fix my pop up with a good job at his factory, at a fine salary. He would get me an athletic scholarship to Parkside and a spare time job that paid enough so that I could send a little moola home to Ma and Al, my kid brother.

It wasn't as well-paying a proposition as playing pro ball for the amount the

pro team had offered me. But it was damned nice going. It would enable me to finish school. I wanted that sneepskin, too. And it took care of the financial situation at home. Ellington promised me that the job he'd give my old man wouldn't be charity, but something he could really work at without bothering his hip. He'd really earn his money.

I said: "Doesn't that smack a little of professionalism, Mr. Ellington?"

He got indignant. "Not at all," he said, firmly. "What I'm doing for your father is a personal favor. It has nothing to do with your basketball ability."

That was a little hard to swallow but I knew there had been bigger deals made by other schools to get good athletic material. Everybody knows how it is, these days. Then I offered him another objection. I told him that I might disappoint him, that maybe I wouldn't be worth the deal.

"Maybe away from the Metro team, I won't show any stuff at all."

He'd laughed at that for real. "I've seen you play, son," he said. "Don't worry about that. And you'll sparkplug that team so they'll play a better brand of ball than Metropolitan."

---

## CHAPTER II

### *Trouble Ahead*

---

SO I talked it over with the family and they seemed to like the idea. A few days later, I checked out of New York for Parkside. I'd been here two weeks now and I still wasn't used to the small town or the small school. I'd worked out with the team and they were all right but I'd seen plenty better. I got along with them okay, too, only there was a little stiffness between the rest of the team and myself. They didn't seem to know just how to take me and vice versa. They were mostly small town boys and I guess they thought of me as being a city slicker or something, which I wasn't, but I couldn't seem to convince them of that.

And now I was going into the first game with them and believe it or not, I was scared. I had stage fright. I'd played

two championship playoffs in the Garden in front of huge crowds and yet, here I was going into the gym of a tanktown college before a handful of people, in a so-so game and I had the willies. I couldn't figure that. I tried to ignore it. I figured when I got out there on that court, it would all disappear.

I headed through the tunnel toward the locker room and the rest of the team was already there, getting dressed. I said to them, "hi!" and started to strip in front of my locker. I looked around at them and they were a grim looking lot. There was no kidding around, little talk. I figured they were strung too tight and maybe I was too, and that was a lot of damned nonsense. St. Jo was good, but these boys should be able to take them, with a little luck. I figured to loosen them up a little. I said:

"Hey, what's the matter with you mugs? This isn't the end of the world coming up. It's just a basketball game. We go out there and we drop that big round leather pill through the hoop a few more times than they do and it's all over, we win."

Nobody laughed. Nobody said anything. At first. And then as I was bucking that silence, Duke Allison, one of our guards, said: "Just like that, eh, Adams? Well, look, guy, it ain't just like that with us. We play for blood! Even when we know dam' well we're going to lose, we still play for blood!"

I looked over at Allison. He was a heavy set chap, with a blacksmith's chest and shoulders. He was very blond, what there was left of his short-cropped hair and he had this red face and he wore a dark, scowling look. Maybe he went out there and tried to frighten the opposing team, I don't know. All I know is, he got under my skin a little with that remark. Right along, I'd noticed that Allison, who had been the star of the team last year and this one, had been vaguely hostile to me. Now, under the pre-game tension, tonight, he was bringing it out into the open.

I held my basketball jersey stretched across my arms, up over my head, where I'd been just about to slip it on and

looked at him, giving him the raised eyebrows. I said: "You think I don't like to win? You got me wrong, Duke. I just meant it's no use getting yourself too hepped up before a game. You get too tight, you play lousy ball."

Duke Allison didn't look at me. He glanced around at the rest of the team. He said: "You hear, you guys? You hear what Mr. Great says. Listen to him and he'll tell you all about basketball. Don't you know nobody else ever played the game before?"

He was baiting me. I started to snow all over him but I saw the rest of the guys watching me curiously to see how I'd take it and I held onto myself. What the hell! Let him talk, let him get some of the poison out of his system.

I went on getting dressed and didn't say anything more. That was a mistake. There are guys you can't let get away with a thing. You do and they'll crowd you all over the place. Duke was like that, I saw now. That little victory set him up and he liked the taste of that first blood he drew from me and wanted more. A few minutes later, he said to the rest of the team:

"I wouldn't want to be in a certain guy's shoes tonight. That crowd out there is going to be looking for miracles. I'm glad I'm just an amateur. They won't be looking for me to make like a pro."

That one was like barbed steel. It dug in there and hooked on and I couldn't get it out. I stood, spraddle-legged and let the thing he had said sink in. Slowly it penetrated and I got it and I didn't like it a damn. I walked over to him. I tapped a finger against his burly chest. I said:

"What did you mean by that remark, Duke?" When he opened his mouth, I beat him to it. I jumped in. "Never mind. I *know* what you meant. So get this straight. I never played pro ball in my life. If and when I do, it'll be out in the open. I won't be hiding anything. Every time somebody infers otherwise, I'm going to take exception to it. As of right now. You got anything else to say?"

He looked right back at me, just as hard. Duke Allison had mean, smouldering green eyes. His lower lip thrust out.

"Sure," he said. "I got this to say. Don't think we don't know what goes on. Don't think we fall for all that hoopla old man Ellington fed the papers. The stories about you getting tired of playing ball with a big league college team and your natural fondness for the underdog. How you liked the spirit 'little Parkside has shown' and wanted to come down and help us. We know why the sports scribes wrote that. Old man Ellington's dough can buy anything, even phony newspaper write-ups. Just like he can buy a hotshot basketball player for his old alma mammy."

I winced at that. He had me there. I'd blown a valve when I'd seen those write-ups, too. They were pretty tongue-in-cheek. And if you were smart, you could read between the lines. But there hadn't been much I could do about them. I'd forgotten them, later, when everybody seemed to swallow those stories.

"And *you* get *this* straight," Duke Allison went on. He knocked my hand aside and pounded his big forefinger against my chest for a change. "The Parkside Ponies don't need any pro to help 'em out. Anywhere we get, we'll get on our own. We're going out there and whip St. Jo tonight, not because of you, but in spite of you. Maybe after awhile, you'll get hep and pull out of here and go back to where you belong."

I looked around at the other members of the team who were ringed around us. Their faces were hard to read. On some of them there were signs of open hostility. A few looked a little sheepish and undecided. But all of them were looking at me hard to see how I was going to take this. One thing I knew, there was no question but what Duke Allison was making an impression. They'd gotten used to looking up to him as their star and apparently he'd sold them a bill of goods about me.

"My first statement still stands," I said. "I'm no pro. I'm goin' to school and workin' for my keep just like a lot of other guys on the campus."

Duke Allison laughed, a harsh, ugly sound. "Why don't you stop it?" he demanded. "It doesn't even make sense. No guy is going to quit a bigtime college,

to go into pro ball and then all of a sudden, out of the goodness of his heart, change his mind again and decide to go back to the amateur game, but *this* time with a dinky, half pint school he feels sorry for."

"In other words," I said and I could feel my face burning and my temples beginning to pound, "you're calling me a liar, Duke?"

"In other words," he repeated.

I reached out with my left and pushed his shoulder and hauled back my right to feed it to him. I'd forgotten where I was or who I was or anything else but the fact that I had to knock the sneer off this guy's meaty, ugly face and ram that dirty accusation back down his throat. I'd figured to throw him off balance with that little left-hand push and then toss the right. But somebody had taught Duke Allison a few things about handling his mitts. He caught my right with the flat of his right palm and reached around my arm and popped a cute little left jab right into my cheek. He did it so fast and I was so hot and blinded by temper, I let him. Before I could come back at him, a couple of the other members of the team caught both of us from behind, pinned our arms. While we strained to break loose and get at each other, Mouse Davids, Parkside's long and lanky center, got in between us.

Mouse's lantern-jawed horse-face looked shocked and a little scared. "You dam' fools cut it out," he said. "You want to finish this, wait until after the game. But forget about it right now. We got to work together out on that court, to beat those Deacs tonight. If Mitchell heard about this, he'd bench both of you. He—"

He didn't finish. Marty Mitchell, Parkside's basketball mentor, finished it for him. His rasping, sandy voice broke into the locker room. I saw him standing there in the doorway of the locker room and I don't know how long he'd been there or how much of this little scene he'd caught before.

He said, very sarcastically: "Not at all, Mouse. You're very wrong. Mitchell doesn't give a damn if you guys want to

bounce each other off the walls for exercise before an important game."

Marty Mitchell was a big guy, who had once been built like a Greek god, but had let a lot of it go to plain beef. He was in his forties, with a balding head. What little hair was left was sandy and wiry looking. He had a freckled, pinkish complexion, a broken nose and wide set blue eyes, crinkled at the corners and looking as though they held all the wisdom in the world, sometimes. Marty Mitchell was a lot of guy, and in the short time I'd been associated with him, I'd gotten to like him a lot. The rest of the team and the whole of Parkside College, for that matter, was crazy about him.

"Go right ahead, you guys," Marty went on. "Don't let me stop you. Lose the game right in here and then we won't even have to bother going out on the court tonight. I mean, I'm only the coach and I got a five year contract, with three years still to go, so if you birds want to buck for the boxing team instead of the basketball five, it's all right with me. I'm sure the St. Jo boys will appreciate this pre-game warmup of yours, too. It'll make everything so much easier for them, tonight."

I felt the anger flow out of me and I was a little ashamed. I looked at Duke Allison, and Mitchell had hit him the same way. And the whole team. As Marty Mitchell turned and went out of the doorway again, without another word, we all broke it up, finished dressing and went out onto the floor.

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### CHAPTER III

#### *Hard-Court Hot-Shot*

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**W**HEN we broke out onto that gym floor, I got a surprise. A wave of sound hit my ears like thunder rumbling right over your head. It made my eardrums ring. The sound stayed and swelled and I couldn't believe it. I glanced around at the stands around the gym floor. They were only about a third full. But that third was using its lungs, to welcome the hometown team. They were just basketball happy or they really had that home-

town, home school spirit. Either way, it got you, that applause. I could feel my chest swelling and that good feeling all inside of me. I could feel a silly uncontrollable grin breaking out on my face.

We trotted out and somebody picked up a ball and we started passing it around. We ran through a few simple plays and practiced foul shots. I was a little ragged, a little off edge and missed some easy shots at the hoop. But I was always that way before game time. It didn't bother me, too much. It took a game, the actual conflict to get me really going. But apparently these Parkside people didn't know that.

When I made my first practice shot, a long, arcing two-handed lob from mid-court, the stands raised a cheer. But when the ball hit the corner of the backboard and bounced clear, missing the basket by a couple of feet, the cheers changed to a groan. Then there was a silence you could cut with a knife. I felt every eye in the place on me. I felt a little like a damned fool. I was glad when somebody else grabbed the ball and went tearing downcourt with it and took the crowd's attention.

Then the St. Jo Deacons came out for their warm-up session and I watched them for a moment. They were a big, rugged looking bunch, very serious and they seemed to know what to do with that melon. They weren't sensational, but they were plenty good.

A few moments later, we were back out on the court again and Mouse Davids, our center, was going into the first jump-off. He tapped the ball to Duke Allison and while the rest of us—as well as the St. Jo team stood there, flatfooted and dumbfounded—Duke went dribbling down the court, dodging, whirling, pivoting. A couple of Deacs made half-hearted attempts to get in his way, to stop him. But he was like a wraith. While everybody else was just getting used to the idea that the game was really on, Duke got down under the St. Jo basket and leaped up and dropped a beautiful layup shot for the first two points.

The stands went wild. Duke went tearing back down the court, clapping his

hands, yelling: "Come on, come on, let's go, gang," and got into his position. He was wearing that ferocious scowl of his and it looked like he was going to back it up.

The second jump, Mouse Davids got out-tapped and the Deacs took the ball. They tried to break through, whipping the pill back and forth between them, pivoting, spinning, but our defense was tight. I finally intercepted a cross court pass and slammed the ball to Hub Kovitz, one of our guards, who was in the clear. A St. Jo guard was bearing down on him though and he didn't get very far. But he made a beautiful feint and spun the ball to Art Delamater, our other forward. The toss was a little high. Art and a Deacon forward leaped after it together. Art got his fingers on it and juggled it, pushed it to the right and took off after it. He caught it coming down, slammed off with a long bounce and was in the clear. Nobody was even near him as he rocketed down under the basket, went up in the air, and dunked a clean goal.

While the teams got back into position, I stood there, grinning and looking around at them. What was this, a wonder team? In less than a minute, they'd racked up a four point lead. And with a brand of ball that would have been sensational anywhere.

After the next five minutes, though, that grin of mine faded. This Parkside team was playing way over its head tonight, no question. They played dazzling, hipper-dipper, bang-up ball and the St. Jo Deacs were running around in circles, bumping into each other, wondering what the hell was going on and how to stop it.

But the part that turned my grin off was this. I only got my hands on the ball once during that five minutes. I passed to Mouse Davids, even though I had a chance for a clean midcourt set shot myself. But it would have been a bit chancy, so I let the opportunity slip by and played it safe by passing. And Mouse took the ball down court and sunk a goal. Neither he, nor any of the other guys even said thank you for that. They didn't even seem to think that I was alive. As far as they

were concerned, there were only four men on the court. I was the little man who wasn't there. During that first six minutes of play, I broke into the clear a couple of times and stood there like a lost soul, waiting for somebody to spot me and heave the leather my way. They spotted me, all right, but they didn't toss anything my way. They ignored me.

And all this time, they were playing like maniacs and so I got it. I was getting the freeze-out and they were playing ace basketball to show me up. They were going to fix this New York bigtime punk for sure.

At the end of the half, Parkside was leading 32-13 and it had been strictly no contest. It had been strictly no game for Joey Adams, either. I hadn't made one of those thirty-two points. I hadn't gotten the chance. You have to get your hands on the ball to be able to toss it at a basket.

Between halves, I didn't say anything. I just relaxed and got my wind back. I was pooped from running all over the court and playing my heart out on the defensive and trying to get in on the offensive.

We went out for the second half and I was getting a little sore. I spotted that Mouse was going to win the jump and I broke from my forward position. I went up in the air and nailed the tap-off that was heading for Art Delamater. It was a crazy thing to do. It wasn't good basketball. Somebody should have kicked my tail for doing it, but I just wasn't going to let these bums get away with a freeze-out on me. We had a safe enough margin of a lead so that I wasn't going to lose the ball game for them in that one play, either.

I speared the ball and whirled while I was still in the air, came down facing my own basket. By this time, the St. Jo Deacons had forgotten about me, too. They'd spotted the way things were going and had figured me out of the offensive play. I was just a dummy on the court to them. So they were caught flatfooted and I dribbled a few steps and stood all by my lonesome. I had all the time in the world and I bent my knees and whipped out my

arms and sent the ball arching halfway across the court. It went down through the net with a clean *swish* sound, not even touching the rim.

The fans let out a crazy roar of applause. It was the kind of thing they liked to see. It was wild and flashy and I guess it was what they'd expected of me, what they'd been waiting to see. But I felt a little foolish as I trotted back into position, a little sore at myself, too. And I was waiting for the rest of the team to snow all over me for pulling such an idiotic, grandstand play. I was ready, too, to alibi myself, to tell them off, to tell them why I'd done it.

But they crossed me up. They didn't give me a chance. They acted as if nothing unusual had happened. They kept right on ignoring me. They didn't praise me, they didn't censure me. I wondered what the hell.

And then a funny thing happened. After the next jump-up, they started feeding me the ball. Every time a Parkside man got hold of that leather, he heaved it at me, no matter where I was. When I tried team play, got the ball myself and heaved it to somebody else, the damn fool, instead of following through on the play, would stop and slam the ball right back at me. They were not only feeding me the ball, they were ramming it down my throat.

Of course, this unorthodox sort of play had its good points. It completely astounded the Deacons. They didn't know what the hell was going on. Here was Joey Adams, ignored, never getting his hand on the ball all through the first half, and now he couldn't get away from it; he was the whole play.

I took advantage of that to ring up four or five baskets. But during a time-out I said; "Look, this is very funny. Very clever. Okay, you've shown me up, now let's get in this game all together. Cut out the clowning, you guys."

Duke Allison looked at me with a phoney injured expression. "Why, what's the matter, hot shot?" he asked innocently. "We been hoggin' the ball on you, not giving you a chance to show your flash? . . . Okay, fellers, we been neglect-

ing Joey. Maybe we'd better feed him the ball a little."

I held onto my temper, somehow. I said, very quietly: "You know what you've been doing. Don't give me that stuff. The Deacs are catching onto this business and they're going to bottle me up, soon." Not that it really mattered much, I realized. The score was now 51-29 and there was only about five minutes to go. The game was on ice.

"Why, we figured you loved to get hold of that ol' ball the way you snatched it out of Delamater's hands, the first jump-off this half."

That got me. I said: "You know damned well why I did that, I—" And then the anger in me boiled over. I lost control. I yelled: "Okay, okay. You bunch of rubes want to be nasty, go ahead. Play it your way. Watch what happens." I shouldn't have said that. I knew the minute the words were out of my mouth. But you can't call words back. You know how you sometimes lash out and hurt somebody in a temper and how you could bite off your damned tongue, the next minute. Well, that's how it was. With the exception of Duke Allison, this wasn't a bad bunch of guys. I like them. And what I'd just said, stung. I could see their faces getting red. I felt like the biggest heel this side of hoopdom.

But then the time-out was up and we were going back into the play. The last thing I heard, was Duke Allison saying: "You heard him, you guys. Give the boy what he wants."

Well, they went out of their way to get their hands on the ball, the last few minutes of that game. And they hurled it at me, every time. By now the Deacs were wise and they ganged up on me, hinged their whole defense around me. That pulled out all the stoppers on my temper and I became a wild man. I took the ball when it came my way and bulled my way through the whole Deacon team twice for a score. I played like I never had before. I got fouled and I dropped the two free points clean. I lobbed overhand one arm shots from midcourt and dropped three out of five of them. When the gun went off the score was 64 to 33.

The fifteen hundred fans in that gym went crazy. It was the most decisive victory the Parkside Ponies had put over in any game. And it was their high score for two years.

While we pushed through that din of sound toward the locker room entrance, I caught some of the other guys throwing reluctantly admiring glances my way. I guess that in spite of themselves they'd been impressed by the damned fool exhibition I'd put on. But I felt no elation. I was bushed to the ears and sort of sick inside that things had worked out the way they had in this first game.

Marty Mitchell, the coach, was waiting for us in the locker room. He was standing, with one foot up on a bench, tightening his shoelace. He didn't look up as we filed in, but he said: "Beautiful game, boys. You were a bunch of wonder boys out there tonight. Think of it—64 to 33. Why you're probably heading right for the national championship. There's nothing I like to see better than a lot of good teamwork. The way you guys cooperated with Joey Adams tonight was swell." His every word dripped sarcasm and his voice had a bite like a snapping turtle.

The guys hung their heads and went straight to their lockers. All except Duke Allison. He bristled up, said: "Wait a minute, coach. We just wanted to show this Adams a few things. Did you know he called us a bunch of rubes, tonight?"

Marty Mitchell straightened up. His wise blue eyes were slitted, but otherwise his pinkish complexioned face showed no emotion. "Is *that* so?" he said, feigning surprise. "Well, what do you know? But you know what I say? I say maybe he was right, maybe the way you guys acted out there tonight, that's just what you were."

And then he dropped the sarcasm and really lit into them. He told them off. He told them they ought to be glad to have a ball player like Joey Adams working with them. He said they ought to be ashamed of themselves for letting petty jealousy get the best of them like that. He included them all in the blast, but it was obvious a big part of it was meant for Duke Allison. I felt a little sorry for

them, taking that brutal tongue lashing. But I didn't feel sorry for Duke. He didn't take it like the others. He didn't hang his head and burn up his face with shame. He got red all right, but it was from anger. He glared right back at Mitchell, his small green eyes mean looking, his mouth curled a shade at the corners, full of defiance.

After the coach whirled and went out of the locker room, the other guys all came over and made peace overtures. They held out their hands and said they were sorry they'd acted like chumps, that I'd really played a brand of ball that lived up to my rep. They said they'd be glad to work with me from now on. They said I'd just gotten them sore with that rube remark, but they could see how they'd goaded me into it.

So I took the remark back and played up to them the same way and I felt a lot better about the whole thing, because it looked like it was all ironed out and we were squared away. All of us except Duke and I. He didn't come over. He didn't call any truce, but I figured he'd come around eventually. And I determined to give him every opportunity.

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#### CHAPTER IV

##### *Time Out*

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**A**FTER the game that night, there was a victory dance and I amble out onto the floor for a while. I looked the dancers over and a couple of the girls gave me the eye over the shoulders of their escorts. But I knew why that was and ignored them. They didn't care anything about me as a guy, not a big red-headed goon, with a broken nose and too much jaw. But I'd gotten a lot of publicity and was something of a campus figure and they just wanted to be seen dancing with me, even if I did mash all over their feet.

But there was one girl there who didn't give me that come-on look. She was dancing with Hub Kovitz and she saw me over his shoulder, all right, standing on the side lines. But she just gave me a

quick smile and a friendly wink and went back to talking to Hub. She was a cute little trick, with glossy black hair that cascaded around her shoulders and with a figure that almost made your eyes roll out down your cheeks. And she had an impudent little nose and the biggest pair of dark brown eyes you ever saw.

This was Marty Mitchell's daughter, Liz. This was all the local talent of Parkside, rolled into one gal. She got me. She'd been getting me for quite a while and I'd been so loopy over her, I'd been scared to try to do anything about it. In the bargain, she was supposed to be Duke Allison's girl. It was one of those understood things. But tonight, when she looked at me, when I saw her out there on that floor, I forgot about those angles and I went out there and grinned and tapped Hub on the shoulder and cut in.

Arthur Murray couldn't teach me in a hurry, or any other way. My big frame and oversized feet just weren't made for gliding around a dance floor. But with Liz Mitchell in my arms, that all changed. I was suddenly floating and my feet just did right on their own account. I didn't have to force them. It was Liz, of course. She kept out of my way and she was light as a feather and she made everything different. After a few moments, I found my tongue and got off a few cracks and the way she laughed up at me, I knew I was making a little time. Not much, but some.

Then over her dark head, I saw Duke Allison pushing through the crowded floor to cut in. His face was dark with anger, that fat lower lip of his pushed way out. I said, quick: "Liz, I—uh—how about taking you home tonight? Or has somebody else got that lovely duty tabbed?"

She laughed, said: "Well, Joey, Duke Allison usually elects himself to that job. But we don't have any contract. I'm not bound to go with him. Maybe it *would* be nice to walk with somebody else for a change."

"Fine, fine," I told her. "Then I'll see you after the last dance."

Duke Allison reached us, then, and

went to lay a heavy hand on my shoulder in an unnecessarily rough cut-in. But I saw it coming and twisted my shoulder out of the way and he almost fell on his face. I heard him growling something as I nodded my head at Liz and said thanks and walked off the floor.

After the band played "Good Night, Sweetheart," I met Liz near the exit. We were just about to start off when Duke Allison came boiling up. He plunked himself right in front of us and there was an ugly frown on his red face. He looked accusingly at Liz, said:

"What's the idea? Where do you think you're going with this monkey?"

"Home," Liz said. I watched her chin start to come up and there was the first glint of anger in her eyes. "I'm going home, Duke. Joey has been good enough to offer to escort me."

"Is that right?" he said. "Well, isn't that decent of him. The only trouble is, Liz, you're going home with me, like you always do." He wheeled toward me and stuck out his jaw. "Buzz off, cousin. You're poachin' on my grounds."

I felt my ears getting red and I started to go back at him, but Liz beat me to it. From there in, I let her carry the mail. She did all right. She said:

"Just a minute, Duke." She held out her slender wrists. "You don't see me wearing any slave bracelets, do you? If you had asked me first, I probably would be going home with you. But you didn't. Joey asked me. And very prettily, too." She threw me a quick, cozy smile. "You merely *assumed* that I was going home with you."

Then she reached over and took my arm and led me around him. We left him standing there and I could hear him cursing under his breath. I heard a couple of people who had been watching that little tableau, tittering now, too. Then Duke called out: "Liz, you come back here, right now and send that hunky on his way, or you'll be plenty sorry."

Liz stopped cold, whirled around. "I don't like threats," she told him. "Or people that make them. Until you can find

some decent manners, maybe you'd better find somebody else to bully, Duke Allison."

Outside, I told Liz I was sorry it had happened that way, that I hadn't meant to cause any trouble. She said it was okay, that the break between her and Duke had been coming to a head for a long time. She was glad it had come and was over. At first, she said, she hadn't taken him seriously and then when she had, she found that she couldn't shake him off. Rather than have any trouble she had endured him. But it had become a little too much for her tonight.

It was nice walking down the tree-shaded streets of the campus with Liz. It was one of those mild winter nights and there was a huge peach slice of moon hanging over the buildings. It was swell. That was for me, that night. And Liz was for me, too, I knew, before we had even reached her house. We stood on the front porch in the shadows, talking for some minutes and then I couldn't help it. It was just like that, one of those things and I had no control over it. I was kissing her good night. For a moment I thought she was going to break loose and slap my face. But she didn't. When I let her go, she just said in a small, sweet voice: "Good night, Joey. Thanks for walking me home. 'I'll—I'll see you again. I hope."

"Sure you will," I said huskily and wondered what the hell was the matter with my voice. I felt like a chump, like a school kid on his first date. And that was crazy. In New York, I'd gone out with lots of girls, but none of them had ever hit me like this one. Not like Liz.

And Duke Allison stayed out of our hair, too. The only time I saw him was at the practice sessions. After the lecture Marty Mitchell had given them at the St. Jo game, the rest of the team were okay. I got along fine with them. Duke didn't give me any trouble there, either. He was surly and he never had anything to say to me at all, but he didn't get in my way, either, and we worked together on the court, as though we were bosom buddies.

## CHAPTER V

*Winning Streak*

THE PARKSIDE paper had given the St. Jo victory a big lay. According to them, we were the team of the country, who could take on all comers and give them odds. That was laying it on a little thick, of course. But even the big metropolitan dailies gave us some press space and called that game "*an impressive victory over one of the strongest Class C League teams,*" and suggested that maybe the end of the season "*would find the Parkside Ponies one of the few undefeated teams of the country.*"

The local paper, of course, missed the real reason behind the crazy play in that game. They said that the Ponies had used clever strategy to cover up the key-point of their offense. Joey Adams, "*one of the great collegiate forwards of all time, who played a smashing, whirlwind game from beginning to end.*" The big papers let it go with a note to the effect that "*Joey Adams, former Metropolitan U. star, sparkplugged the Ponies' attack.*"

The next game was against Westview Teachers on their home court. We played in a small gym, that was packed to the rafters. The playing of this game wasn't as spectacular as it had been against St. Jo, but the coordination was better. Even Duke Allison seemed to lose his hostile, bitter manner in the heat of the game. The Teachers were a team of seasoned vets and a good strong club. For the first half they held us down to a three-point lead. But in the last period the Ponies really got going. Duke Allison was a ball of fire and tied me for points on the game. We came out of it with a 42-33 victory.

After that, we cracked a tough nut in Kent Military Institute. The cadets were a big, fast rangy team, with a pile of reserves who were just as good as the first stringers. That was our one weak spot. The Pony reserves were strictly second class. And when we ran up against K. M. I., they kept sending in fresh re-

placements and running us ragged. At the halfway mark they were leading us 24-20. At this game, the Ellington Gym was almost filled up. And every one of them sat with their heads in their hands, morosely, at the end of the half.

Marty Mitchell didn't tear into us, the way I figured he would. He just shook his head and said: "You guys are playing tight basketball. I have no complaints. Just don't slacken up. No matter how much of a lead they might get, don't let it throw you. You can still come from behind and take these soldiers. Go to it, kids and dig in like hell."

We appreciated that, because it was so. We'd played our hearts out in that first half. If he'd tied into us, some of the guys might have resented it. This way, we knew the coach was with us, knew what we were doing. It put new heart into all of us and went out there, fresh and ready to bust hell out of those kaydets the next period.

We didn't exactly do that, but we made progress. Mouse Davids outjumped the K. M. I. center and tapped to Art Delamater. Art faked a pass and dribbled around a cadet guard and into the clear. He got bottled up and made a hurried toss to Duke Allison. Duke flipped to me as the cadet center slapped at the ball. I went down court, along the sideline, while cadet guards headed sideways to cut me off. Then I flipped over their heads to Mouse Davids, right under the basket. Mouse caught the ball at the top of his leap and dunked it clean.

The next jump was intercepted and there was a gang-up over the ball and Hub Kovitz was hacked on the arm. He took the two free shots from the foul line and dropped them both clean and the score was tied.

I got the next tap-off from Mouse and took a chance. I was free for a moment and in midcourt, just right of center. I bent my knees and looped the big round hide toward the basket. It hit the board at an angle but the reverse English sent it down clean through the webbing with that wonderful smooth sound and we went into the lead. But not for long.

The cadets went wild then. But our de-

fense system was working like a charm and they couldn't break through. We froze them out of our end of the court. In desperation, they started shooting from all over the court. Some of it was luck and some of it was beautiful timing, but they piled up three more goals in the next two minutes of play and once more we were dragging behind on the scoreboard. It went along like that, see-sawing back and forth, right up to the end of the period.

There was just a little over a minute left to play when I had a little trouble with Duke Allison again. In the heat of a fast play, we both went after a free rolling ball at the same time and bumped heads. The ball got away from both of us and rolled outside. Duke straightened up, his face crimson with rage, his fists balled.

"You big redheaded wise guy!" he squaddled. "You did that on purpose. What's the matter, you tryin' to knock me out of the game, so's you can hog all the glory."

I started toward him but Mouse Davids grabbed my arm, hard. He said: "Come on, come on, you guys, break it up. Save it for later. Lookit that clock. Lookit that scoreboard."

I did that and K. M. I was ahead 40-36. A four-point lead and the clock showed about 70 seconds of play left for the period. Unless we did something in a hurry the Parkside Ponies' winning streak was going to be broken, right here and now.

One of the cadets took the ball on an outside, heaved down court and Mouse Davids came up with a mighty leap to intercept. While he was still in the air, he made a terrific two-hand heave, over the heads of the whole cadet team as I made a mad dash toward their basket. I took the ball on my left palm and went right into a dribble. I could hear the cadet pack howling and bearing down on me as I went up under the basket. I said a fast prayer and left the ball leave the tips of my fingers. And then half the cadet team piled into me, their own momentum too much for them and we went down in a tangle. I didn't know whether I'd scored or not. But then I got up,

dazed and shaken, and I heard the yelling of the crowd, and Kovitz and Delamater coming toward me with big grins on their faces and I knew that one had popped in for a scoreboard payoff.

The next jump, Mouse just barely made the tap, but got it off the tips of his fingers and across the floor to Delamater. Art, circled around by a couple of cadet-men, looped the ball to me and we waded through the K. M. I. team, dodging, darting, heaving the ball back and forth between us. Then, at the last minute, I faked a heave to Delamater, spun, dribbled twice and flipped the ball to Mouse Davids, who was in the clear, near the sideline, almost even with the basket. It was a difficult angle shot and he couldn't use the board. Ordinarily, he wouldn't have dared try a shot like that. But we'd caught the cadets flatfooted and Mouse had a clear spot around him and could get set and really take aim. And since it would be the last play of this period, there was no other choice for him. I watched his long bony legs hinge at the knees and he lobbed the ball up in a short arc toward the basket.

The crowd screamed in anguish as the ball hit the rim of the hoop, spun sideways and bobbed lightly against the backboard, then fell back, hit the rim again, rolled around it and settled in at the last moment, lazily, with barely enough drop to force it down through the netting. And the score was tied.

That broke the cadets' backs. They didn't have anything left for the extra period. And the extra chance put new pep into the Ponies. We really went at 'em, and salted them away in that extra time.

That tight, exciting victory was a front page splash for the Parkside paper, and even the New York dailies gave the game a feature story. That night there was a victory celebration in Parkside. There were big bonfires all over the town square. Each guy on the team had to get up and make a little speech. The town had gone wild.

Look at it like this. Here's a jerkwater college town that loves the school but has never had any chance to glory in its

athletic success. Parkside College had been pushed around by the big universities and even some of the more powerful smaller schools, in every field, for years. And now suddenly they come up with a real team, that's bowling over stiff opposition every game. They begin to see hopes for a big Garden playoff, maybe against Metropolitan U. Dim hopes, still, but hopes. Figure how that town felt.

It was like a skinny weakling who was getting kicked around by everyone and then one year he sprouts a set of muscles and goes around polishing off all those toughies in fine style.

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## CHAPTER VI

### *Baskets or Blondes?*

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THE school pitched another big victory dance that Saturday night in the gym, and this time the whole town was there. It was such a big to-do, even old Douglas Ellington came down from New York. He made a little speech and shook hands with every guy on the team and put his arm around Marty Mitchell, who looked embarrassed. And he promised that if the team went through the season, undefeated, he'd build the school the biggest library they had ever seen.

Old man Ellington brought a girl to the dance with him, a little blond number. She had every guy in the place gawping at her from the time she came in. Someone told me that it was his daughter, Fay.

When the dancing started, Ellington took Fay around and introduced her to each member of the team and insisted that she dance with each of us. My turn came and I wasn't too happy about it because Liz had made several pointed remarks when I had been staring at Fay. I knew she was watching me all the time we were dancing. And that was silly, because Fay Ellington wasn't the kind of a gal that I could go for. She had too much flash, too much bright red paint on her sulky mouth, too much eye shadow and mascara. I'd always steered clear of the Fay Ellington type.

The first time we danced, she said: "So you're the great Joey Adams!" and then she batted those long lashes at me.

I thought she was kidding me, so I said: "Sure thing, honey. The kid himself."

"I've read a lot about you," she said then. "I've watched you play a lot in the Garden."

"Is that so?" I said. "Where do you go to school?"

She mentioned some swank finishing school for girls in Connecticut and then dropped her little bombshell as innocently as if she were just passing the time of day. "You know it was I who talked Daddy into bringing you to Parkside."

"You did?" I said politely, and then I did a double take. "You *what?*"

She giggled. "Of course," she said. "I knew that he'd take to the idea, anyhow, of course, once I'd put it to him. But I started the ball rolling for you, Red."

Right then and there she was stepping on my toes. I'm a carrot-top who doesn't like to be called Red. But that was a minor point. It was the other that really got me. I said: "I was under the impression your father fixed me up down here because he liked the way I played basketball. And because he thought maybe I might be a fair addition to the team representing his old school."

"Of course," she said, smiling up at me. "But daddy's a much too busy man to bother about those things, under ordinary circumstances. So I had to give him a little push on the way."

"I don't think I like that idea," I told her. "It was bad enough that I was being helped along because I played a fair game of basketball. But to learn now that the big reason was the whim of a rich man's daughter is a little rugged to take."

"Don't be like that," she said. She pouted and looked up at me from under her long lashes. We were dancing then, near French windows, that led out onto a little patio. Suddenly she pulled me out through the door into the darkness, under the crisp midnight sky.

She got very close to me and held onto my arms at the elbows. "Listen, big guy,"

she said huskily, "We might as well get this straight. I was *glad* to help you out that way. It wasn't anything special. Red, I—sinc— the first time I watched you play basketball, I went for you head over heels. I've asked daddy to introduce us a hundred times, but he always backed out, said that a brat like me would ruin a good basketball player. You—you don't think that, do you, Red?"

I could smell the heavy musk-like perfume of her and she was so close. Her voice had become a husky throb and for a moment I thought: "Joey, you dope, here's the chance of a lifetime. Here's a gal who's not hard to look at and standing neck deep in more money than you ever dreamed about. Tie up with her and go places. She can do you plenty of good.

That shows you what a little moonlight and a shot of heavy perfume and a flashy looking gal, close to you, can do. For a moment I almost went for the stuff. I guess she thought I had, because she tried to follow through. She went up on her toes and threw her arms around my neck and tried to kiss me. I turned my head away. I reached up and took her arms from around my neck. I said:

"Fay, I'm sorry, but you're just not for me." I wanted to tell her that I didn't want to be any spoiled little rich brat's plaything. But I didn't. I just let it go at that.

She stood there for a moment, trembling and gasping. I looked down and saw her eyes narrow to slits and her lips were curled back. And then she stormed:

"You big, redheaded gook! I was just kidding around with you. You don't think I'm serious, do you? I was just teasing you. You don't really mean anything to me. You couldn't, not a big overgrown chump like you, who has to depend on my father's charity to get you through school!"

While that was all sinking into me, she hauled off and slapped me. It was a full arm swing, a ringing blow and her fingers bit into my cheek and stung. The sound of the slap was like a whip-rack. The suddenness of it stunned me. I turned slowly and watched her flounce away, back through the French doors.

And then I saw three guys standing there, just outside of those doors, where they'd come out for a quick smoke. I heard one of them laugh and I realized that they'd been standing there all the time and they'd seen everything that happened. They had picked a beautiful time to come out for a smoke, these guys. Mouse Davids, Art Detamater and Duke Allison. Especially Allison. Knowing him, I could figure this story to get all over the campus in nothing flat. But there wasn't much I could do about it.

I stalked past them and went back inside the gym, too, ignoring the cracks they made. Some of the things Fay Ellington had said were beginning to settle inside of me now, and rankle. As I walked around the dance floor, listening to the music, watching the other couples dancing and laughing, Fay Ellington's words: "*—has to depend on my father's charity to get you through school,*" pounded over and over in my head.

I found old Douglas Ellington talking with the coach and the director of the Athletic Association. I asked if I could have a word with him in private. When I got him to one side, I put it neat and straight.

"Mr. Ellington," I said. "I appreciate all you've done for me. But I don't think I'll need your help any more. You can release my pop from the job you gave him. He can find some other kind of work. Until he does, I'm going to get some more spare time work and send some more dough home to help out the family. I don't want any more charity from you or anybody else."

He looked surprised and stroked his gray mustache with his fingernail. He said: "Aren't you being a bit hasty, son? What about the team? They need you worse than ever at this stage of the season. You going to let them down?"

"No," I said. "I'm not. I'm staying on at Parkside. And I'm going to go on playing basketball with them. I'm just doing it on my own from here in. That's all. I think I can get along now without any more outside help."

Ellington looked thoughtful. Then his eyes narrowed and he fixed me with an

amused and speculative glance. He said: "You wouldn't by any chance have had a clash with my daughter, Fay?"

For a moment I was tempted to tell him what I thought of his daughter Fay and what she had said to me, but I held onto my tongue. I just said: "Nobody else has anything to do with this, sir."

He nodded his sleek gray head. "I see. I see. It happens, though, that I saw you dancing with Fay. I know how she is, son. She's my own daughter, but she's a spoiled, unmanageable child at times, who causes me a lot of trouble and heartaches. If you told her off or anything I won't hold it against you, son. I'll thank you for it. And don't worry about my paying any attention to anything she tells me. I know Fay too well. . . . So, if you want to change your mind about this and let things stand . . ."

I told him thanks, but I didn't think I did. I wanted it to be the way I said. I got a little embarrassed then, he was so damned decent about it. But I couldn't back out. I had to stick by my decision. So I said good-by a little curtly and walked away.

Crossing the dance floor, I saw Fay Ellington now dancing with Duke Allison. I saw them both looking at me and there was poison in their glances. But I didn't care. And then I saw them turn away and begin to talk real cozy. But I didn't think anything much about that. Later I was to wish I had.

I found Liz Mitchell near the punch-bowl and I told her I was leaving early, that I didn't feel so good. She looked at me coldly and said, "I shouldn't think you would. I saw you going out onto the patio with Fay Ellington, Joey. But it's all right. I—I don't blame you. A girl like that can do a lot for you, Joey."

This was too much. This floored me. I didn't know what to say. I floundered around dumbly. "Liz—I—she—I mean we—Fay Ellington means nothing to me. She only was—"

"Explanations aren't necessary," she said with a bitter little smile. "I didn't have any strings tied onto you. Good-by, Joey."

I stood there looking at her and some-

body else came up and asked her to dance and she went off with the guy without another word. She'd said good-by. We'd never said good-by before. Only so long. But there wasn't anything much I could do about it so I turned on my heel and walked off.

Walking back to the dorm at the training club I went back over the whole thing in my mind and wondered if I'd pulled a bull play all around. I wondered how in hell I was going to get a spare time job to make enough to send home money to keep the family and live on myself. I wondered how I was going to ever get back in good with Liz again. I kidded myself on that last part. I figured she'd get over her mad enough to give me a chance to explain.

That shows how wrong you can get because the next day when I tried to see her she was out. When I called her dorm on the phone she wasn't there. It went on like that and I finally smartened up to the fact that we were through; she wasn't having any part of me any more. It would have knocked me out altogether, only I buried myself in work and didn't have too much time to brood over the way things had gone.

I managed to talk the coach into letting me off a couple of afternoon practice sessions. I took on two extra jobs and what with boning up on a few studies as well, it was nearly two A. M. every morning before I hit the sack and I was up again at seven. I had told Marty Mitchell what had happened and what I was going to do. He'd said, "Good boy," and wished me luck.

Later I heard that Duke Allison had made a crack to the effect that I was a big phony. He'd said, Ellington was still behind me and I was still really a pro and had no right in college basketball and that I was just trying to cover up, to get sympathy for myself.

When I first heard that I was all for looking Duke up and seeing what I could do about it, being me and him all over the campus. But then I cooled and I didn't have the time for brawling. I let it go. Especially, since the guy that reported this bit of gossip to me said that the other

guys on the team had hooted Duke down when he'd said that. They told him he was just a jealous lug and they were all for me. They were, too.

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## CHAPTER VII

### *Pay or Play*

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THE first couple of games after that eventful Victory Dance, the Parkside Ponies breezed through a supposedly strong Tech team and the B League leaders, Radburn College. I was a little tired, from not getting enough sleep and working too hard. Some of the edge was off my play at times, from missing practice sessions, but I got through those two games all right. I made my quota of points and then some. Nobody even seemed to notice that I was just a trifle off my game.

But then a big one came up. Brown College. They were going to be our one stumbling block from here on in toward an undefeated season. If we could get past them, we were set. If we could get past them. The Brown College quintet had everything. They were big, rough, tough and tricky. They had taken on a wicked schedule and bulled through every game, winning by never less than a ten-point margin. No opposing team had scored more than thirty points against them. They were already being talked up as the team to play a post season charity game against Metropolitan, in the Garden. They were four to one favorites to whip us, by game time, with no takers.

It's funny the way things work out. It had to be the night before that game, that I drank a lot of coffee to keep awake on my ten p.m. to two a.m. extra shift job at the Parkside Pottery Works. And when I finally hit the sack, I couldn't sleep. I was sitting at the window, my eyes hot and dry and heavy-lidded, when the sun came up. I didn't get forty winks that night; I didn't even get ten. So you know how I felt the next night when game time came around. I started yawning in the locker room and some of the guys looked at me a little funny. In the

pre-game warmup. I was slow and lethargic. But I managed to shake it off a little by game time and through the first period, everything went all right.

By going all right, I mean, when the half was over, the Parkside Ponies had scored a moral victory. We were only dragging behind by five points. Marty Mitchell gave us a little pep talk in that rest period. It really got us Ponies worked up. We went out there, for that next period and played like demons. For the first few minutes, the Browns didn't have a chance. It was the orange and blue of Parkside, all over the court. I knew how the guys felt, because Mitchell's heart-warming pep talk had hit me the same. I was putting everything I had into the play and it was smashing, reckless, driving basketball every one of us was playing.

For one of the few times that night, Mouse Davids outdid himself and outleaped the giant Brown center and took the tap. He knocked the ball toward Kovitz, who took it, wheeled and passed with a crazy crooked backspin bounce that put it right into Art Delamater's hands. Meanwhile, I was bulling my way downcourt, dodging, feinting, trying to lose a Brown guard. I took the pass from Art and stopped short, pivoted and let the enemy guard blunder by. I hurled a bullet-like pass to Duke Allison, right between two Browns. Duke took the pass neat and shot for the basket. I saw the moment it left his hands that it was not going to sink clean and ripped down under the netting. A couple of Brown players beat me to it. But when Duke's shot rolled around the rim and out, I found some extra spring in my legs and got up there on top in the leap for the ball. My fingers stretched themselves out and poked the leather back up and over the ring to sink a goal.

The next play, we lost the ball, but Hub Kovitz ripped into the Brown defense like a wild man and took the sphere back away from them again. He dribbled half the length of the court before he was stopped and forced to pass. Mouse Davids got his throw and made a crazy overhand one arm fire toward the basket.

It hit the backboard one solid thump and bounced down through the hoop so fast, the eye could hardly follow.

For the next few minutes the pace was the fastest I'd ever run into on any court. Brown fought like wildcats to stem the rising Parkside tide. Players from both teams scrimmaged madly up and down the court, neither side sinking for a score, both teams trying from all angles. And then suddenly, Duke Allison broke out of a tangle over a free ball and streaked down one side line, three Browns after him. Just before he reached the basket, he cut clean across court, then swivel-hipped back again and went up off the floor under the hoop and sank an easy dump-in shot for the basket that put us ahead by one point.

Going back to position for the jump, Duke was grinning and cocky, and with every right to be. He was playing bangup ball. Every one of us felt the same way, too. Didn't we have the highly touted Brown powerhouse backed down? That one point lead of ours loomed as big as a million right then. But the Parkside Ponies' jubilation was short-lived.

As I bounced back to my forward spot, I felt a pain like a knife digging under my ribs. It was what you call a stitch. I didn't pay too much attention to it and figured it would wear off. But it didn't do that. The play started and I went after the Brown forward, who got the tap-off from their center. But something was wrong with my legs. They felt like they had leaden weights tied onto them. And that damned stitch kept stabbing at my ribs. And then I had to stop and stand stock still. Because the gym lights were beginning to spin and the hardwood, polished floor was tilting like the deck of a ship in a storm. I spread my legs to keep my balance, fighting against the pitching inside my gut.

As though through a distance, I heard the roar-sound of the crowd. I heard someone yelling my name. Through the blur in front of my eyes I saw a queer shaped object float past me. I looked around and I could see the other players but as though they were in slow-motion, or under water, or in a dream sequence

in a psychological movie. Unreal. And then just as suddenly it all cleared. I stood there weak as water and still unable to move but able now to see what was going on. And I saw a Brown forward going down under our basket and reaching up to lay in a sweet two points for them.

It hit me, then. The round object I'd seen floating past, was the ball being tossed to me. A Brown man had taken it while I stood there and let it sail past. I had cost the Ponies a precious two points when that sick fatigue had caught up with me. I could tell I wasn't going to be any more good to anybody, this ball game. I signalled weakly to Marty Mitchell on the bench and headed over there.

He was looking at me narrowly, as I said: "Sorry, Marty. I dunno what happened. All of a sudden I got bushed fit to die. I almost did a fadeout right on the court."

He said: "Don't worry about it, kid. You played a beautiful game while you were in there. Go to the first aid room and I'll send the doc in to look you over."

I stood in the white walled neatness of the first aid room, while the doc gave me a going over, and I listened to the roaring of the five thousand fans that filled the gym outside, and wondered how it was going. Then the doc was finished with his examination. He said:

"You're all right, son. Just run down. You've been knocking yourself out. You'll have to cut out either all this extra after classes work the coach told me about—or you'll have to cut out basketball. You can't carry both any longer. I'm not kidding."

I said: "You're the doctor," only I wasn't trying to be funny.

"Maybe this'll make you feel better," he added. "Just before I came here, Mitchell said to tell you that the team says for you not to worry. They understand and they admire your guts for doing what you've been doing. They said they're going to win this one for you. . . . I think they meant it, too, kid."

He sent me to the showers, then, and while I was under the water and later,

getting dressed, I thought about that and I thought what a swell bunch of guys these Parkside hombres were. I knew then that I wouldn't swap playing with them, for all the big time U's or all the pro teams in the world. This little town and this little school had got me. And then I remembered, with a stab, that the doc had said I'd either have to quit the game or quit working so hard on the outside. That was a hell of a choice to have to make. But I had an idea what it would be. I couldn't let Pop and Mom and my kid brother, back home, down.

I went back out toward the gym to see how this last basketball game that I'd have any part in, was coming along. It was near the end of the last period when I got out to the bench and squeezed a place next to Marty Mitchell. I looked up at the score board and my eyes popped, because the count was 38-35, favor Parkside and the stands around the gym floor were in a frenzy. The guys were making good their boast to me. And there was only a minute and a half left to play. That was the way it ended, too. The Ponies got hold of the ball on the next jump and froze onto it and the Brown team never even got hold of 't for the rest of the period. Parkside was past their big bugaboo.

Sometimes I figure there is a guardian angel or something that watches over me. Because it was the next day, just as I was about to go to the coach and tell him I'd have to check in my suit, I got a letter from Pop, saying that he'd gotten a snazzy new job, with a healthy pay check attached to it and I could stop sending home any dough from here on. I read 'hat and I could have floated right out of the window, like a balloon.

The only rotten spot in all this, was that I hadn't seen Liz Mitchell since that night she'd dusted me off over Fay Ellington. There were a couple more dances and I was going to go, then changed my mind at the last minute. I didn't think I could take it, seeing Liz dancing with some other guy. I heard she was there, though. And I heard Fay Ellington was at those hops, too. She'd come down special for them and had gone with

Duke Allison. They were supposed to be thick, the two of them and were rated in the campus paper as what is known as "an item."

About Duke Allison during the final three games of the season, when we banged over three small time schools to finish undefeated, he played top basketball and I didn't have too much trouble with him on the court. By now, he had been given the cold shoulder by the rest of the team, too. He had become silent and surly. We got used to it though, and since it somehow didn't seem to affect his game, nobody paid much attention.

One thing that worried me, though, was that Duke and I were tied for high score man of the League and when we got our invitation to play Metropolitan U. in the Garden in a post season charity game, I heard that a big pro team had offered Duke a berth if he topped me on scoring in that game. One day during practice session, I went to Duke and told him straight that I'd be glad to feed him everything I could during that game, that the high scoring honor didn't mean too much to me and I didn't care anything about playing pro ball. I knew that Duke did. I knew he didn't really like college and that his one ambition was to get in with a top line pro outfit and toss baskets for big pay.

But Allison only snarled and glared at me: "Don't do me any favors, wise guy. You don't have to feed me anything. I'm gonna take all of the scoring honors, anyhow. I just dare you to try and stop me."

I didn't say anything to that, just walked away. The guy was pure poison. I forgot about it then, for awhile, in the excitement that had set in on the whole town of Parkside over the big game coming up and in the hot and strenuous practice sessions we went through on our schedule.

We had one break. I was able to tip Marty Mitchell and the team off on a lot of the Metropolitan Beavers' plays. We practiced every kind of defense against them. And if anybody could whip the big boys, we should be the ones.

## CHAPTER VIII

*Top Secret*

**B**UT the night before we set out for New York for the game something happened. It was the payoff in more ways than one. Marty Mitchell and the team were having a last minute game-strategy meeting in Marty's rooms. We had all been given slips of papers with trick play signals and diagrams worked out on them. We were supposed to study them and memorize them right up until the last minute before the game. Just before that meeting broke up, Marty said:

"I want all you guys to pull out your fancy play slips, make sure you got 'em. I don't want anybody saying they lost theirs or any alibis at all. We got to win this big one tomorrow."

The guys all reached into their pockets and pulled out the long slips of paper. I put a hand into my inside sport jacket pocket and yanked out the paper. At the same time, something else came out of my pocket and fluttered to the floor. It was another piece of paper, long and pink and oblong shaped, with scalloped edges.

I bent to pick it up, but Marty Mitchell, who was standing next to me, beat me to it. He started to hand it back to me and then something about it caught his eye. He started to grin and said: "Hey, what's this, Joey? You find a fairy godmother or something?" And then the smile froze on his face. He got very white. His eyes narrowed as they looked up at mine. He handed this pink piece of paper back to me.

"What does this mean, Joey?" he demanded. You could hear the ice tinkling in his voice. The other guys came crowding around. I looked down at that slip of paper.

"What?" I said. "What is it, coach?"

That was a silly question, I saw, as I looked down at that piece of paper. It was a check. It was drawn on a big New York bank and it was for a thousand dollars. It was made payable to me, Joseph J. Adams, and it was signed by Douglas Ellington. The notation on the side mar-

gin said: *For Services Rendered.*

I stared, stupefied at that check. I'd never seen it before. I didn't have the slightest idea where it had come from. I didn't know what it meant, what it had been doing in my pocket. Marty Mitchell had some ideas on that subject, though. He said:

"For services rendered." I looked at him and his face was red with anger now, not pink. His mouth was a thin line. "Joey," he said, "I've always liked you. I thought you were a square shooter. I guess you know how I feel about even the simple subsidization of players that goes on everywhere, I've given up stewing over that but I still don't like it. And when it comes right down to a man taking cash for playing a sporting game, against amateurs—no matter if the donor is bigshot Douglas Ellington or who he is—it sickens me. I won't stand for it, either. If it means my job, I'm keeping you out of tomorrow's game. You can turn in your suit and your bus ticket. You aren't going with us. That's final."

I didn't know what to say. I was caught flatfooted. I looked at Duke Allison and there was a triumphant gleam in his eye that didn't leave any doubt in my mind as to how that check had been planted in my pocket, where it would fall out at the opportune moment. I choked out: "Duke, I—"

"Leave Duke out of this," Marty Mitchell stopped me. "He had you tabbed right, apparently. His reasoning, about you coming here to play basketball, always *was* good. Only none of us wanted to believe it, because we needed you and wanted you so badly. But we don't any more. Get going, Joey. I don't even like to look at your face any more."

For a moment, I wanted to hurl myself at Duke Allison. I wanted to plead with Mitchell and the guys to believe me, to yell at them that I was innocent. I looked around at that ring of accusing faces and I saw that it wouldn't do any good. I was condemned and convicted, for their money. Anything I said or did, now, would only make it all the more worse for me. I turned slowly and went out of the room, feeling the burn of

their glances on the back of my neck.

I went back to training quarters and got my things and went over to the main dorm and got a room. But I didn't sleep. I lay awake for long hours, going back over this first few months at Parkside and all that had happened. It looked like fate had ganged up on me, because I'd found all these good things and then lost them. I'd found that Parkside and the town and the school itself were my size, my kind. And now I'd lost them. I'd found in Liz Mitchell a girl I'd dreamed about for a long time. I'd lost her. And to top it off, in the minds of the guys I'd learned to love like brothers, I'd let them down. I'd turned out to be a cheap phony, selling his talent for cold cash and posing under the false flag of school spirit.

I guess I did finally get to sleep. But it didn't do me much good. I kept having these dreams and waking up in a cold sweat. The next day was worse. I cut all my classes and avoided everybody. That night, as it came time for the team and the fans to embark on the bus trip to New York, I stuck in my room and tried to shut out the sounds of merry-making and excitement from the town as practically the whole of Parkside filled up buses to go up to Bigtown to root for their team. For a team that was going to be one man short. And then those sounds faded and were gone and the deadly quiet was worse. I got up and went outside and the whole campus was deserted. I went downtown and Parkside was like a ghost town. Finally I couldn't take it any more. There was a late bus leaving for New York and I got aboard. I had to go up and see that game. It was a kind of self torture, I guess, but I couldn't help it. I had to be with them at the end, good or bad, this way, if no other.

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## CHAPTER IX

### *Basket Barnstormer*

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THE game was a sellout, but I managed to get a ticket from a scalper outside for an extra ten bucks. It used up all my extra dough for the next two

weeks but I didn't care. When I took my seat, high in the balcony, the game had just started. It was funny, sitting way up here looking down on a game. The court and the players looked so small. It was funny, all the times I'd played down there, in the purple jersey of Metropolitan and it hadn't meant a hell of a lot. Tonight, when I should have been down there, playing *against* those purple shirts and it would mean *everything*, I couldn't do it; I was stuck up here. It wasn't a good feeling at all.

I watched the play. It wasn't bad at first. Bernie Mott, who was playing my spot, was a fast, wide awake ball player and he seemed to be doing all right. I knew he would as long as things were going good. But I knew, too, that Bernie wasn't very good in the clutch. In the tight spots he was inclined to blow up. And in this game, there would be plenty of tight spots for the Parkside Ponies.

Parkside started off with a bang. They swept down the floor and rang up a fast score in the opening scrimmage. Then the Beavers walloped down the court to rack one up. The Ponies came right back at them with two more sinkers, a long set-shot and a dump-in basket. Davids took a foul and sunk it in for one and the Ponies were in the lead by five points.

At the far side of the Garden, I heard the Parkside contingent raising the roof with their howls of triumph. They thought everything was going their way. They were already getting ideas of a snap victory for the hometown boys. I didn't share their joy nor their hopes. I knew the Metropolitan Beavers. They were slow starters. It took them a while to roll.

In the last part of the first half they got up steam. They plowed through the Parkside defense, then, like it was put up by a bunch of grammar school kids. They were a wonder to watch. And the Parkside Ponies were dazzled and blinded by the speed and trickiness of the big team's play. When the half ended there was a little difference in the score. Parkside was trailing, 19 to 26. There was a difference in the Parkside part of the stands, too. Now it was silent and drenched in gloom. They were al-

ready seeing the handwriting on the wall.

The second half started and the Ponies fought desperately and held down the lead but couldn't cut it. I sat there, watching this debacle and sweated and groaned and wished that I were in there. Because I thought I could stop the Beavers. Not because I was so damned good, but because I knew their style of play. I knew all their tricks. I saw them getting away with double-back and spinner numbers that were as familiar to me as my own name and that I thought I could bust up, if I could get the chance. But there was the little matter of a phony thousand dollar check between me and that chance.

Parkside called a time out after a while and a voice came on the public address system. At first I heard the sound without paying much attention and not noticing what the voice was saying. And then I realized that it was calling my name. It was crazy. It was like a wild dream come true. I knew it couldn't be. I was hearing things. That voice on the P. A. wasn't, couldn't be saying: "*Will Joey Adams please report to the office immediately. This is important.*" But I listened and the message was repeated. I heard a guy next to me say:

"What the devil are they going to pull. I thought Adams was out of the lineup tonight. The papers said—"

I didn't hear the rest of it. I got up out of that seat and climbed over people and took off, almost flying. An officer directed me to the office and when I burst in there, I almost swallowed my tongue. Three people were standing there: Marty Mitchell, Douglas Ellington and Liz Mitchell. They were all grinning.

Douglas Ellington held out a pink check toward me, *the* check. He said: "Son, I wanted you to know that Miteneil now knows for a fact that this check was a phony. I didn't make it out, nor sign it." His distinguished features dropped the snile for an instant and he looked pained. "It is a forgery perpetrated by my daughter, Fay. She and Duke Allison cooked up the deal between them. She has been dealt with. I want to assure you that I never knew a thing about it."

"I don't get it," I said, dumbfounded,

looking from one to the other. "How did you know I was here? How did this all happen?"

Marty Mitchell explained it. He told me how they'd called everywhere in Parkside and when they couldn't locate me, figured I'd come to the game. He explained, too, how the more he thought about the check, the more he'd been convinced that it was a frameup. He'd talked it over with Liz and she had agreed with him and offered to check with Ellington on it. But he had been out of town, wouldn't be back until tonight for the game. They had only just located him.

I took that all in and kept staring at Liz. I said: "Liz, you—you did that? I—I thought you were through with me, Liz. I—"

"Oh!" she laughed. "Later I heard the truth about those few minutes you spent out on the patio, from Hub Kovitz, who was there. But I felt like such a fool, Joey, I didn't have the courage to go to you and admit that I was wrong. Now I want to say—"

"It's all right, Liz," I stopped her. I started toward her, but Marty Mitchell grabbed my arm. He said:

"Hey! Hey, where you going? You got plenty of time for that stuff later. Get on your horse and down to the locker room. There's a little basketball game going on, outside."

It hit me that he was certainly right and I wheeled and got out of there. A few minutes later, when I ran out onto the floor of the Garden, I looked up at the clock and there was about six minutes of play left. I hoped that would be enough, because the scoreboard read Parkside 31, Metropolitan U. 36. The Ponies had cut down the lead to five points while all that other was going on.

The grins on the faces of those guys when they saw me run out onto the floor! I noticed that Duke Allison was out of the lineup and Alec Dubois had taken his place. I figured that Marty Mitchell had yanked him while I was getting dressed. I had an idea, too, that I would never see the guy again. He wouldn't dare go back to Parkside. They'd have run him out of town on a rail. That was too bad. I had

been looking forward to a little session with Duke. But I pushed that out of my mind now. I had other things to think about.

Those other things, five of them, in purple jerseys, swarmed all over me, the opening play, when I got the tap-off from Mouse. My old teammates were giving me a royal welcome. I lost the ball in that tussle and the Metropolitan Beavers swarmed down the floor with it. But they missed the shot under the basket and Mouse, who'd ripped downcourt with them, got up and hooked the ball from the backboard on a rebound, slammed it to Dubois. The stocky guard dribbled, twisted and passed. It was intercepted.

In the heat of the play that followed, the Beavers must have forgotten that I was there. They went into an old but tricky play that I knew by heart. I watched for the right spot and jumped in and got my hands on the ball. They were caught short. They were so used to that play clicking for a score they had no defense against an interception. I went down the court without anybody getting near me and went up under the hoop and spun one in.

The Ponies took heart from that. They messed up the next Beaver offensive beautifully. We went into one of our own special plays then and the ball flew back and forth across the court, completely baffling the Beaver team. And all the time we were bringing it down into scoring country. Then suddenly Art Delamater broke free, set himself and arched a long looping shot toward the hoop. The backspin was perfect and it squished down through the webbing, and Parkside was only one point behind.

I looked at the clock and there was still a minute to go. They went into the

jump and there was a long groan from the Parkside fans as Mouse lost the tapoff and the Beavers got hold of the ball. They tried to freeze it, to stay set with that big one point lead. But the whole Parkside team was aroused to a fighting frenzy now. We tore in at them and finally bulled the leather away from them.

I heard Kovitz yell and looked around just in time to see the ball come spinning toward me, high. I went up in the air at the same time as a Beaver guard. Both our hands hit the ball at the same time, but I got it away from him, swung it down almost to the floor and shot it toward Dubois a few feet away. Then I ducked under the Beaver guard's arm and raced for the other side of the court and a clear spot. I turned and Dubois had figured the play. He sent the big round pill lobbing toward me. I pulled it down, set myself, said a prayer and let it fly for the hoop. It went in clean and sweat broke out on me in rivers. Thunder rolled through the Garden as wave after wave of applause burst from thousands of strained throats.

And that was it. That was the winning basket. The Beavers got hold of the ball once more before the gun went off and one of their forwards tried a long one-hand potshot at the last second. It hit the rim, bounced and bobbed, rolled around and finally dropped out. But it left every one of us weak in the knees. . . .

After the game, Liz and I didn't go to any of the victory celebrations that the Parkside fans were tossing at some of the big night spots. We had other things to do. For one, I had to take her up to meet Pop and Mom and young Al. I thought they might as well get to know their future daughter-in-law as soon as possible.

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# BLUE-LINE SOLO

by **NORMAN OBER** Author of "Goalie Guts and Slashing Sticks," etc.

**J**OCK sneered at his younger brother. "Well, where do we go from here, boy wonder? Now that you know, do you turn your own brother in?"

The younger man flushed. "And I came to the *Eagles* because I thought it'd be hell's bells to be on the same ice with my own brother!"

"Maybe it's just as well you found out. This starry-eyed hero-worship wears thin after awhile. I still want to know, are you gonna turn me in to Pop Taylor?"

Dave Evans started to answer, changed his mind. "I don't know," he managed. "I'll have to think. It's a great thing to find out your own brother's made a deal to blow the playoffs."

Jock Evans mellowed his tone. "Listen, kid. Hockey money's all right as far as it goes. But a guy has to look out for himself! This is my chance for a pile of

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***There's no premium on sprains and broken bones when two pro hockey teams mix it up—but when it's brother against brother there's blood on the ice!***

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The elder Evans sailed into the stick, tripping with terrific impact!

dough. I'm sorry you picked this afternoon to sleep in. When Morgan and I came up here to clinch the deal, I thought you were out."

"I wish to hell I was!" Dave exclaimed. "Have you thought how this is gonna sound to Ma?"

"Have you?" the older Evans rejoined.

"What do you mean?"

"I'm not telling her. If anyone does, you will!"

Dave reddened still more. "Boy, you *are* a pip! What the devil happened to you? You used to be pretty decent when you lived at home!"

"It doesn't pay off, Dave. The difference between us is, I found it out and you still haven't. Why not grow up and throw in with me on this? At the left alley, I can make hash out of our chances, you know that. But with your defense sagging in the right spots we'll be a cinch. I'll talk to the gamblers and get you an equal cut. They're betting for big stakes."

"All in the family, huh?" Dave snapped. "Go to hell, Jock!"

"Well, what'll you do?"

"I oughta turn you in. Maybe I will, at that! But with Ma's heart the way it is, I'm gonna stop you another way!"

"How?"

"Try this for a starter!" Dave put in, bringing his left up from the floor. Jock reeled with the blow and dropped across the bed. He brought a hand to his eye, started up to defend himself, changed his mind.

"Okay, kid," he muttered. "If that's the way you want it! But there's fifteen grand in this for me if the *Eagles* lose the play-offs. Nobody's holding me back from that dough, see?"

**E**VERYBODY in Clayton City who called himself a hockey fan turned out to the opening play-off between the *Clayton Eagles* and the *Buffalo Cougars*. It was two out of three for the Wallace Cup and the play-off kitty. The *Clayton* sextette was heavily favored, finishing first in the standings. But *Buffalo* had power and determination. Odds notwithstanding, it would be a hot series.

Pop Taylor sent his *Eagles* out on the

ice to warm up after the visiting *Cougars* had their spell on the rink. "Go to it, champs!" he growled, full of pride for the husky lads he'd piloted to first place.

Skating out, Jock, sporting a black eye, muttered to his younger brother, "Keep outa my way tonight, Dave! I'm warnin' you!"

Dave said nothing. He'd been grimly amused at Jock's explanation of the eye. The puck came into his possession and he swiveled towards Jock, driving the rubber at his stick with a fury that said more than words. Pop Taylor, watching from the bench, raised a surprised eyebrow.

The crowd continued to pour into the arena until there was more humanity on the premises than the rest of Clayton City could boast. Local rooters were in a holiday mood, sensing the superiority of their home team, out for a decisive victory!

Both teams lined up for the opening face at last. In his position in the line, Dave gritted his teeth. His brother, veteran left wing of the *Eagles*, cocked an eye at his younger brother, the kid who'd come up from college to make good in a single season, playing like a Gibraltar at left defense. The brother act was mighty popular around about Clayton City.

The referee dropped the disc between Barry McCann of the *Eagles* and *Cougar* Pete Tagger. Lumber flashed, collided, and the fat was in the frosty fire! The crowd let go a pleased roar as Barry's thrust nailed Jock Evans. Jock shot down his own alley across the *Buffalo* blue line, both aggregations on his heels, only to be skated into the boards by hefty Apples Ryan, the opposing wing, supported by Jojo Drake, *Cougar* guard.

Dave sank his teeth into his lip as the puck changed hands. It was nothing you could nail as deliberate, unless you knew what was in Jock's mind.

The puck reversed directions, sticked along by Apples Ryan, deftly chopped across to Pete Tagger as the defense moved in on him, ragged down mid-ice at high gear into *Eagle* ground. Red Adams at the *Eagle* wicket steered him-

self for his first chance of the play-offs as Pete zoomed over to the left of the cage.

Tagger brought himself to a screaming halt, his skates throwing up a fine icy spray, feinted to the left and then brought his wood around for the payoff. It never came! Tagger met lumber instead of rubber. The disc was poke-checked out of his path. It was Dave Evans, ploughing down on him, pilfering the puck and wheeling about in one coordinated motion of stick and body. The crowd positively sang with delight!

"That's how to stop 'em, kid!" Pop Taylor grunted from the bench. "Now give it to Jock!"

But Dave didn't. He passed it to Vic Leclair, the right wing, who sped ahead of the pack into Buffalo territory, the puck leading the way!

*Cougars* converged from all sides and the fleet Canuck Leclair surrendered to Center McCann, skating along in a better position. They bore down on Crash Pitts, the broad goalie of the *Cougars*, who set himself for a save. But *Cougar* sticks flew, skates moaned and McCann barely cleared to Jock Evans. Jock drove it right for the goalie's skates without a momentary feint. Crash caught it midships and spilled it off to the left, where Trilling, the left guard, scooped it up. The crowd had started a yell of triumph that faded dead away.

Dave passed Jock on his way to cover, grunting, "Nice dull shot! You'll get your dough, maybe!"

Jock missed the last sentence as Dave streaked into Trilling at the boards, his stick seeking out the disc. The whistle shriiled and a face was called as both men tangled arms, sticks and skates in a fury of physical effort.

Dave copped the face and shot the puck to McCann, who whipped it across to Jock. Jock took a long cut at it and arrived too late as Apples Ryan's stick pried it off the cold floor. Again they changed ice and it was Red Adams's turn to ward off a marker. Apples let Tagger have it on *Eagle* ice. Tagger faked a pass to Trilling as the defense hit him, then ploughed past Leclair and Stan Avery,

chopping the puck for a cage corner. Adams dove for it, knocked it down and reached to clear it with his mitt. But Tagger rode down on him, hickory sweeping, and drove it home for a score! The red light flashed back of the cage and the home fans groaned their dismay!

The first period ended that way—and the second, both teams delighting and disappointing the mob in turn, up and down the ice, one rush after the other, but without a single puck finding a home!

The *Eagles* tried everything they had, passing attacks, full team rushes, solos, but the best plays fell apart. At the core of the trouble was Jock's calculated weakness, but just one man on the ice knew that.

Dave wore himself out trying to make up for his brother's play, stopping one offense after another, always losing a hard-won advantage when one of the others entrusted the rubber to Jock. At no time during the play did Dave give his brother the puck. For once, some of the fans noted, the brother act wasn't working.

Early in the third period, Pop Taylor yanked Dave for a rest. Dave skated to the bench and dropped wearily.

"What's wrong with you tonight, kid?" Taylor demanded.

"What do you mean, Pop?"

"All season, you worked with Jock! Evans to Evans! All of a sudden, you're playing any pass but your brother. And that black eye of his! You two have a scrap?"

"Don't be silly, Pop," Dave protested. "That's just—just how it worked out tonight."

"Maybe so. But we need a marker to stay in the game. I'm gonna send you back in there now and I want you to find out where Jock is when you get that puck, understand?"

Dave went white inside. He nodded his head. The action on the ice stopped again and he shot back to position after reporting.

There hadn't been a penalty all game, despite numerous blasts of the whistle on play after play. What the *Eagles*

needed desperately as the game grew old was an advantage—any advantage they could muster. The play grew rougher and the whistle more insistent.

Pop saw the strategy shaping up but he saw the danger too. Then it happened. Jock lost his temper on a body check and raised his stick against the Buffalo Ryan. The whistle stopped him cold and the referee called two minutes on him. The team, trying to provoke the *Cougars* into rough play, had suffered a boomerang. As Jock skated past Dave, the younger brother thought he saw a momentary glint in the wingman's eye and a fleeting grimace of satisfaction.

They faced off again. Short-handed, the *Eagles* had to chance their tactics to ward off the flying rushes that were sure to follow.

McCann beat Tagger to the puck and shot it to Vic Leclair. Vic began a fleet shuffle off to *Buffalo* ice but ran into a barrage of sticks. Trilling stole it cold and the panic was on! Five *Cougars* bore down on Red Adams, skating like fury as the defenders, Dave Evans and Stan Avery, tightened in a V against the puck carrier. Trilling sailed straight into them, releasing the puck to Tagger just as he met the guards. Tagger passed it to Ryan, flashing down the right alley. The desperate *Eagles* closed on him before he could get it away and sticks churned while the fans yowled blue murder!

Suddenly it was Dave Evans, breaking out of the crowd with the puck ahead of him. He took off like a comet, looking both ways for a free carrier. None were there, so he kept right on going, over the line to neutral ice, whipping along without a single barrier to the pay-off zone. The crowd's reaction blended into a long wail of suspense as the guard, not another player near him, drew up for a shot at the wire! Dave feinted to the left, then drove it full speed to the right. Crash threw himself at it bodily but it was too fast. The red light glowed and it was a brand new contest at 1-1!

At least a dozen spectators must have played out their lungs in the ovation that followed. And as the younger Evans

skated up the ice, he couldn't resist a quick glance at his brother, standing now, in readiness to rejoin the fray when his time was up.

The *Cougars* were in a lather to get the play going again and capitalize on their superiority in numbers before Jock rejoined the team. On the face, they exploded off the line as Tagger scooped the puck off McCann's stick. Adams was set for them, watching the disc like a hawk. The play battered its way down to his wicket and the goalie made a leaping save of a shot by Trilling. He knocked it down and Evans skated it around the cage, only to run into a solid wall. He reversed his direction, passed it to Avery on the opposite alley. Avery lost it to Tagger and Adams saved again, throwing it out. The play raged on around the cage another several seconds and a cheer of delight went up as Jock skated out to rejoin his team. Just as he bore down, though, Apples Ryan put it away behind Adams and the second *Buffalo* score was chalked up!

The play was fast and furious, but futile for the *Eagles*. The game ended on 2-1, *Buffalo* ahead with one more to win for the cup and the title.

**I**N the dressing room under the *Buffalo* arena, the roar of the gathering crowd was dull and suppressed, but steady in the background. Pop Taylor looked over his charges, resting up before hitting the ice.

"It's all or nothing tonight," he remarked. "Forget about tomorrow and win this one or we're through." He paused, then turned to Dave Evans. "That was a great play you pulled off yesterday, Dave. Gave us our only score."

"Lucky," Dave muttered, flushing a little.

"No, it wasn't," the manager continued. "You played it that way." He paused and then added, "And that was what licked us last night!"

Dave looked up startled. "Don't look so surprised," Taylor snapped. "You made the grade with this outfit because you learned from Jock the one lesson a hockey player has to learn—team play! All sea-

son long, you were satisfied to break up a rush and set up plays for the forward line. Last night, you didn't once give Jock a chance. Half a dozen times, when he was the logical man to clear to, you found someone halfway in the clear. Now whatever is wrong between you two may be none of my business, but I don't want to see any evidence of it tonight or I play the second string and bench you!"

A few of the others growled agreement and the junior defenseman went crimson. He shot a glance at Jock, who was busy looking the other way, swallowed, and said nothing.

"You get me, kid?" Taylor demanded.

"Yep!"

"Okay, then. Play it that way!"

Someone yelled down the alley at that moment and the team went out to face the *Buffalo* outfit on their home ice.

"Sorry you had to take that," Jock mumbled as they went up to the bench.

"Play like you're sorry," Dave replied.

But he could see from the set of his brother's jaw that there was no hope for it. They continued to the bench in silence and took the ice a few minutes later with no more words.

The game started with a broken stick! McCann bore down so hard at the face that he cracked his lumber. A new one was sent out while the big center grinned sheepishly, caught red-handed at being over-anxious.

The second face-off took! McCann stuck it back to Jock, who started forward with a fine show of speed. A wall built itself around him and he managed to clear to Leclair, who promptly ran into trouble. It was clear that *Buffalo* was going to play it cagey for a while. Everywhere the *Eagle* forward line probed, beef skated in to fill the breach. The heavier *Eagles*, though, bullied and bullied until they fought it down to the *Cougar* cage. Crash Pitts barely saved on a murderous Leclair attempt, dumping it into Jojo Drake's stick. Drake moved it up the right alley but they skated him into the boards even before he hit neutral ice. A moment later, it was coming back, Jock winging along behind it.

Shooting fast before he was surround-

ed, Jock sent it straight at the goalie without a hint of deception in the blow. But his strategy to avoid the score worked in reverse. Pitts played the maneuver as though it was a deception and the shot found him moving the wrong way. A howl of displeasure rose in the *Buffalo* stands as the red light flashed. Jock cursed inwardly, noting Dave's amused look on the play. It was 1-0 in favor of the *Eagles*.

After that, it was organized murder to the end of the period. Dave followed instructions, rifling the puck to his brother every time he managed to break up a *Buffalo* rush, challenging Jock to make an evident miscue. But Jock played along, content to await further developments.

*Buffalo* roughhoused all over the ice, drawing numerous warnings from the referee. When the teams swapped ice, the single *Eagle* marker still separated the two outfits.

On the bench while the groundkeepers smoothed the ice, Pop Taylor growled at Dave, "Now you're using some sense. Keep up the team play. Even for a front line man, solos are usually poison in hockey. When a guard tries it, it's rink murder!" He slapped the kid on the back and turned to give his attention to the others.

Pop sent them out for the second period with the advice, "They're playin' over their heads! Get some more goals for margin! And don't let 'em tempt you into that penalty box!"

The *Cougars* began to commit every brutality the game allowed, out for blood to make up their deficit. Hickory chopped away at hickory bodies crashed, skates locked, the teams grappled over their blades as though the Wallace Cup were the promised land itself. Their break came mid-game.

The *Eagles* had possession of the rubber, McCann, Leclair and Jock Evans trying a power rush for another score. McCann made the shot with *Cougars* riding down on him, shooting too high, just over the cage to the glass mask above the boards.

Jojo Drake recovered and rode it out

from behind, where the teams collided, rioting for possession of the puck.

Jock got into a tangle with Jojo Drake and the whistle stopped them for a fresh face. Jock lost it on the play, Drake passing to Pete Tagger, who broke through to neutral ice. Everyone else covered, Tagger elected to take it solo, the big center weaving down the right hand lane, sticking the puck past Avery and swinging his body to block Dave Evans while he made the shot. Red Adams knocked it down but it bounded several feet in front of the cage.

Both teams hit the area like a thundering herd, just too late to take part as Tagger fought it out with Dave for possession of the disc, got his stick behind it and hammered home a goal! It was a tie game.

Dave recriminated inwardly, "Bad enough with Jock throwing it, I have to let that big ape sink one and tie it up!"

As though reading his thoughts, Jock grinned. "What's the idea, kid? The other side payin' you off?"

Encouraged, the *Cougars* fought for the puck as play began, quickly swept into *Eagle* territory and engaged the defenders in lively competition. There was a bitter roaring of skates as Dave poked the puck out of Ryan's maw, whipping it to his brother. Ryan's Irish was up and he fought his way close to neutral ice, crossed the line right on Jock's heels, forced a pass to Leclaire back of the line, wheeled and illegally body checked the *Canuck* wingman. The referee caught it and motioned Ryan into the cooler for one minute. As far as the *Eagles* were concerned, it was kismet's smile.

They faced off and threw five men into the drive. A roar of unexpected satisfaction went up as Jock pulled an off-side. He looked sheepish as they lined up again.

Dave clenched his fists inside his now moist gloves. Jock was stalling away Ryan's penalty time during which the *Eagles* might notch another marker.

Again they were off, McCann passing it out to Leclaire, five men moving down the ice, fighting to power up another score. Dave rode in with the tide, taking

a short pass from Leclaire, moving in on Crash Pitts at the goal. He looked both ways and cursed. His brother Jock was the only free man. Taylor'd be watching for the pass. Dave decided! Instead of passing to Jock, he rode into the *Buffalo* defense like a sledgehammer, bullying the puck along, and crashed right through. Grinding to a half-turn halt, he slashed the rubber and sent it home! *Buffalo* rooters moaned! It was 2-1 with the *Eagles* up!

Forty seconds later, both teams were at full strength again and Dave was back on the bench.

Pop Taylor was livid. "Damn it, kid! You play it my way or not at all!" he shouted. "You were dumb lucky to get through to that score. Jock could have ridden it in easy!"

"You got the score!" Dave insisted stubbornly.

"And you got the bench!" Taylor snapped back, turning his angry eyes on the ice. "Blasted prima donna!"

The lead held through the finish of the second period. But Dave's heart sank as he saw, because he was looking close for it, his brother's deliberate lack of timing and coordination where it counted. The *Eagles* had the team and they should have been getting the scores. But they weren't. And the way things looked, Jock was set to throw it away in the third period.

Coming back to the bench when the second period was over, McCann took up Taylor's argument. "You never can tell about a freshman!" he snapped. "I thought we had another Jock Evans in you, but these play-offs have turned you into a spotlight grabber! That's not how we do it on this outfit, bub!"

Leclaire put in, laboring his *Canuck* accent, "By gar, I tole you anotheaire theeng, Jock's timeeng ees all shot, thees youngstair ees got heem so nervous!"

Taylor waited until they hit the dressing room, then turned it on Dave again. "What's the excuse this time? You saw Jock in the clear. Why didn't you pass it? You got through only because those guards were sure you'd pass it. It'll nev-

er work again for you, no matter how smart you figure yourself!"

Dave shrugged. "You needed the point and you got it. I've got nothing else to say!"

"Okay, college boy. Think it over during the next period—on the bench!"

The *Eagles* took it right down to Crash Pitts as the third period began. The air was hot with action as Leclair roved into scoring position, let fly at the cage and sailed in to recover as the goalie knocked it down. Jock bore in, too, charging the goalie and jamming the puck into the cage. The light beamed but the whistle shrilled! The referee killed the point and jailed Jock two minutes for rushing the cage. They faced off again, with Jock in the penalty box.

Now it was the *Cougars'* turn for power plays. On the first drive, they bore down on Matt Wiley, substituting for Dave. Wiley, over-anxious to make out, poured it on and there was a resounding crash in mid-ice as Pete Tagger collided with the shaky but determined defenseman. Wiley went down under a five-man pileup as *Buffalo* fans roared. A moment later, he was carried off the ice.

Taylor needed his defense now at all costs. He turned to Dave. "Whose way do you play it, soloist?" he demanded.

Dave's eyes narrowed. "Yours," he managed. Taylor nodded Dave back to his position on the ice. It was another bitter pill for the younger Evans, but Dave knew the important thing was to be on ice, stemming the results of Jock's sabotage. Looking around, Dave saw coldness in the attitudes of his mates. He shrugged it off. This game had to be won, then tomorrow's. Time enough after for worrying about the friendship of the *Eagle* regulars which meant so much to him.

Play resumed and the *Cougars* ripped into *Eagle* territory. There was a succession of shots and miraculous Adams saves. But the *Buffalo* action was so fast, the puck remained nailed into *Eagle* ice, moving out a distance and then pouring back at the wicket. Trilling, Tagger, Ryan and the two *Buffalo* guards were grappling with fury to knot the count.

Dave's stick was everywhere. The rough play drew one blast after another from the referee. Tempers rose and fan hearts pounded faster and faster. But still no marker came. Weary Goalie Adams got a tremendous stroke of luck and managed to ice the puck the length of the rink just as Jock's sentence expired and the wing rejoined his mates. Even the breathless *Buffalo* rooters gave generous applause to the defense work of the short-handed *Eagles* during those two torrid minutes.

As both teams rushed down to recover the puck in *Buffalo* ice, Dave skated alongside his brother. "Why not clout the referee?" he snapped. "That'll put you out the rest of the game and finish us for sure!" Then he dropped back as his forward line went in to grab the puck.

The remaining five minutes of play time melted rapidly, the *Eagles* now concentrating on holding the single point lead. As the minutes checked off, *Buffalo* opened up wide, forgetting all about defense, intent on knotting the count. Five and four man rushes battered away at the *Eagles*. Play after play, Jock subtly opened holes for their drives, but Dave and Avery, the rest of the forward line joining the defense, were impregnable. With seconds left, Tagger took a pass from Trilling, bored a hole through Jock and poured himself at the cage, letting fly a chop shot. Adams leaped out to meet it bodily, sprawled himself across the puck and took the full weight of Tagger, unable to stop himself after the shot, who tripped over the goalie's fallen form and sailed bodily right into the cage. The blast of the horn announced the end of the game. *Buffalo* fans screamed with surprise, amusement and disappointment at the circus finish. It was a tie series with the Cup riding on the next day's game back in Clayton City.

THERE were two near accidents that night. When the *Eagles* were boarding their train for Clayton City, a load of trunks piled high on a mechanized baggage wagon toppled over, narrowly missing Dave Evans, who luckily stopped to light a cigarette just at that moment.

Later that night, crossing the street to enter his hotel, Dave had to make a flying leap to avoid a delivery truck that wheeled away from the curb and bore down on him in what could hardly have been accidental haste.

It took no master minding on Dave's part to see the fine hand of Jock's gamblers at work, insuring their bets for the next day's game. Breathing hard, his heart pounding with exertion and fright from his narrow escape, Dave pushed his way into the hotel lobby.

"This," he thought, "is too much! If Jock's in this kind of thing with them, it's high time I told Taylor the truth! This lone wolf business looks like it'll pay off in curtains for me!"

He moved briskly over to the desk clerk. "What's Pop Taylor's room number?" he demanded.

"Room four twenty-two," the clerk answered, consulting a card file.

"Thanks!" Dave snapped, turning to the elevator. Half a minute later, he emerged on the fourth floor, started down the corridor and suddenly came to an abrupt halt. His eyes hardened. Then he slowly turned, walked the other way. He found the stairs and went to his own room. As he walked, his steps quickened, his body straightened and determination crept slowly but surely into his face.

The way things looked in the arena by whistle time the next night, everybody who'd been there two days ago had brought a friend. There were no empty seats, the aisles were filled and personal friends of the carbon-arc spotlight operators were draped all over the steel girders at the top of the house Clayton City was present en masse to root home the *Eagles* now that the count was even. If moral support could bring victory, whooping and hollering from all parts of the house bespoke no mincing arguments for an *Eagle* win!

"Cage them *Cougars*! Cage them *Cougars*!" some wit started going around the house. Now it had become a sixteen thousand voice bellow, repeated over and over! "Cage them *Cougars*!" Bad grammar but mighty good vocabulary in *Eagle* ears.

Taylor confronted Dave Evans in his office. "Well, kid? What's the story? What've you and your brother been fighting about?"

"Something private!" Dave snapped. He'd taken plenty these last two days. "It's got nothing to do with hockey and nothing to do with tonight's game."

The old man's jaw tightened. "Have it your way!" he growled. "I can't bench you because last night's play put Wiley in the hospital. But if you lose your head, tonight's game'll be the last you play for the *Eagles*. Get me?"

Dave nodded. He knew the old man was trying to save him from going the way of many a hockey neophyte, forgetting team play in favor of the solo spotlight. But there was no telling Taylor the truth. So the youngster bitterly went out to join his teammates.

He dropped on the bench beside his brother, conscious of the hostile eyes of the *Eagles*. He waited a moment, then whispered to Jock, "Haven't changed your mind, have you?"

Jock said nothing, looking straight ahead. Dave could see the effects of a sleepless night, strain and worry. No. Jock was concerned with fifteen thousand dollars, nothing else.

Dave tried again. "Your friends tried to knock me off twice last night. Or did you know?" he grunted.

Jock turned in surprise. "What the hell do you mean?"

The kid nodded. "I thought those trunks at the station were accidental until a truck almost ran me down in front of the hotel!"

"You're lying!" Jock hissed. "Just trying to make me . . ." The signal came for the *Eagles* to take the ice. The brothers exchanged no more talk.

After the warmup, the opposing teams lined up for the drop of the puck. Hardened veterans on both sides faced each other with mixed respect and determination. The series cash, the cup, the glory rode with every skater tonight. There was no more tomorrow, only three periods of hockey to be played off between the *Cougars* and the *Eagles*.

The puck fell and the teams came to-

gether as the *Eagle* centerman clipped the disc to Vic Leclair, who rifled it to Jock, already winging down the left alley. Bodies whirled on ice, *Cougar* defensemen threw themselves forward to catch the flying wingman.

Jojo Drake zoomed up and threw Jock a beautiful body check. They crashed into the boards and Apples Ryan pried the puck out from between their skates, starting it back toward *Eagle* ice.

The referee's whistle wailed as the two untangling players exchanged words and Jock's stick suddenly rose. Dave cursed! Another penalty! Why couldn't Taylor see the truth in Jock's play?

With the game less than a minute old, it was three minutes off the ice for Jock. Dave went cold inside. He'd been waiting to see what course his brother would take after hearing about the attempt on his life. Now he knew. And he knew what he had to do, as soon as the opportunity presented itself. He'd thought of it last night when he almost told Taylor.

The delighted *Buffalo* team lined up quickly to take advantage of the penalty. There was a face-off and McCann took the puck away from Tagger. But he lost it a moment later as the short *Eagles* ran into the full strength of the *Cougars*. Both teams fighting like wild animals, the *Cougars* brought it right down under Goalie Red Adams's nose and Paul Trilling tagged home a beautiful deception shot, first drawing Red out of position. The *Cougars* had first blood!

Buffalo tried too much on the next play and Tagger rushed the goalie too hard for a score the referee disallowed, much to *Cougar* chagrin. The *Eagles* tightened up after that and managed to hold back the opposition until Jock got back on the ice.

Dave tensed up inside, his heart pounding louder in his own ears than the din of the crowd, yelling for Jock to get back the point.

Jock sailed in, a photograph of determination. The complexion of the game changed instantly. The *Cougars* tightened to hold their lead while probing the renewed offensive power of the *Eagles*. A

three man forward line emerged from *Eagle* ice, crossed neutral territory like streaking comets, slicing the puck back and forth, hoarding it from enemy sticks. It was McCann to Leclair to Jock Evans. Evans took it in and let the puck fly. It was another fast-one straight at the goalie. The crowd groaned. This time Crash Pitts wasn't fooled and threw it out.

The teams roared together and sticks flew for possession of the puck. The whistle stopped the rough play, but it began again on the face-off. The play saw-sawed back and forth but the period ended with no more scoring.

Dave was silent in the dressing room. Taylor and the others left him alone. His play had, up to this point conformed with the team pattern, but nobody trusted him any more. He returned to the ice, wary and waiting—waiting for an opportunity he knew would have to come!

The *Eagles* opened the second period with a show of their superior strength but again Jock failed to deliver at the crucial point. The crowd was beginning to quiet down, just enough to show that their faith was taking it on the chin.

Suddenly Dave broke up a *Cougar* rush, whipped the puck to Jock and started down the ice, keeping even pace with the fleet wing. The brothers gathered speed. McCann and Leclair joined the line and Dave, eyes warily measuring his brother's progress, began to drop back to defense position. But his right skate suddenly took a half turn, his body lunged crazily, his stick ploughed wildly into Jock's speeding path and a wall of horror went up as the elder Evans sailed into it, tripping with terrific impact over Dave's stick!

Dave went down, too, wrenching into a twisted heap. But it was Jock's groan that would have been heard all over the arena if the crowd hadn't drowned him out.

Time was called. The medico ran up, the *Eagle* manager, both teams and the officials. A stretcher was called for and Jock, in intense pain, was carried off the rink.

The medico shook his head, following

the patient off the ice. "A fracture!" he said. "Can't tell yet how bad!"

Taylor faced Dave Evans, his face dead white. "This," he managed, "is your last professional game, young feller!" He turned abruptly and went back to the bench. Willie Engler came in to replace the injured wingman and play resumed. Dave's heart continued to do tricks inside of him, but he knew he had done a job that needed doing.

From the seats, the whole play had looked like pure accident. Only the *Eagles* themselves had different ideas. And the local fans persuaded themselves gloomily that they'd just seen the last feeble chances of the *Eagles* vanish in thin air.

But it didn't work out that way. Willie Engler was no weak offense man himself and something subtle began to happen to the *Eagles* that became more and more evident as the play continued. The first concrete evidence came when, just before the end of the second period the *Eagles* knotted the count, Engler taking a McCann pass and converting it to a goal before Crash Pitts could set himself for a change of direction.

The third period was all *Eagles!* Dave lay back with Avery, letting the forward line do its own job. And the work grew smoother and smoother. The puck seldom saw *Eagle* ice during the entire period. And four times, disc propelling *Eagle* forwards found weak points in the opposing goalie's armor. When it was all over, surprised and intensely delighted fans had shouted themselves into a fren-

zy and the *Eagles* had clinched the play-offs, 5-1!

"I WAS wondering when you'd show up!" Taylor said, as Dave Evans came into the hospital corridor. "Your brother's in Room 21."

"How is he?" Dave asked.

"Compound fracture. He'll never play hockey again."

"And neither will I, is that it?" Dave added.

"Sit down," Taylor said, using a soft tone.

"I'd better go in and see him first," Evans replied.

"That can wait a bit. Sit down." Dave did, next to Taylor on a bench provided for the purpose. "It may interest you to know, kid," Taylor began, "that Jock and I had a long talk after they set his leg. He's in pain and will be for a while. But he doesn't hold it against you."

"I'm glad of that," Dave put in.

"He told me the whole story, kid. Broke down and blubbered like a baby. McCann and Leclair were standing there, too. Jock's mighty sorry for what he made you go through these three games. And so are the rest of us." The old manager patted Dave on the back. "Now go ahead in and see your brother, kid. Your Ma's in there with him and she's told her it was an accident."

Dave had to gulp as he rose shakily to his feet. He moved over to the door and turned the handle. Quickly, he went inside and shut the door behind him.

## BIG LEAGUERS NEVER QUIT!

Great Baseball Novel by Roe Richmond

*Mike Marlin wasn't a whirlwind on the bases, or a sensation on the field, but his powerful hands gripped a stick of dynamite every time he faced those fireballing fools on the mound!*



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PLUS A TENSE FIGHT  
NOVELET

**IN THIS CORNER—  
MURDER!**

by H. C. BUTLER

# BASEHITS ARE BIG

I OFTEN wondered why they called him Rocky. Maybe it was because his name was Ted Rockwell, and they'd just shortened the last name. And maybe it was because he had a heart as hard as a rock.

My name is Steve O'Brien. I've been managing the Moguls for ten years, and I've seen a lot of baseball players come and go in that time. But none quite like this Rocky.

Big, raw-boned and young, he was a real ballplayer. He'd been with us four years now, and already he was hailed as one of the best ballhawks in the business. And he could hit that apple too.

There was only one thing wrong with the guy. He was money-hungry.

I watched him now as he pranced nervously around in left field, like a frisky colt ready to run. Mike Devlin, the Rams clean-up hitter, swung on the first pitch and lashed a liner between left and center.

Rocky faded over like a streak of lightning, cutting at an angle toward the fence. At the last instant he leaped high against the screen and speared the ball with his gloved hand. It was a sweet play.

I shook my head a little. That was the kind of stuff Rocky pulled all the time. On top of that, he kept powdering the ball at a .350 clip—so how could you bench him? Yet I felt like benching him most of the time.

Like I say, he was money-hungry. He'd come up at a time when we needed a left gardener like Bergen needs McCarthy, and he was so good that he was able to swing a shrewd deal which included a neat bonus for signing.

Then, every year, he held out for more dough—and got it. And his contracts usually had a sharp clause that landed him an additional bonus when the season ended.

But Rocky wasn't even satisfied with

that. He went out of his way to pick up mazuma on the side. Like endorsing breakfast foods and toothpaste, things like that. Within a year after he hit the majors, his handsome blond head was pictured on half the billboards in town and in most of the magazines.

I remember the day he signed up. He really put the screws on.

"I'm laying my cards on the table," he told us. "You need a left fielder bad, and I'm your boy. You know it and I know it, so let's not quibble. You pay me the dough I want, and we can do business. Otherwise, I can peddle my contract somewhere else."

Charlie Kinner, President of the Mogul Baseball Club, took an instant dislike for Rocky. But business was business, and we needed a left fielder. So Rocky was signed at a preposterous figure.

Two months later an incident occurred in the clubhouse that turned the whole team against Rocky. He didn't have sense enough to keep his mouth shut, and was blowing off steam about the bonus clauses in his contract to a lot of veterans who weren't drawing anywhere near his salary.

"You're suckers," he told them arrogantly. "Running your legs off out there for peanuts. Get wise, why don't you?"

Big Clem Waters, veteran first-sacker, took exception to that one. He glared at Rocky through sun-narrowed eyes.

"Listen, busher!" he rapped. "Maybe some of us guys play baseball for two

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***Ted Rockwell, king of clout, loved to see those hero-worshipping kids flocking into the bleachers—for each fan meant another coin at the gate and more dollars in his pockets!***

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**HE COULD PASTE THE HORSEHIDE ALL OVER THE PARK, BUT**

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# BUSINESS

**ACTION-PACKED DIAMOND  
NOVELET by H. C. BUTLER**



There was a crack of bat against ball, and then the Ram's outfielder just stood there watching the white pellet go for a homer!

**ROCKWELL WANTED MONEY—ONLY FOOLS TOOK THE GLORY!**

reasons. For a living, and because we love the game. Ever think of that?"

"Love the game!" Rocky spat out the words as if they tasted bad. "Look, guys! Let's get the record straight. I'm not playing ball because I love it. I'm playing for the dough I can get out of it. I came from a poor family. Dad never had a cent, and there were a lot of times when we went hungry. I decided I wasn't going to take any more of that. I'm out for every cent I can get!"

Well, that got the whole team down on him. They tolerated him because he was a whale of a ballplayer and you just couldn't keep him out of the line-up. But that was as far as it went.

With me, I had a personal problem. Rocky was giving my daughter the rush act, and I didn't think he was the kind of guy Joan ought to hook up with. I just couldn't see Rocky giving her the care and attention she was entitled to. Rocky thought a little too much of Rocky—and the dough he was making.

An organized cheer, welling up from the stands along the left field foul line, caught my attention. I looked down the line at the kids in the stands. One black-haired, black-eyed kid with freckles on his nose was leading the rest in a cheer that went:

"Yea, Rocky! Yea, Rocky! Fight 'em!"

It sounded more like a football yell than a baseball cheer. Besides, there was a note of sadness in it to me.

Rocky was a great favorite with the fans, who didn't know about his money-madness but simply rated him on the stellar performance he turned in. Some kids, all about ten or eleven years old, had formed a Rocky Club, in honor of the Mogul player which they considered a hero.

The management of the club, taking notice of this show of loyalty and affection, had granted the kids free seats in the left field stands for this crucial last series with the Rams. And the boys were making the most of it with organized cheers for their hero.

Now, ordinarily, that would be enough to soften the heart of almost any baseball player. But not Rocky. He stood out there

with a dead pan and didn't even reward the kids with a grin. It made me sore.

When Rocky trotted in at the end of the eighth I said:

"You got a lot of loyal support out there."

He just gave me a dirty look.

"Aw, those fool kids! Why don't they shut up?"

I began to sizzle like a fried egg at that one.

"Maybe you don't know it," I snapped back, "but you're a hero to those youngsters!"

He shrugged his broad shoulders and started for the wood pie.

"Okay, so I'm a hero to a lot of dumb kids that aren't old enough to know the score! So what? Let the kids yell, if they're having a good time. I'm not getting emotional about it. Baseball is a business with me—you ought to know that!"

Well, I felt like murdering him. But he ambled out to the plate and calmly pickled the first pitch, dropping it in the left-centerfield stands for a homer that gave us a 2-1 lead.

You should have heard the kids yell then! It was a tight race, and we were tied in the won and lost column with the Rams. By a trick of schedule-making, we were playing the Rams in the last three games of the season. Whoever took two out of three games won the pennant this year.

The kids knew it was crucial, and they yelled their hearts out. But to Rocky it meant nothing—except World Series money. When we trotted off the field ten minutes later with a 2-1 victory, he didn't even give the kids a sidelong glance.

**T**IMMY McLEAN came into the clubhouse after the game. He was the black-haired, freckled kid who had led the cheers for Rocky. Timmy was the leader of the Rocky Club, and he'd written me a nice letter asking for an interview with Rocky after the first game. I believe in giving kids who are interested in baseball a break, so I'd invited him into the clubhouse after the brawl. He came, ac-

accompanied by a smiling cop who was taking joy in his work.

Timmy was a cute kid, with freckles dancing on his nose and a contagious grin. I could see right away he was nervous. After all, not many eleven year old kids are dragged into the clubhouse of the fabulous Moguls, and Timmy was properly impressed. He stared wide-eyed at the shouting, laughing players.

I talked to him a couple minutes, then led him over to the man of his dreams—the great Rocky. Rocky was taking off his spikes when we came up, and he looked at us uncertainly.

“Rocky,” I said, “this is Timmy McLean. He’s the boy who organized the Rocky Club in your honor. How about you two men shaking hands?”

The kid stuck out his tiny hand and his young face flushed with excitement.

“Gee whiz,” he gasped, “I’m sure glad to meecha. Mr.—that is, Rocky.”

Rocky came to slowly, rose to his feet, and took Timmy’s hand in a half-hearted shake.

“Pleased to meetcha, kid,” he said, rather rapidly.

Timmy grinned all over, so that the freckles looked like they were dancing on his nose.

“Gee, Rocky—that was a whopper of a homer you hit!” he exploded exultantly.

“Oh!” Rocky sounded like somebody had just woke him up. “The homer? Yeah, that was a good clout.” He stopped, looking a little embarrassed and impatient.

There was a silence, during which Timmy was evidently tongue-tied and Rocky did nothing to help him out. I cut in.

“Timmy was going to ask you a question, Rocky,” I said. “I guess maybe he’s a little nervous.”

The kid started talking then, bravely, the words tumbling out of his mouth, one over the other.

“Well, I—you see, our club is meeting tonight. All the kids in the Rocky Club will be there. And we kinda thought—that is, if you could do it—that maybe you’d come out to our meeting and say a few words.”

He stopped breathlessly, evidently re-

lieved at having gotten it out. I watched Rocky out of slitted eyes. I was afraid of his reaction to this. If he ran true to form. . . .

He did. I saw a distressed frown wrinkle his forehead, and a little light shone in his black eyes, like it always did when he was sore.

“I’m sorry, kid. I guess I couldn’t make it tonight.” He spoke rapidly, like he wanted to get it over with. He turned abruptly and fussed with the door of his locker.

I saw the kid’s face drop like a foul fly. I knew he’d been planning on Rocky’s appearance, hoping against hope that his hero would honor the club with a call. It was one of those things that mean so much to a boy eleven years old who has his heart wrapped up in the game of baseball.

To me, it was a little sickening. I felt nimble fingers tugging at my heart.

“Maybe another time, Timmy,” I said, trying to soften it.

Timmy looked up at me, and I thought his eyes looked a little more moist than they had been.

“Yeah. I guess Mr. Rocky is kinda busy.”

Rocky turned, scowling.

“That’s right, kid. I’m pretty busy. Maybe some other time.” It sounded like a stall, to get the kid out of there.

Well, I took Timmy around and introduced him to a lot of the boys and he brightened up a little. Then, finally, I let him go with the promise that I try to get Rocky to consider another date. Then I bee-lined it toward Rocky’s corner, burning up inside.

“You’re a damned fine hero?” I snarled at him. “You knocked the heart out of that kid!”

Rocky wheeled around. His eyes looked like ice-cubes.

“He’ll get over it!”

“Sure, maybe he will. But you could have made it a lot easier for him if you’d have gone out and said a few words to his club. To *your* club, Rocky!”

“My club, nothing!” Rocky slammed the locker door. “It’s not my fault if a lot of hero-worshiping kids named a club

after me. I get paid for making speeches other places. Making speeches to a lot of brats won't put any dough in my pocket!"

I just looked at him. I could hardly believe it. There was simply no sentiment in this guy! He wasn't even human. He had a rock in his chest instead of a heart—and whatever he had for brains insisted in evaluating everything in terms of money. Money was his god.

I turned away, feeling all upset inside. Maybe it was anger that drove me toward the clubhouse door—or a suspicion that I'd find Joan out there waiting for Rocky.

She was there, all right. Dressed in a sheer green blouse that matched her eyes, and a black skirt that matched her hair—well, even if she was my daughter, she looked mighty cute! I grabbed her arm before she could greet me.

"You waiting for Rocky?" I asked.

She pushed a stray curl back from her forehead, while her green eyes widened in surprise.

"Why, yes, Pop," she said, and there was something warm in her voice.

I put on my super deluxe frown.

"Why don't you give him the slip? He's no good, honey."

A nettled expression crept into her face, the way it always did when I ran Rocky into the ground. I'd talked to her before about him, but it hadn't done much good. To her, Rocky was a hero, like he was to a lot of people. Although she was level-headed about other things, she was blind where Rocky was concerned. She couldn't see a thing wrong with him.

"Rocky's a good egg, Pop," she said quietly. "I like him."

I decided to go whole-hog then.

"You know what he just pulled?"

She shook her head. The curl fell down again and she brushed it back.

I gave it to her then, straight from the shoulder. I told her about Timmy, and how Rocky had turned him down and practically broken the kid's heart. But all she did was look impatient with me.

"Maybe Rocky wasn't feeling well. He gets an awful lot of adoration from the

crowds, and I guess it wears on him at times."

I just shook my head.

"Always finding excuses for him, aren't you?" I asked.

She gave me one of those dazzling smiles that always melted my heart and tweeked me under the chin.

"You lovable old goat!" she said. "Of course I am! I'm going to marry Rocky one of these days."

Well, I gave up. How can you fight a daughter who has her mind made up? Especially when she has it set on a guy like Rocky and can't see any of his faults? I went back into the clubhouse, feeling disappointed inside.

The Moguls had copped the first game of this crucial series, but I wasn't feeling hilariously happy.

**W**HEN the second game of the series got under way, the Rocky Club was again whooping it up in the left field stands. But after the first horrible inning, even they quieted down a little.

Blake, the Rams' lead-off hitter, started the fireworks with a single to center. Speedy Smead, our pitcher, got the next man on strikes, but O'Doul rapped a liner into right to put Blake on third. Then Smead lost control and walked Devlin.

That filled the bases with one out. Smead worked carefully on Hansen, the Swedish slugger, and finally got him on a pop-up to second. And when Terry lofted an easy fly to left it looked like Smead would get out of the hole without being scored on.

Then it happened.

It was one of those unexplainable things that happen to a major league player once in a while, but not often. Rocky, all set for the catch, muffed it! And before he could retrieve the ball the three base-runners trotted home!

So it was Rams 3, Moguls 0, when the first frame ended.

Rocky came barging into the dugout, his eyes flashing with anger. I slapped him on the shoulder.

"Tough," I said. "Just one of those things, Rocky."

The breeze almost knocked me over, the way he whirled on me.

"Tough, nothing!" he snarled. "It's those kids out there! All that rah, rah stuff! Where do they think they're at—a football game?"

I saw some of the boys throw some sour looks at him. I felt like clipping him on the chin myself, only a manager doesn't do those things.

"I thought you were too good a player to let the fans get you down," I said.

"I don't give a hoot about the fans," Rocky retorted hotly. "Let 'em cheer or let 'em boo. But those kids and their organized cheering get me down!"

"They're for you a hundred percent," I said softly.

"Yeah? Well, I'm not for them!"

I let it go at that. But I watched him the rest of the game. And he was something to watch.

He played a steady ballgame, but he kept tossing black looks at the stands behind the left field foul line. Timmy was leading his gang in the cheers. As every inning opened, and Rocky trotted into left field, the cheers would well up.

"Yea. Rocky! Rah, rah, rah!"

The kids were having themselves a time. And Rocky wasn't enjoying it.

Meanwhile, the Moguls were having quite a time, too. They were vainly trying to tie together some hits off Lefty O'Neill, the Rams' pitcher, but nothing was happening. He had us popping up all over the place.

When the eighth inning rolled around the score was still Rams 3, Moguls 0, and there didn't seem much prospect of a change. Then with two out, Sanders looped a hit into left and Billings socked a clothes-liner into right to put runners on first and third. It brought up Rocky.

Rocky knocked the dirt from his spikes and stepped into the right hand batter's box. And right then the cheer started. It came drifting up from those left field stands, in high-pitched, kiddish voices.

"We want a homer! We want a homer! We want a homer!"

I saw Rocky step out of the box again and glare down the left field foul line at the stands. Timmy was standing up in

front of his gang, leading the cheers with wildly waving arms. Rocky muttered something under his breath and stepped back in.

Well, I don't know to this day if Rocky did it on purpose. He claims he didn't, so maybe I ought to believe him.

Anyway, the first pitch that came in was on the inside corner, made to order for what Rocky did. He swung on the ball a little early, pulling it sharply along the left field line. It was a fast, screaming liner—and it headed right for that pack of kids!

What happened made my stomach churn. Timmy was standing with his back to the field, leading another cheer, and that white ball went for him as if it were radio-controlled. There was a horrible thunk as the ball hit the back of Timmy's head, then caromed away. I saw Timmy go down in a pitiful heap!

Well, fans have been struck by baseballs before. The ushers rushed in and carried the poor kid out and we didn't see him any more. The game had to go on, of course, although Rocky delayed it a long time before he got back in the batter's box.

He kept staring numbly at the stands, his face expressionless and even a little mean. When he finally stepped back in, he struck out.

Nobody said a word to Rocky until the ninth had been played, and the Moguls had been tagged with a 3-0 defeat. Then, in the clubhouse, I decided to find out about things. I caught Rocky at his locker.

"I didn't know you were a place-hitter," I said.

He turned on me angrily, his dark eyes blazing.

"Cut the sarcasm! I didn't hit that ball in the stands on purpose!"

"Maybe not. But the kids were bothering you all day long and—"

I stopped as someone loomed beside me. It was Charlie Kinner, President of the Mogul Baseball Club. His face was grave.

"That kid that was hit with the foul ball—" he began.

Rocky's face suddenly turned to stone.

"He's at Mercy Hospital," Kinner went

on, "He has a slight concussion. He's asking for you, Rocky. Maybe you'd better drop over."

Rocky stared at us a moment, saying nothing. Then, at last, he shrugged his broad shoulders.

"I guess maybe I better," he said spiritlessly.

"Okay," I rapped. "Get dressed and meet me at the clubhouse door in fifteen minutes. You're going on a good-will trip, Rocky—and it isn't going to put a cent in your pockets either!"

Rocky was silent on our quick trip to the hospital. I did all the inquiring at the desk, and a nurse rushed us up to Timmy's room. Timmy's parents were with him, but he forgot them when he spotted us.

Ho looked very sick. His eyes were sort of bleary and his face pale, but when he saw Rocky he managed a quick smile.

"Gee whiz, Rocky!" he breathed.

Rocky went over to the bed, awkwardly. He held out his hand and shook hands with the kid sort of automatically.

"Sorry I hit you, kid," he said roughly.

Timmy just grinned, the freckles dancing.

"That's all right, Rocky. The worst part is, we lost the game!"

Rocky just stared. I guess he just couldn't understand a kid being so interested in the Moguls losing a game. After all, it wasn't any money out of the kid's pocket, was it?

"Yeah. Too bad we lost." Rocky said it awkwardly, as if the words came hard.

"We gotta win tomorrow," Timmy said enthusiastically. "It means the pennant, Rocky. We just *have* to win!" A bright light leaped into the bleary eyes. "The doc says I can have a radio and listen to tomorrow's game. Couldn't you hit a homer, Rocky, and make sure we win it?"

I saw Rocky gulp.

"Well, I—I—"

"Hit a homer for me, willya, Rocky? Babe Ruth use to do it for kids in hospitals. You do it for me—huh, Rocky?"

Rocky gulped again. I decided to take over.

"Rocky'll hit one for you tomorrow, Timmy," I said. "And not only that, we'll

win that pennant too. For you, Timmy."

We left a few minutes later. And in the taxi back to the hotel, Rocky said:

"You sure fixed me up fine, didn't you?"

"Not only you, Rocky. All of us," I said.

**T**HE kids were out in the left field seats again when the third and last game rolled around. All except Timmy. I watched Rocky carefully as he cavorted around the outfield during pre-game practice, and I noticed he was extremely quiet. There was a grim tightness pulling at his mouth and there was something in his eyes I'd never seen before.

Just before game-time, we trotted toward the dugout. Joan, in a box-seat, stopped us.

"Look at that," she said, pushing a newspaper at us.

Well, the whole story was there. Apparently Timmy's folks had tipped off the papers, and they'd built up quite a story about it. How Rocky had gone to visit Timmy in the hospital, and how he'd promised to hit a homer for the kid.

"I dropped in at the hospital on my way to the park," Joan said seriously. "The doctor told me to give you a message, Rocky."

Rocky's head came up from the paper with a jerk.

"Yeah? What?"

Joan brushed a wisp of hair off her forehead.

"Timmy's having a radio today. The doctor didn't dare refuse him, because he was afraid it might get Timmy down—set his recovery back. And the doctor told me to tell you, Rocky, that you'd better hit that homer today. Timmy takes his baseball very seriously, like lots of kids. If you let him down, and the Moguls lose, he's liable to have a relapse of some kind. At least he won't be in the right mood for recovery. You see what I mean, Rocky?"

That strange expression welled in Rocky's eyes again, and his lips went tight.

"I'll hit that homer for the kid," he

said gruffly. Then he walked stiffly into the dugout.

I stared after him a moment, not quite believing my ears.

"Is that guy getting sentimental—at last?" I asked.

Joan didn't reply. She just smiled.

The Moguls were primed for a win when they took the field, but that didn't matter much. So were the Rams. Both teams knew that this game was it. The pay-off game of a long, grinding season, the game that would decide the pennant.

It turned out to be a tough pitchers' battle. We had our ace on the mound, southpaw Eddie Wade. And the Rams were throwing the tricky Turk Forest at us, a tough guy to beat in the clutch.

Both teams were retired one-two-three in the first inning. In the second, the Rams threatened when they planted two ducks on the pond with two out. But Rocky killed their chances with a neat, one-handed grab out in left field that brought down the house.

You should have heard the kids in the left field stands scream!

Rocky led off in the last of the second. He had that glint in his eye as he took his wide stance at the plate. The kids out in left field started the refrain.

"We want a homer! We want a homer! We want a homer!"

Rocky gripped the bat, waved it at the enemy pitcher. And then a raucous voice came from the Rams' bench. It was Link, the Rams' bench jockey!

"Why'd you promise that homer to the kid, Rocky? There ain't no money in that!"

Rocky seemed to tense at the plate. Forest, working carefully, got the count of two-all, then dipsy-dooed one in that Rocky caught on the end of the bat. It went straight up the elevator shaft, and down into the Rams' catcher's big mitt.

The raucous Link boomed from the dugout.

"That's your homer for today, money player!"

The game wore on, with both pitchers baffling the opposition. When Rocky came up in the fourth again, the score was still 0-0. Billings, our center-fielder, had just

doubled off the screen in right and was camped on base waiting to be brought in. Rocky went after the first pitch grimly—and tagged it.

It rode on a sizzling line into left-center, far out toward the barriers. The Rams' midgardener floated over fast, and at the last instant leaped into the air near the screen. He hauled down the ball just before it dropped over the low screen into the seats!

Link's voice roared from the Rams' dugout.

"Whatsa matter, Rocky? You could always hit 'em when you were thinkin' of the dough! Why can't you hit 'em for that kid?"

Rocky threw a hostile look in Link's direction, then came back to the dugout with his lips tight set. He said nothing, and nobody said anything to him.

The Rocky Club kept cheering their hero on, giving him a big hand every time he came to bat or walked out to his position in left. When he came up to bat again in the seventh I gave him a word of encouragement.

"You've hit 'em before, Rocky!"

Well, he tried to hit it again, but it was no go. He caught a curve on the face of the warclub and lifted a towering fly into the left. At that, it was almost deep enough to drop in the stands. The left fielder took it standing against the screen.

In the top of the eighth the Rams got a couple of lucky breaks. With one out, Blake dropped a handle-hit into short left. Then White drove a grass-cutter toward second. Sweeney, our second-sacker, was all set for it. But it took a false hop over his head, and there were runners on first and third with one away.

It was a lousy break, but Wade bore down like the fighter he was. He got O'Doul on a pop-up, but Devlin rode the ball to the center field screen for a triple that scored two runs. So it was Rams 2, Moguls 0 when we came up in the eighth.

The eighth was non-productive. Our boys went out of there like sandlotters. And Wade set the Rams down in the top of the ninth the same way.

We were a mighty grim bunch of boys

when we went to bat in the last of the ninth. The pennant was at stake, and it was now or never!

I sent in Green to pinch-hit for Wade to open the inning. He lashed a wicked drive that went right into the hands of the Rams' shortstop. A groan went up from the stands at that. It began to look like it wasn't our day.

Bannister then dropped a blooper back of second that looked like a sure hit, but the Rams' second-sacker made a circus catch, and that made it two away.

The outlook was pretty dismal as Sanders walked up to the plate. Turk Forest got a full count on Sanders, then Sanders fouled off three good ones. The next pitch was outside and Sanders walked. It buoyed our hopes—but just a little.

Billings went up, lugging a couple bats, and hope sprang eternal. Rocky, grim-faced and with that glint still in his eye, knelt in the waiting batter's circle.

Billings, a dangerous man in the clutch, delivered. He deftly poked a grounder through the infield, and when the dust cleared he was resting on first and Sanders was on third. And Rocky was up!

Well, I never saw a ballplayer with the expression on his face that Rocky had just then. He looked worried and grim and determined, and even a little mean. There was something seething inside of him, ready to burst its bounds.

I cupped my hands and shouted, "Get that homer for Timmy! Get 't, Rocky!"

And the answer came from the Rams' dugout.

"You shot your bolt, money player! You're all through! Back to the bushes, you bum!"

Rocky stood up there, rigid, bat poised. He let the first pitch slip past for a called strike.

"Strike the busher out!" yelled Link, from the Rams' bench.

Forest, encouraged, came in with a change of pace and Rocky ignored it.

"Sterrike tuh!" howled the ump, and a roar of approval went up from the Rams' dugout.

Forest, cagey, wasted a couple then, trying to get Rocky to go after a bad ball, and suddenly the count was full and

Rocky was up there waiting for the pay-off pitch.

It came in, a sharp-breaking curve on the outside. Rocky swung. There was a crack of bat against ball, and then the white pellet was streaking into left field.

I saw the Rams' left gardener race back to the screen, then suddenly drop his hands helplessly. The ball, still rising, soared into the stands for a home run!

Moguls 3, Rams 2!

THE clubhouse was a madhouse of wild, milling players. A lot of them patted Rocky on the back. I waited a half hour before the boys quieted down, 'her. went over to Rocky's locker.

"A nice one, Rocky," I said. "A beaut!"

Rocky grinned at me. It was one of the few times I'd ever seen him grin, and it looked good on him.

"I hit it for Timmy," he said abruptly. "I really did."

I just nodded at his words.

"I think you did, Rocky," I said.

"Sure I did!" He sounded enthusiastic. I'd never heard him sound that way before, and it felt good on his ears. "I've—I've been all wrong, Steve. All wrong. I never got a thrill out of hitting a homer before, like I got out of that one. It was all money with me before, but this afternoon, for the first time, I had a different reason for winning. I had to help out that kid!"

"I'm glad to hear you say it, Rocky."

Rocky frowned slightly.

"The kid woke me up. When I went to see him at the hospital, he made me feel—well, kind of cheap. He kept saying, 'We gotta win.' Just like it meant a lot to him. It wasn't a matter of money with him. It didn't make any difference to him whether we won or lost—not really. Except that he got a thrill out of winning—something I'd never got a thrill out of. He even forgot his own bashed head, wanting the Moguls to win!"

He stopped, shook his head, went on rapidly.

"I thought a lot about it last night. I decided to forget money today and go out to win this game—for the kid. I did, and found out there was a thrill in winning,

just for the sake of winning. I'm going to play it that way from now on, Steve."

Well, it warmed my heart. I felt so grieved about it that, while Rocky was taking his shower, I trooped outside to find Joan. She was waiting at the door, the way I thought she would be.

I told her about Rocky's transformation.

"He's really changed, Joan. He's found out there's a thrill to winning ball games, aside from the dough he gets for it. He's a ballplayer now, instead of a cash register."

Joan smiled and brushed the unruly hair back from her forehead.

"I knew it would work," she said easily.

I gawked at her.

"Knew what would work?"

Joan grinned impishly.

"I wasn't blind to Rocky's fault, Pop, like you thought I was. I knew all about it, and it worried me. But I knew nobody would ever talk him into changing his ways, because it went too deep. I figured something drastic had to be done to impress him. So I organized the Rocky Club—"

"You organized it?"

"Sure. I was the guiding hand behind it, anyway. I got the kids together, formed the club, and even got Charlie Kierner to give them seats at the final series. I knew these kids loved baseball, and it was my plan to get Rocky into a spot where he'd have to make a speech to these youngsters. I thought they might soften him, quicker than we."

"But—"

"Naturally, I didn't anticipate Timmy getting hit by that foul drive. But when it did happen, I took advantage of it. I

gave all the dope to the papers on Rocky's visit to Timmy's hospital room, after you told me last night what had happened, so that they'd splurge it. And that report from the doctor about Timmy having a relapse if Rocky didn't hit a homer. That was all faked."

"Faked?"

Joan looked a little embarrassed.

"Yes. I had to give Rocky a different reason for hitting that homer, so that he'd see there was more to the game than money. So I told him Timmy's health depended on it. Actually, Timmy's in fine shape. The doctor says he'll be okay."

I stood staring at her in amazement. Of all the conniving ever practiced on a ballplayer, this was the most fantastic. I'd harped on it, bawled him out, threatened and even begged. Now Joan—this slip of a daughter of mine—had calmly fixed the whole thing up!

It was about the time I was wondering if maybe Joan wouldn't make a good manager for the club that Rocky came out and grabbed Joan's arm possessively. He had a nice grin on his face.

"We're the Champs, Steve!" he yelled.

"And we're going to take the Cards in that World Series, too!"

"I suppose you two are going to celebrate?" I grinned right back.

"Heck, no!" said Rocky. "We're going to the hospital to see Timmy. I've got to make a date with that boy, to address his club!"

They walked away, then, arm in arm. I watched them disappear down the ramp to the street.

Darned if they didn't make a nice couple after all!

## WHAM-ATOMI-COMEDY!

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# NO GLORY FOR A

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***Playing together, Marty Bowers and Ted Driscoll made one of the sweetest combinations in hoop history — facing each other as enemies would mean a bitter duel under the basket!***

---

**T**ED DRISCOLL slid into the key-hole, took the ball from Martin on the left sidelines, pivoted and shot. Even as the ball left his fingers, Ted knew it was good. He could feel it before the clean swish through the hoop reached his ears. He straightened, grinning.

The grin faded fast as Matt Cassei, the gray-haired coach, strode toward him.

"Make it faster," he bellowed. "And when you fake—do it like you meant it. That one wouldn't have fooled my grandmother! All right, take it again."

In the silence that followed Matt's bel- low, Ted heard Barry, the big forward, say, "Driscoll's too busy adding two points to his record to remember the play."

Red-faced, Ted walked back into the center circle. His jaw was clamped shut to keep the hot, useless words down. There was no point in blowing off at these guys. They were down on him and a hot temper wouldn't change their minds. He adjusted his white jersey and measured the blue-clad man opposite him, ready for the jump.

This, his first scrimmage since being recalled to the Ramblers from their west- ern farm team, wasn't turning out so hot, he reflected gloomily. He had known the moment he walked into the dressing room that the team was still down on him from last year. And the first crack made by Barry hadn't helped matters.

"Throw your chances for a scoring rec- ord out the window, boys," he had an- nounced to the room. "There's a ballhog loose again."

Ted had taken it because he knew Bar- ry expected to get a rise out of him. He

trotted onto the floor, determined to show them that the name "ballhog" didn't be- long to him. They had stuck him with it at the end of last season, and he was finding it tough to live down.

The first string lined up in white shirts. Ted looked them over, trying to find a friendly grin. There they were, the same men he had played with for three years of pro ball. Barry, Martin, squat and tough Engals. And a new face, Mike Keehan. It had been the same last year when they had been a neat, clever unit. Only instead of Keehan it was Marty Bowers. Ted wasn't used to playing yet without Marty. Since their first grade- school games they had been together. But at the end of last season Marty had gone to the league-leading Steelers on a trade, and Ted had dropped to the farm team.

He wondered how the great Marty was getting along without Ted Driscoll to feed him. He wondered what it would be like week after next when he met Marty on the floor. A little ruefully, he won- dered if he would still be around week after next. This was his last chance, he knew. And he wouldn't be having it if Borgan hadn't broken an ankle the week before, leaving the third-place Ramblers in a tight spot for an experienced center.

Matt blew the whistle and the ball jumped upward from his hand. Ted tensed and leaped. He outreached the blue center easily and sent the ball into Bar- ry's waiting hands. He broke for the right sidelines, screened out a Blue guard while Engalls cut over and took Barry's pass. Ted knew the play by heart. Al- most automatically he took two quick steps, caught a sharp throw from En-

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***THIS PAIR WOULD MAKE HOOP HISTORY ON THE HARD***

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# BALL-HOG

**FAST ACTION NOVELET**  
by **LOUIS TRIMBLE**



Ted dribbled straight,  
Marty leaped high and  
sent a one-handed push-  
shot for the basket!

**COURT, WHETHER AS TEAMMATES OR AS BITTER ENEMIES!**

gals, whipped the ball back to Barry, and raced for the keyhole. Barry dribbled forward, bounce-passed to Martin on the left sidelines and then raced for the basket. Martin's pass whipped like a streak to Ted, meeting him in the keyhole. He faked, sucking the Blue guard out of position, pivoted and shot cleanly. Once more he heard the ball swish through the net.

And once more Matt Cassel was roaring up to him. "Better, but not good enough. And what'll you do if you don't suck the guard on your fake?"

Ted said patiently, "I'll shoot it down to Barry under the basket. Like," he added flatly, "I used to feed it to Marty Bowers."

Someone snickered. Ted turned. It was Barry, his thinning red hair gleaming with sweat. He met Ted's steady gaze, a contemptuous grin on his mouth. Ted turned away. It was still no time to start a fight. Dissension had cost the Ramblers the title last year. The blame had fallen on him; he wouldn't let it happen again.

He couldn't, if he wanted to stay in bigtime basketball. He knew it better than anyone. And despite Jane Shaw's protests, he refused to marry her until he was sure of his spot at the top. No bush-league, one-night stand stuff for Jane, even if she swore she didn't mind.

Ted turned back to Matt. "How about that slide play under the basket, Matt? I'm a little green on it yet."

"That's the play," Barry said loudly, "where everyone feeds Driscoll."

Matt said, "Set it up." He seemed to be ignoring Barry.

Ted trotted back to the center circle. He held up two fingers and then crooked one. It was the old signal. His tip-off went to Keehan playing Marty Bowers' old forward spot. Keehan to Barry, Barry back to Ted, then a pass to Engals, and while Engals was dribbling down, giving the others time to get set, Ted drifted down the sidelines until he was ever with the basket. The Blue center was on him like a court plaster. Ted watched the progress of the ball. The play was flexible and when he judged the time ripe he would

whistle sharply, suck the guard out and then break for the basket. It called for neat timing and quick reaction. Ted hadn't used it much. The variation before had called on Ted to drop back after sucking the guard, take a pass and shoot it in to Marty Bowers, who had stationed himself under the basket.

Ted watched the play. Engals was open. He whistled shrilly, back-pedalled, and when the Blue center went with him, cut forward quickly, leaving his guard off balance and flat-footed. He whistled again and cut away from the basket. Engals, ready to pass hard and high, swivelled and threw across court. Ted took the pass, stopped flat, pivoted and lined a pass to the basket. Only Keehan wasn't there and the ball thudded against the back wall of the court. Matt's whistle blew wrathfully.

"You had your man suckered, Driscoll. Why didn't you cut for the basket?"

"Sorry," said Ted briefly.

"He wants to let someone else know how it feels to score," Barry said bitingly.

Once more, Matt Cassel ignored the remark. He said, "Shoot a few and go on in."

Ted shot three out of five free throws and trotted for the dressing room. The others trailed him in. He stripped and went into the shower. They were quiet tonight. There was none of their usual horseplay. Before, showering had always meant a water fight or roughhouse with someone pegging a bar of soap against an unsuspecting back. Tonight there was none of that. The silence was close to painful.

Ted shut off his shower and went back to the dressing room. The silence held until he was halfway out the door to the street. Then he heard a sharp hubbub of voices rising behind him.

"Swell," he said aloud. "Driscoll, the life of the party!" With him in there, the place had been like a morgue. Now listen to it!

**H**E went outside, turning his overcoat collar up against a sharp March wind blowing off the lake. Okay, if

they wanted it that way, they could have it that way. From now on, he'd stick to himself. On the court he was a cog in the team. But away from it, he would go his own path—the way they wanted him to.

He stopped at Jake's, the old hangout, for a cup of chocolate before going to his hotel room. He chose a back booth because he knew the others would come in, noisy and friendly, and he didn't want to feel them dry up when they spotted him. If they wanted it like this, they could have it. He'd play it alone.

**T**HE week end rolled around with Ted smoothing out in practice, and still alone. He kept strictly to himself, not even seeing Jane until the Saturday night after the pair of games with the second-place Shamrocks. That date was prearranged, but meanwhile he was sticking it by himself.

The Ramblers were still a pennant threat and the papers had played up Ted's return enough so that a capacity home crowd turned out. This pair of games with the Shamrocks at home, two with the Steelers here, and a final pair with the Shamrocks away wound up the season. Anything could happen in a close three-way race, and the fans weren't taking any chances on missing out.

Matt Cassel started his first-string unit. Ted signalled for the slide play under the basket. He out-jumped the Shamrock center easily, sending the tip-off to Engals. This time, when he sucked the Shamrock center out he cut under the basket. The pass was from Barry, the right height and fast. Ted tipped it in and the crowd roared. The Shamrocks passed out and tied the score quickly on two foul throws when Barry inadvertently hacked in guarding too closely.

Martin and Engals worked the ball down court; Ted signalled to set up the slide play again. They passed to him. He whipped the ball to Engals and then went lazily into the corner. Barry's pass was right and Ted dropped in his second bucket. The Shamrocks crossed their signals and the Ramblers took the ball out of bounds at mid-court. Ted signalled for a third slide play set-up. This time, when

he sucked his guard out, he broke into the court, took the pass and whipped it to Keehan. Keehan was in position but an alert Shamrock man had him tight. He bounce-passed to Ted, coming in fast. Ted took the ball at the keyhole, leaped, and sent a swisher into the basket. When the cheering had died down a loud voice from the crowd rang out:

"Let someone else score, Ballhog!"

Ted, red-faced, looked up to see Barry grinning at him. "They paid to see five guys play ball," Barry said. "They want their money's worth, I guess."

Ted drifted by Keehan. "Nice pass out," he said. Keehan's answer was a short grunt.

The Shamrocks worked the count to six all, went ahead on a foul shot, raced on until they were working with a seven-point lead. Ted made a pair of free throws, but the rest of the scoring from the floor he left up to the others. He saw to it that he called only plays that used himself as a feeder. When Matt jerked the first unit, he called Ted to his side.

"Same like last year," he said briefly.

"When I shoot I get it from them." Ted said. His voice was not complaining; he was stating an obvious fact. "When I don't, I get it from you."

"We're losing the ball game," Matt Cassel said simply.

The first string returned to the floor. Ted, despite his precautions, found himself open three times. He bucketed two out of three, but at the half the Ramblers were down, 23-28.

Matt Cassel lined them up in the dressing room. He walked quickly back and forth, turning suddenly. "All right," he bellowed, "we've had our fun." He stopped, his eyes on Barry. "What's your percentage for the night?"

"Three out of fifteen," Barry answered.

"Twenty per cent," Matt interpolated. "This is pro ball, Barry. Can you afford to eat on a twenty per cent shooting record?"

They all knew what he meant. In pro ball a man produced or he didn't play. Ted had nearly waited too long to learn that. With last season half over, Jane, working in the front office, had tipped

him off that the Ramblers, now that post-war competition was getting really tough, were going to crack down. She reminded him that he fed Marty Bowers instead of shooting himself. Jane had gone through school with Ted and Marty, and she had no trouble in pointing out, in detail, that Ted had fed Marty through their basketball careers.

"You've passed up a thousand good shots to feed Marty," she told him.

"That's my job—feeding," he answered.

"Your job is to shoot, too." Jane's rich blue eyes, clouded with worry, held him closely. "I know what I'm talking about, Ted. Feed Marty, but shoot yourself. The bosses want all-around men from now on. Unless you shoot, they've got only a four and a half man team."

Ted had shot. Because he believed what Jane had said, and because since high school he had known he could shoot as well as Marty Bowers. When he saw his chances he took them. And from a low average of three points a game, he rose to top man. For a while the others thought it was funny and they fed him instead of Marty.

And Marty couldn't take it. Too many years of glory, too many seasons as leading scorer were behind him. He began to ride Ted. Their friendship, never personal, grew into a feud. The Ramblers, leading the league, lost six in a row to cellar-division clubs. The Steelers crept up to them and ahead. The team began to stop laughing. Only Ted and Marty, in their anger, couldn't see it. Marty began trying impossible shots to keep from feeding Ted. In turn, Ted fed everyone but Marty Bowers. Too late he saw the results of his churlishness. He tried to pull back into the old groove. He even cornered Marty in the dressing room after the others had left. Without warning, Marty had flailed out a big fist, knocking him into the steel lockers. The janitor found him, still unconscious, an hour later.

**T**HE season ended with the Ramblers faded to fourth and the Steelers far ahead. Before contracts were ready, Ted

expected his dismissal. Marty asked for and got a trade with the Steelers. Keehan and a second-string guard were swapped for him. When Ted was told to report to the west-coast farm, he thought Jane had pulled the strings that saved him from an outright release.

He played well with the farm because it was the only way he knew how to play. When Borgan broke his ankle and Ted was recalled he wondered again if it had been Jane's doing. She denied it, but he could believe nothing else.

Now Matt Cassel was taking Barry apart and, at the same time, taking Ted Driscoll apart, too. Because it was going like last year.

"Driscoll, you've got five out of six. Get ten out of twelve this half and we can win the ball game."

Ted said, "If the shots come my way, I'll fire them."

Matt looked at the assembled men. "See they go his way. That's all."

Ted groaned. Maybe Matt thought he was helping, but it was anything but help. The others were silent, drawn away from him. For Matt to back him would only make things worse. He returned to the floor, determined to do as well as he could as one of a team. If the others wouldn't play ball with him, he could only do his best. To sulk as he had the first half only made himself a fool, not them.

Ted set the keyhole play up from the tip-off. His fake was good and fast and his shot clean. The Shamrocks were down to a three-point lead.

They made it four on a free throw. On the pass out Martin was fouled by too close guarding. He missed the foul shot and Ted, under the basket, batted the ball to Barry who sank it. One bucket behind now. The Shamrocks passed out of bounds. Ted signalled for the slide play, made his shot, and the game was tied up. From then on it was all Ramblers. There was no inspiration in their playing but, as a unit, they were easily superior to the Shamrocks. They won handily, 57 to 45.

The next night saw them take a quick eight-point lead, hold it to the half and

then break through to walk away, 77 to 59.

In the dressing room, Matt Cassel said, "You were lucky. You played a bad ball club that's had breaks all season. Next week you meet the Steelers. They split with the Jackrabbits this week-end. You guys are two games behind, with four to go. The pennant means a tournament. That means cash in the sock. You can hate Driscoll's guts—but he can play rings around any of you—so feed him! Feed and keep on feeding! Scrimmage Monday."

Ted showered and dressed amid a thick silence. Passive enmity from some had turned active. He was worse off than ever now. He knew enough of men's temperaments to be sure Barry and Engals and Martin wouldn't take kindly to Matt's tongue lashing. He walked out to meet Jane. After he shut the dressing room door he heard voices rising, but in anger rather than cheerful banter to-night.

Jane's smile was warm as he came up to her. She was alone in the vestibule of the big gym, and he touched a blond curl that peeked out from under her small hat. "Like the game?"

"You were lucky," she said, repeating Matt Cassel's words.

Ted took her arm wordlessly, and they went into the cold, still night. In her small coupe they drove to a steak house, settling down in a back booth away from the lights and noise of the front.

After the waitress had gone with their order Ted looked soberly across the table. "I'm still poison around there."

Jane nodded. "I heard someone behind me tonight say, 'I wonder what he'll do when he runs into Marty Bowers.' I'm wondering, too, Ted."

"I'll play ball," he said bluntly. "I made a fool of myself last year. I think I've grown up since then. Marty'll be just another basketball player as far as I'm concerned."

"He'll be laying for you." There was a frown wrinkling her forehead. Her blue eyes were worried as they met his gaze squarely. "Ted, maybe I shouldn't tell you this, but . . ."

"Let's have it," he said. "If it concerns me—us, I have a right to know."

"There are ugly rumors," she answered. "Rumors to the effect that if you stay on—next year, that is—the rest of the team will ask to be traded."

"Or they'll quit," Ted finished for her. "In other words, the old force play." He shook his head. "They really hate my guts!"

Jane clenched a hand over his arm. "It isn't that, Ted. It's just that they—oh, they're such fools. Or Barry is. He's the one behind it all. I know it."

"They resent me," Ted admitted. "I can see why. After all my foolishness and Marty's cost us a lot of money last year. And since Marty isn't around they take it all out on me. That's natural."

"Excusing them doesn't help matters," Jane said. "Isn't there some way you could—could . . . ?"

"Make them love me?" Ted grinned sardonically. "If I shoot and score they ride me. If I don't, Matt and the front office ride me." He shrugged his shoulders. "If I play good ball and get a contract for next year the team quits. Which is the same as saying I won't be given a contract. If I don't play good ball, then they have no use for me. That's what the tip you got amounts to."

She nodded soberly. "If you weren't so stubborn, Ted, you could quit and do something else and we could get married."

"And I'd spend the rest of my life telling myself I quit because I couldn't handle the situation. No thanks, honey."

The waitress came, interrupting them, and Jane only said, "Whatever happens, I hope you make Marty Bowers look like a bush leaguer."

"I owe him a paste in the jaw," Ted said, and reached for his knife.

**P**RACTICE the following week was light. On Monday Matt told them they knew the plays well enough. "Beating the Steelers with them is something else again," he said. "They're no scrubs like the Shamrocks. Take it easy and save your energy for the week-end." He looked grimly down the row of men. "And

save your fights for the Steelers." His eyes flicked from Barry to Ted before he walked away.

Ted knew what the ensuing silence meant. They were hating him because they figured Matt Cassel was with Ted and against them. Or Barry was, at least. And Barry seemed to do the thinking for them all lately.

Ted went into the first Steeler game knowing only one sure thing: good or bad, he was through with the Ramblers. The rumor Jane had repeated to him had turned into an ugly certainty. The front office had called him in before the game and put it up to him bluntly. They were taking a chance, telling "the key man news like that before a crucial series. Ted admired them for it, for their fairness to him. He walked onto the floor ready to give his best basketball. Knowing he was through gave him no excuse to play the quitter.

He found himself facing Marty Bowers in the center circle. Marty, his dark hair characteristically over one eye, grinned at him. He had grinned that way before his fist had knocked Ted into the lockers a year ago. He always grinned that way when he felt he had the upper hand.

"I'll wipe that off," Ted said in a low voice.

"How were the bushes out West?" Marty jeered at him.

Ted said, "You never could make center when I was around, Marty."

The referee came up with the ball and Marty contented himself with a poisonous glare. Ted was happy to see his old teammate opposite him. It meant that, except on the switches, they would be guarding each other. Marty couldn't dodge him now.

Marty hipped him cleverly as they went up for the ball. Ted, knowing the trick, allowed for it, and made the tip-off to Engals. With Marty dogging him, he cut to set up the slide play. Engals fired to Keehan, Keehan back to Ted, who shot the ball to Barry before Marty could cover him.

He slid for the corner, watching the ball with trained eyes. At the right moment, he whistled shrilly and began to

back pedal. But Marty Bowers knew the play, and he knew how to guard. He clung grimly. Ted tried to sidestep. Marty appeared to go the other way and then, as Ted cut forward, eased back. Ted's charge carried him to the floor. The whistle shrilled.

Laughing, Marty walked down for his free shot. It went in effortlessly and Engals took the ball out under the basket. Ted signalled for the slide play again. This time, when Marty guarded him back, he faked the same maneuver. Only instead of charging Marty, he wheeled and cut around him. Marty's hip sent him off balance but two dancing steps set him right and he was under the basket. The Steeler forward came down fast but Barry's pass was plenty high and Ted's jump was enough to tip the ball over and in for two points. The crowd, mostly Rambler fans, roared their appreciation.

With the ball in their possession, the Steelers showed why they were league leaders. They worked the ball down smoothly, Marty making a beautiful shot from the corner. On the Ramblers' next turn down the court, a bad pass got away from Keehan and the Steelers took over out of bounds. Marty set up a play that took him under Ted's guard and in for a sweet hook shot, making it five to two.

Engals and Martin worked the ball to mid-court for the Ramblers, where Barry took over. He shot a fast pass to Ted sliding toward the keyhole. Ted back-passed to Keehan. He relayed to Barry who dribbled four steps and fired one. It bounced high. Ted, under the basket with Marty Bowers, climbed for it. Marty, screened by the Rambler guards and one of his own men, put his knee in Ted's ribs as they brought the ball down together.

"Enough of that," Ted said gratingly. The jab hadn't hurt him, but he knew what would happen if rough basketball got started. Both teams were keyed high tonight. One win meant the title for the Steelers. Two wins for the Ramblers left them only the impotent Shamrocks. The title and tournament were at stake here tonight and tomorrow.

On the held ball, Marty got enough of

the jump for control. The terrific fast break of the Steelers left the Ramblers flatfooted, and the score went to seven-two.

Almost angrily, Martin fired the ball to Ted after it was worked up the floor. He had signalled for the keyhole play and now he shot it to Barry and cut in fast. He hit the keyhole at the same time as the ball. Marty was in front of him, grinning. He faked and came about for his pivot. Marty Bowers' hand reached out to block the ball. Ted spun back, dribbled around him and leaped high, shooting. He was off balance and his powerful fingers sent the ball out of the court. The fans booed.

The Steelers came out fast. Marty faked Ted into fouling him as he attempted a shot. He made his free shots easily. Now seven points behind, the Ramblers played too tightly, and the Steelers intercepted a pass. The left forward put one in past Barry. Going down, the Ramblers lost the ball off the backboard and once more the fast break beat them. Ted asked for time out.

"Eleven points behind," he said. He wiped his face on a towel.

"Bowers is making a monkey out of you," Barry said bluntly.

Ted ignored him. He looked at the others. "Relax. We've got lots of time."

"Feed Driscoll," Barry advised. "Then he'll hand the ball to Bowers."

Keehan, Ted thought, looked a little disgustedly at Barry.

When they got the ball, the Steelers scored again with the same ease as before. The Ramblers fought back with Engals sinking one from twenty feet out. But with the Steelers scoring every time they got their hands on the ball, the lead loomed larger and larger. Each Rambler mistake cost them an additional two points. Two foul shots, one by Barry and one by Ted, cut the lead to eleven. It shot back to thirteen and up to fifteen with less than five minutes to go in the half.

The anger of futility began to crawl inside Ted. He tried to fight it, knowing it only made matters worse, keyed them all too high. But with Barry riding him from one side and Marty's insolent grin

facing him, control was hard to keep. He knew that Marty was outguarding him. He made a good percentage of his shots when he could get them away. Only Marty saw to it that he had few chances.

Marty, on the other hand, was eluding him fairly easily.

With three minutes to go, Ted, Marty, Barry and a pair of Steeler forwards all went into the air under the backboard. A quick glimpse showed Ted that Barry had the ball and he pulled in. Coming down, he felt Marty's hip. He went off balance, rocketing into a Steeler forward. He was thrown back and lit half sprawling. He saw the foot coming at him from the tangle of arms and legs. He tried to pull in but he wasn't fast enough. Marty Bowers' shoe ground against his ankle. The pain shot up like hot knives. He saw Barry dribbling down court and he pushed himself to his feet. One step and his leg gave way. The whistle shrilled and Ted limped off.

Ted sank onto the bench, his teeth clenched. Matt was probing his ankle.

"No sprain," Ted said "It's like a crack in the shin. I'll get over it."

Mat signalled. "Take him to the dressing room and tape that."

When the men trooped in for the half, Ted was lying on the rubdown table, his leg stretched out. He looked up. "How much?"

"Thirty-eight to twenty," Engals said succinctly.

Barry came forward. "That's a good way to get clear of Bowers, all right."

Ted swung off the table. Taped, his ankle held him. As he had guessed, the pain was clearing. He took two steps toward Barry. Matt Cassel came forward quickly. Ted turned to him. "How about giving me the dressing room between halves, Matt?"

He saw the protest ready on Matt Cassel's lips and he added, "We won't win anyway—like this."

Matt turned slowly and walked from the room. Ted let out a deep breath and faced Barry again. The men were grouped around, waiting.

"Explain that crack," Ted said.

Barry brushed his hand over his thin-

ning hair. "Maybe you got some dough on this game, Driscoll. Bowers didn't have much trouble with you."

Ted took another step forward. His fist lashed out. Barry flashed up a guard. Ted slapped it aside and drove in. Barry was heavier but his reach was far too short. Ted rocked him with two blows to the mouth, then cut a hard one to his chin. Barry bounced against the wall and slid down.

"That was a lousy thing to say," Engals said disgustedly.

"I'll take your apology, Barry," Ted said calmly. Somehow, the snock of hitting Barry had ebbed his own tension. He walked to the table and leaned on it.

"Okay," he said. Barry was standing now, walking to the washroom. Ted looked at the men, grimly silent. "They've got eighteen points. Most of it's my fault. I let Bowers sucker me. Maybe because I'm still afraid of him—or was. I'm not now. But don't forget—he can't shoot if they don't feed him. You guys see that he doesn't get the ball all the time. I'll take care of the rest of it."

Barry came back and stood with the others. Ted looked directly at him. "You've been riding me ever since I came back. Last year I was tabbed as a ballhog. Okay, maybe I earned the name. This year I've been trying to play my share of the ball game and no more. No one man can make a ball team, but one man can break it.

"You guys are sore because Marty and I cost us the tournament last season. Right, Barry?"

"Right." Barry's voice was clipped.

"Okay, so you've been fighting me about it. But there's Marty out there. If I caused half the trouble, he caused the other half. Why don't we all fight him for a change?"

Ted could feel them relaxing as he talked. He knew he wasn't being eloquent, but he was saying what was inside him. He was talking it out now instead of harboring it and letting it rankle.

The manager stuck his head inside the door. "Three minutes."

Ted nodded and looked around. "If we can stop Bowers we can beat these apes.

If we beat them, we've got the tournament sewed up. You can do what you like about next year. It's this season's bonus I'm after." He grinned, a little wryly. "I'll be needing it."

Someone laughed. It was like an electric charge. They broke for the door. Barry hesitated a minute and then walked after them. Ted followed slowly, testing his ankle.

Matt Cassel was waiting by the bench. He looked silently at Ted and then at the men on the floor. They were firing practice shots with a new snap. Ted said, "My ankle's okay."

"How'd Barry cut his lip?"

"Biting his fingernails too short," Ted said, and jogged onto the floor.

This time Marty's hiping on the tip-off cost the Steelers a point. Ted's free throw went in easily. The Steelers took the ball under their basket and went to work to increase their seventeen-point lead. But the Ramblers were guarding too tightly. Martin and Engals checked the length of the floor, forcing a pass from mid-backcourt. Barry's quick interception and hissing pass to Ted, going high to shoot, was good for two. Rushing and close checking cost the Ramblers a point on a foul, but once they had the ball they burned the floor.

THE crowd, glum at the half, began to howl as Rambler points slowly edged over Steeler buckets. The lead dropped to fifteen, to thirteen, to twelve. There it hung while everyone watched the grim battle between Driscoll and Bowers. The sports writers, sensing the drama, had played the game up in the papers. There wasn't a fan in the auditorium who didn't know why the two men guarded so tightly, shot so grimly, fought so hard to keep each other out of position.

Slowly Ted wore Marty down. His ankle, kicked in a dive for the ball, began to throb a little. He fought it as he fought Marty. Silently, but without the tension that had worked on him in the first half. Marty's guarding began to falter under Ted's quick feints. Jerked for a rest, he watched the lead fade to seven points. Back in again, he found Ted

still his silent, dogging shadow. With three minutes to go the Steeler lead was down to three points.

A Steeler shot put it up to five. Ted signalled for the slide play. This time, in the corner, he fainted the tiring Bowers aside easily. His leg hurt up into the thigh, as he bore down on it going around. But his leap for Barry's pass was sure and the ball swished through the loop.

"Get that ball!" he panted, running down the floor. Martin and Engals took him at his word and checked too closely for the Steelers to get a pass over the center line. It was the Ramblers' ball out. Ted signalled the slide play again, and again he went around Marty Bowers. Marty followed frantically, but Ted's superior height made his jump for Barry's pass and the tip-in simple.

Only Ted knew how tired he was. Once more the Steelers were working down. Their fast break picked up speed. The forward rifled a pass to Marty, who wheeled and sent it back and then cut for the corner. Ted was on his heels.

The pass whipped back to Marty. He spun, leaped, and his shot hit Ted's wildly reaching hand. The ball thudded hollowly as it went to the floor. Barry came up with it and fired across to Keehan.

Ted whistled shrilly and raced for the corner. Warily Marty Bowers dogged him. Ted eased up and watched the play. He couldn't take time to glance at the clock but he knew there was little left. He faked around Marty but instead of cutting in for Barry's pass, he cut out. It came to him by the keyhole. He fired in to Keehan. Keehan shot. The ball hit the rim, rolled around and out. The crowd groaned in chorus. But Barry was in, scrambling for it. He came up with the ball and shot it out to Martin. Martin to Engals to Keehan. Ted yelled and dove for the keyhole.

He took Keehan's hot pass, faked to his left, and went up for a pivot shot. Marty Bowers was there, his arms outstretched in a last weary effort. Ted saw Barry cutting down behind Marty and he pulled in and sent a bounce pass between Marty's spread legs.

Barry took the ball on the run. He

dribbled twice before he went up. The shot arced cleanly. The fans howled as the scoreboard blinked up 79-78 for the Ramblers.

"Get that ball!" Ted ordered again.

There was one minute, he noticed. Then the ball was in play and the Steelers were fast breaking with their last ounces of energy. Keehan went high to intercept a pass and had it rifled to Ted's hands before his feet hit the floor. Ted dribbled down the sidelines, slid between two Steeler men and directly toward Marty Bowers, who had cut back between him and the basket. He looked for a pass, saw no one, and kept on going.

Some one yelled, "Shoot!"

Ted dribbled straight toward Marty, then put on the brakes, leaped high and sent a one-hand push shot for the basket. The gun barked as the ball dropped to the floor. Ted felt someone beating him on the back. He looked down at Keehan.

"Easy," he said. "We didn't even need that last one."

In the shower room, there was silence. But it was the silence of weariness and a natural embarrassment. Ted, as before, dressed quickly and alone, and strode out. In the vestibule he found Jane.

"I know it isn't our night but I wanted to find out . . ." she began.

Behind Ted, someone said, "How about . . . ? Oh, sorry, Driscoll. Didn't mean to interrupt."

Ted turned. It was Barry. "Shoot."

"I was going to say how about coming down to Jake's for a cup of chocolate, but . . ." Barry paused uncertainly.

Jane smiled. "I'll see you tomorrow night, Ted."

He watched the door shut behind her and turned to Barry.

Barry grinned self-consciously. "We've got 'em licked!"

Ted could feel it too. The Steelers had played themselves out. Tomorrow they would be the ones keyed too high. Tonight's game had been the deciding factor.

"And," Barry was saying, "that Keehan's getting to be quite a ballplayer. We ought to be a real team next year, Driscoll. A real smooth five."

# FULLBACK FRANKENSTEIN

by **JAMES BLISH** Author of "Puck Poison," etc.

**W**HEN the Swallows hit the field for the last quarter they still held their precarious 6-0 lead, but fullback-pilot Ralph Payne was not exactly pleased about it. The team didn't look very happy, either; one or two of the linemen were making an unsuccessful attempt to talk it up, but everyone else just looked angry or glum.

Payne ran his fingers through his hair worriedly and clapped his helmet on. The Shields were a tough outfit, even if they had lost Sorenson last year, and there was plenty to worry about. The Swallows were already nudging the bottom of the Mountain League, and it would take only a few more losses to put Ralph Payne out on his ear.

He danced in place. "At my age," he told himself, "and with a rear-ending team on my record . . ."

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*Was this melancholy marvel, this iron man who blasted out touchdowns like a football machine, playing without hope, or hate, or fear?*

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The first whistle blew, and the teams fanned out onto the gridiron. A ref trotted out and put the ball on the Shields' 45 where the last down the previous quarter had left it. Henry "Freeze" Fenderson, fullback for the Swallows, jogged past Payne, and the pilot watched him go quizzically.

It was the new man's first game with the team, and so far he was the only member who didn't look either grim or angry. His face was in perfect repose; when he had first arrived Payne hadn't believed the legends and had watched him carefully for some trace of suppressed emotion, but there actually was none to find. Small wonder that the sportswriter had dubbed him "Freeze" Fenderson when he'd turned up with the pennant-copping Cats.

"Nice work, Fenderson," Payne called after him suddenly. The fullback turned and nodded thanks, then looked away again, flexing his knee-muscles. Somehow such statue-like calmness was eerie amid the yells and sweating of a football gridiron. Didn't Fenderson know that the Swallows were his last chance, just as they were Payne's?

The second whistle blew and the teams dropped tensely into formation. It was the Shields' ball, and they looked as if they wanted those six points back and meant to get them in a hurry. The backfield shifted—

The ball snapped, fast and high, and the Shield quarterback snaffled it and faded back. A pass? A little early, but it could be. The Swallows hit the line, broke through at right tackle. Payne danced and stiff-armed his way through the tangle, but the enemy's blocking was good. The man was abruptly ducked over the ball and running.

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**WHO WAS HE . . . A FIGHTING FULLBACK . . . OR A**

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As the fullback went down under the avalanche of men, Jones, evidently thinking he was covered by the tangle, kicked him viciously in the side, But Freeze's face did not even twitch!

**GREAT NOVELET  
OF THE GRIDIRON!**



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**MECHANICAL MONSTER WITH A PIGSKIN FOR A HEART?**

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Payne bounced a Shield off his palm and drove after the ball-carrier. His leg-muscles strained against the fabric of his uniform, and the cold air was sucked into his lungs in great gulps. The man was fast, no doubt about that. With a last burst of energy he threw himself forward.

The shock of striking the man's knees was a complete surprise; he hadn't expected to make it. Judging by his expression, the Shield was surprised, too. Surprised and none too pleased—what with the fade-back, he'd only picked up three yards on the play.

Payne snapped into position feeling a little better. "Hold 'em," he panted. "We've got it sewed up. Watch for passes."

In front of him, Gene Morrisey, the right half back, muttered and brushed one stained knee disgustedly. He was taking Freeze's hiring badly, so was the whole team. Payne had been counting on Freeze's obvious commercialism to put a little fight into the rest of them, but so far it just seemed to be making a bad situation worse.

The signals sounded and the Shields plowed in determinedly. There was some sort of hanky-panky with the ball; Payne couldn't see what it was for the pile-up, but before it was ironed out Freeze was arrowing around left end. The crowd screamed delightedly.

The Shield quarterback twisted, but Freeze stuck to him like glue. Payne charged to recover in case of fumble, but he might as well have stood where he was. Freeze nailed the man down solidly and cleanly for a yard loss. Payne shook his head and grinned with one corner of his mouth. Freeze was a phenomenon, no doubt about it.

He was more than a phenomenon; he was a mystery. On his first game with the Cats he had scored twice—once on a forty-yard breakaway solo—and on the defensive had been a one-man fortress. Then he'd walked off the field looking exactly as bored as he'd looked when he walked onto it—no more, or less. Nothing bothered him. Nothing even seemed to interest him very much.

He was an amazing punter, as well as an elusive broken-field runner, and while his passes weren't spectacular on distance, they made up for it in accuracy even in the tightest corners. He played what the newspapermen liked to call a scientific game, meaning that he rarely made mistakes and didn't look upset when he did make one. But he was bad for morale. The general feeling was, *Hell, sure we're professionals — but a guy ought to take some pleasure in his job!*

Fenderson apparently didn't. It was a puzzle why he stayed in the game at all, for his luck had been very bad. He was worth money in five figures to any coach as a backfield man; but his attitude was so hard on the elevens who'd hired him that he'd slid gently down from the Cats all the way to the Swallows, season by season, going for less money each time.

He was a top-rank man who could hold a job only on desperate small-time teams—and that didn't seem to bother him, either. The question was—could the swallows use Freeze's inarguable talents without suffering from his drawbacks, as better teams had suffered? There had already been a few locker-room incidents—

The Shield quarterback chanted, the lines strained forward. Then the enemy was thundering forward on a line drive, straight through Pat Masterson, the Swallows' right guard and weakest link in the line. Payne fought to get by the tangle to the ball and got a snootful of fingers for his efforts.

Freeze closed in again, but somehow Ben Jonas, his own right halfback, got crossed over in front of him. The Shield fullback snake-hipped around the struggle and hit open turf. He made five yards before Morrisey hit him.

**W**ITH three to go for a first, the Shield eleven went into kick formation. Payne watched them narrowly. This would almost surely be a phony—the Shields had plenty of drive to gain three, and the ball was right in the middle of the field.

"Watch this one for a fake," he said softly.

"Check," Freeze said. Nobody else said

anything. The Shield center fired, and the quarterback dropped his arms and took off for the sidelines to the left. The left halfback crossed him, took the ball just before it touched turf, and lateraled to the quarterback.

It was a beautiful bit of razzle-dazzle, and it left most of the Swallows running at random in more wrong directions than Payne had ever guessed existed. Even the unshakable Fenderson was baffled for a moment, and there was a determined quartet of blockers between Payne and the ball. Well, at least Jonas was covering that side—

But he wasn't. Payne looked frantically around for him and discovered him back on the thirty, coming forward belatedly. Despite Payne's warning, he'd gone back for a punt!

The Shield runner picked up an easy ten yards before Payne, Fenderson and Alec King, the Swallows' right tackle, closed in on him. He stopped in plenty of time and lateraled over Ben Jonas. Morrissey, swooping down the opposite side, dived at the receiver, but it was hopeless.

A second later the ref's green-striped arms were raised skyward and the whistle screamed mockingly, 6-6.

Payne closed in on Jonas as the teams re-formed. "Next time," he said, "follow orders. You cost us that goal all by yourself."

"A thousand pardons," Jonas purred. "I thought our frozen-faced friend had the game all sewed up—he seems to think so, anyhow."

Payne glared and said sharply, "This is one buck you can't pass, Jonas. Next time this happens—"

Jonas shrugged and took his place. The Shields swung into action exultantly. They'd learned their lesson on Freeze, too; they mobbed him the second the ball was snapped. A toe connected solidly with pigskin and Payne jumped with every ounce of strength he had, but the kick was good. The Shields were a point ahead, 7-6.

The deck of struggling men on the scrimmage line unstacked itself slowly and Fenderson slid off the bottom of it.

He had a nasty cut over one eye, but he looked as unconcerned as ever. Payne strode over to him.

"All right, Fenderson?"

"Think so, coach." Fenderson's voice was deep and quite expressive—just one more jarring aspect of his character. "Twisted my leg a little, but I think it'll still operate."

"Good. We've only got five minutes to take this ball game. Can you stick it?"

"Easy."

Payne tipped his helmet back and scratched his head as the man limped off. "What," he asked aloud, "can you do with a guy like that?"

What did it matter now? Hiring Fenderson had been the last wild shot before the end, anyhow—nothing could knit this demoralized team together after the lousy season they'd put in.

The kickoff was a beauty—not very high, but travelling in a flat arc with plenty of oomph behind it. Rosy Keller, the left tackle, managed to pull it down on the twenty-seven, but there was no hope there. The chunky redhead was a shrewd linesman and could pass impossible distances, but on running the ball he was too short-legged very often.

For a moment, nevertheless, Payne was hopeful. Evidently the Shields hadn't expected Rosy to be a jumper, for they'd followed up the kick with a drive on the corner of the field. The tackle swung to pass around the main rush, his cleats chewing at the turf. The Swallows followed, Freeze and Masterson and Karl Mechlin passing him to make a battering ram for him up ahead.

But it wasn't good enough. Rosy had no sense of tactics. When he saw a hole, he made straight for it. The four Shields who had played back on the kick-off divided, sucked him away from his defense, and nailed him two feet on the wrong side of the fifty.

"Nice work, Rosy," he said in the huddle. "And good blocking. Let's hit 'em again. The long fifty-two—Rosy to pass and Freeze to take the center. Mechlin and McWhorter to open out the backfield, just in case."

He pounded the two nearest sets of

shoulder-pads and broke it. Freeze took Payne's spot; Payne called from the full-back position. At the signal Rosy bunted the opposition away like an empty barrel, while Boyd went around end. Freeze held the ball until the last split second and then fired it underhand through the hole.

It was a lightning-quick motion and evidently the Shields scarcely noticed it. Rosy had plenty of time to snaffle the pigskin and launch it—

Boyd almost made it. It went just a little too far over his head for him to pluck it down. He fell on it on the first bounce, however, and the crowd hollered.

**T**HE clock-hands were creeping toward deadline. First down on the twenty-five, and a minute and a half to go. Suddenly the Swallows seemed to stir and awaken; the huddle was tense.

"A line-buck over Alec. They won't expect it and that left tackle of theirs hasn't had a cleat in his race all lay."

Payne took the ball at his belt and dove for the line, without stopping to see whether Alec King had moved over. Just before he struck, a big figure shot under his nose and went through the hole; he swerved and followed the straining back. Fenderson, of course.

Somebody crashed against his hips and he went down, cradling the pigskin desperately. That must have been good for four yards at least—

It was good for five. Also, it had taken forty seconds. Payne had just gotten his hands on the ball again when the whistle trilled mournfully, and the Shields had the game, by one lousy point.

It looked like curtains for Ralph Payne.

Karen was waiting for him when he came in the door. "How did it go?" she said, taking his coat.

"Bad, Sis. We lost by one point, believe it or not. Toward the end, they bucked up a little, but most of the time they were too busy fighting Fenderson to pay much attention to the ball game. I don't guess I'll have this job much 'onger."

Karen shrugged, her blond page-boy bob tossing with the motion. "I'm not surprised," she said. "You've been pretty

cold-blooded about Hank, Ralph; it's been pretty hard on him, too."

"Hank?"

"Oh, all right, Freeze then. I hate that tag. Suppose he doesn't like to show every yokel in the stands what he's thinking? He plays good ball, doesn't he?"

"Sure he does," Payne said slowly. "I didn't say he didn't. He's an ace, and everybody knows it. But I don't think he'll do us much good. He's killed better teams than the Swallows, for all his skill."

"Then why did you hire him?" she demanded.

"I've told you before. The Swallows were falling apart. They'd been had so many times they were sure they'd never win again. No spirit. I thought maybe Fenderson would make them mad enough to start fighting again—"

He eyed her speculatively. "Why so concerned about Fenderson all of a sudden?" he asked. "You've been around pro football players all your life. I don't see why you should be upset over the way I'm using one more new man"

Karen turned her back abruptly and walked over to the window. "He's nothing to me," she said stiffly. "I just hate to see a man being hit when he's down. I've talked to him, he has feelings, Ralph, even if he doesn't want to let the world in on them."

"Maybe I've been hard on him," he repeated. "I don't mean to pick on him, Karen; the guy's good, and I like him. But I've got my job to consider, and it's the only job I do well, and the only job I like. If the owners fire me, I'll be in sad shape. I can't consider Fenderson's feelings, I couldn't consider them even if he told everybody in the Mountain League how he felt. What the hell, Sis— who is Fenderson, anyhow? Does anybody know? It's a cinch the Cats don't, and Marty Matson isn't the kind of coach that hires a man cold. Nobody knows where Fenderson came from, or why he won't let anybody know what he's thinking, or where he learned to play the kind of football he does, or—"

He stopped for breath. Karen kept her back turned, looking out over the twin-

kling city. "I'm not much worried," she said, "about Fenderson's feelings. I'm worried about yours. Since I was old enough to count to five, Ralph, I counted on you as the one decent person in the world. Up to now you were the only person in the world that I could count on to give any guy the breaks if he'd earned them. And now . . ."

Her shoulders flexed gently under her grey jacket, and Payne realized belatedly that she was crying. "I'm sorry," he said. "I'm sorry, Karen, I was only trying to keep my job."

"Your job! You can always get another job! You can—"

"Karen!"

After a moment, she turned and walked away from him to the door. He watched her go, helplessly, his whole body tied into knots, waiting for her to say something. The door closed behind her.

At that moment, Ralph Payne hated Henry E. "Freeze" Fenderson almost as much as he hated himself.

**I**T got worse. Being second from the bottom did not please the Swallows' owners any more than it had at the beginning, and the team stubbornly refused to climb any higher. Nothing seemed to work. The men did as they were told, but without hope or spirit, and lost games to both the Tiglons and to Joe Szigo's massive Olympians. A win over the Lions held them where they were, but it was rather like hitting a cripple—the Lions had just lost LeFevre, their slave-driving coach, to the Wolves, and had played as if they'd forgotten which end of the football was the caddy.

Payne sweated, and was angry to discover himself worrying as much about Fenderson as about Ralph Payne. The big blond fullback played for the team—he seemed to be totally indifferent to his own interests. The team, except for Rosy, played against Fenderson. They passed over his head; they made a point of getting in his way on blocking; they froze on him when he needed backing or a man to take a lateral.

Jonas in particular made a nuisance of himself. He always had. He had been in-

terested in Karen, and there had been a time when he had seemed to be getting somewhere with her. Ralph had watched it, as puzzled as he was disturbed. What was there about beady eyes, too-pale skin, and bad manners that seemed to mow women down in droves?

After a particularly nasty sequence which had wound up with Jonas tripping Fenderson just short of a goal-stripe tackle, Payne reamed out the whole sullen crowd of them, and finally yanked Jonas as an object lesson; but it did no good. They rather disliked Jonas, but they understood him. Nobody understood Freeze Fenderson, least of all Payne.

Stubbornly, Payne refused to yank Fenderson, the new man was good—wasn't that enough? It was tough on him, but everybody had it tough these days, and Freeze never complained. He came off the field after the battle with the Olympians with a bad arm and a bloody left cheek, but he didn't even seem to care.

And Payne worried, and kicked himself for it. A man with a terrific will could hide his hurts—it was easy enough to see *now* Freeze managed to look relaxed and indifferent even when he was hurt. But, for God's sake, *why*? What was the point? The man was evidently a consummate actor—it would take enough pride to equip six normal men to go through an act like this—but for what?

Fenderson offered no answers, and made no attempt to get along with any of the rest of the team. When Murray or Pat talked it up, he turned upon them a cold, unfathomable stare which made them feel like fools; sometimes he didn't even seem to hear them.

And as for Karen—Karen was a Payne, like Ralph, and like their father. There would have been no point in firing Fenderson on her account. It would only have cinched the matter. The Paynes were stubborn; they bluffed things out. There was a bad session after the Lions game, the only one the Swallows had taken during the season so far—beginning, first of all, with Ben Jonas, and ending with the owners, who had suddenly realized that their team was all

set to be forced out of the League entirely unless it took another game.

In between the two Karen stormed into Payne's office and gave him the kind of hell only a sister can administer. "Hank's a swell guy," she said, nearly crying. "You're colder in the blood than he is to be using him in this stupid fashion—and it isn't even working!"

"Sure it's working. We took the game today, in case you didn't notice. There's some spirit in the team now—not enough, but some. Don't you realize that I'm the only friend Fenderson has in football, Sis? Who else would hire him if I got canned?"

"That's rank hypocrisy. You're just feathering your own nest."

Payne clutched at his temples and made a tremendous effort to calm himself. "Look, Karen," he said carefully. "I've made no secret of the fact that I'm trying to keep my job. I'm doing nothing to Fenderson. He's playing just as he always did; if he's having a rough time of it, it's his own fault."

"You could at least treat him like a human being!"

"He doesn't want to be treated like a human being—he's doing his level best to look like Superman. Doesn't it occur to you that a guy who has to look calm, cool and collected all the time, no matter what kind of a jam he's in, has something seriously wrong in the head?"

"I know what you're getting at," Karen said with dangerous quietness. "I know you've been trying to find out something about his family and his background. You think you might be able to scare me if you can find some insanity in his heredity. Well, you can't."

"No," he admitted. "What little I've been able to find out is perfectly commonplace, I'll grant you that. Yet you've told me he even keeps up that front on dates!"

"It's become a habit, that's all."

"I don't get it," he said. "To hear the fuss you're making over him, you'd think you were thinking about marrying the guy."

"Maybe I am," she said. The door slammed behind her.

FOR a long time Payne just sat, his head in his hands deep in thought.

After a while he called Fenderson in.

"Hi. Sit down. I'd like to talk to you."

"Sure," Fenderson's curiously musical voice said. "Have I been canned again?"

"No, nothing of the sort—though I don't say it wouldn't make a lot of people happy if you had been. You play well, nobody says anything different. But I guess you know that I'm having a fair amount of trouble on your account."

"So Karen says." Fenderson crossed his legs and drummed his fingertips on one knee.

"Don't you like football, Fenderson?"

"Yes, I like it fine."

"Why don't you put more into it?"

"What do you mean?" Fenderson said.

"I try to put everything I've got into it. If you're not satisfied, I'll be glad to do anything you want to suggest—I'm not letter perfect, of course."

"That," Payne said, "isn't what I meant. It's a matter of heart, not skill. You've got enough skill for six men, but it's the same here as it was on every other team you played with—you play the game cold, as if it didn't really mean anything."

Fenderson shrugged. "I do the best I can. I can't be the whole team, and I don't try—even though I am accused of it sometimes."

"Of course not, but you know what I'm talking about as well as I do. Sometimes I think a corpse would show more enthusiasm."

"I can't help that," Fenderson said. For the first time he actually seemed to be feeling some sort of emotion. His voice was very cold, and had something like anger in it. He looked at Payne out of the same perfectly composed face. By contrast, Payne felt as emotional as a roomful of hysterical schoolgirls.

"Well," he said finally, "maybe you can't. I've no reasonable cause to fire you. When they fire me, the next coach will probably can you, though."

Fenderson got up. "I know it," he said. "You've been decent, Payne; nobody else in the Mountain League has had your patience. Like I say, I'll do my best."

He went out, leaving Payne with the

vague feeling that he'd done something now, anyhow. Unless they took the Seals game, everybody was due to be stepped on—hard.

**T**HE Seals' new coach, Charles Buckmeister, was just recently retired from active participation on the field, and he was a shrewd apple.

The Swallows were neither confident nor cocky, but they had something—a kind of group nastiness. They were feeling pushed around, and they were out to kick cats, or maybe a passing Seal. It looked like a bad game from the start.

The Seals got the kickoff. Morrissey booted the ball ferociously; it was a hard kick, but it took no prize for control. The Seals swerved in after it, but they might just as well have run in place—it went offside on the forty.

They wasted no time. The ball zoomed back and the two lines lunged at each other. The Seals quarterback feinted to the left and angled crossfield in the other direction. Matt Gregory, the Swallows' left end, broke loose and tried to get to him, but the blocking was perfect.

Payne skirted the scrimmage and pulled across the ball's line of travel. The carrier saw him coming and reversed the field again. He was a little late; Rosy Keller shot through the bucket and lammed into him. The Seals had five yards.

The next one was an unexpected, hammering blow through right tackle. Payne saw it coming just in time to throw himself in behind Alec, but the Seals were already steaming through the gap. Fenderson thudded a blocker out of the way and took the ball-carrier from behind.

"Nice work," Payne gasped. The markers scampered along the sidelines with the tape, stretched it out along the white-wash stripes. A first down!

The Seals deployed and rode it hard. The quarterback bore the ball off on a wide sweep. The Swallows crashed the line in time to let Freeze through, and the ball carrier took a sharp cut and lateraled.

The receiver took it neatly and shot

down the sidelines, the Swallows stampeding after him. Jones was supposed to be safety man, but either he wasn't trying or the blocking was considerably stronger than it looked. Payne finally made the save himself, driving the man offside on the fifteen.

"Keep your eyes open, Jonas," Payne snapped as the squad reformed. "They'll be passing in a minute—you're playing back to stop the aerials. Do it."

"Yah," Jonas said. "A guy can't tackle three men at once. If you guys up at the rushline were taking out the blocks like you're supposed to—"

"Never mind the excuses. Play ball."

The Seal backfield shifted and the center rocketed the ball back. A short, bull-like charge picked up three yards; Buckmeister's strategy was evident—he must have had scouts on that weakness at right tackle.

The attack developed swiftly, the enemy steadily concentrating its forces, pounding toward the stripe. Two more downs put them just short of the five yard line. The Seals went abruptly into a modified Z-formation.

"Here comes that pass," Payne warned. "Fan out." The ranks opened a little to cover the scoring area more widely, and the backs played in to plug possible holes, Jonas and Morrissey took the outside.

The ball snapped and the Seals' quarterback faked toward center and faded back abruptly. Payne lunged in and jumped; the quarterback changed his mind just as suddenly and cut in deep, stiff-arming Payne over the right eye. At the scrimmage line he drew back his arm and let fly.

And where was Jonas? Under the haystack fast asleep, evidently. Still, there wasn't much he could have done about that one—it was a clean shot to a receiver already effectively off the field of action.

The point kick was good, too.

The kickoff was high, but luckily most of its force was expended in altitude. It dropped almost straight down into Karl Mechlin's arms. The long drop gave the Seals plenty of time to move in, but it gave Payne's men an equal amount of time to form a defensive wall.

Karl ran the ball easily, letting his blockers do the work while they could. He picked up ten yards without difficulty, then put on a sudden burst of speed as Freeze was shunted away from him and began to dodge like mad. The crowd cheered, and even Payne felt a small flicker of cheerfulness.

"Hello, stranger," he said. The Seals' safety finally stopped Karl on the enemy's thirty.

"Forty-two," Payne said briefly. "Damn fine work, Karl—where'd you get the snake-hips all of a sudden? Hipe!"

Feeling suddenly nervous, he called the signals rapidly and the ball came up at him. A quick lateral to Freeze freed him to plug the bucket. The frozen-faced fullback took a long diagonal run away from the pile-up, pulled back his arm as if to pass. The man who was trying to take him out jumped desperately and ran right under him, much to the crowd's delight. The old Statue-of-Liberty was still good for something!

The Seals' rear guard hit Freeze on the five. Half the Swallow line had charged in to protect him, but the quarters were too close to do much good. He went down under an avalanche of men. As he struck the ground, his face was turned toward Payne—and at the same instant, Jonas, evidently thinking he was covered by the tangle, kicked him viciously in the side.

The blow was so sharp that the pilot winced in sympathy, but Freeze's face did not even twitch. Payne stood frozen to the ground. That *couldn't* be an act! No living human being, no matter how long or how thoroughly he had trained himself, could keep his face from showing it when he got kangarooed in the ribs with a heavy shoe. That meant—

He swung into action abruptly. "Time out," he told the ref who was circling the down spot.

"But, Payne," Morrisey protested. "We're right on the edge, and the quarter'll be over in a minute."

"We'll still be on the edge next quarter, and there's urgent business. Jonas."

"What?" the halfback said, his voice surly. He didn't look at Payne.

"I don't let my men kick the enemy,

let alone each other," Payne bit out. "You're through—you're through on the Swallows and you're through in pro football if I have anything to say about it. Get off the field; you dirty it."

Jonas spat and walked off. Payne signalled to Eddie Grendall on the bench, and the redheaded sub came in on the run. "You're in from now on," Payne told him. "Fenderson? How's the side?"

"Sore."

"I don't wonder. Any ribs broken?"

Freeze prodded gingerly under his shirt. "Nope, can't find any. Just took the wind out of me."

"You mean that louse kicked Freeze?" Morrisey demanded. "Well, I'll be damned. I didn't see it."

"He didn't think anybody saw it. But I'm glad I did. It taught me something I've been trying to find out for a long, long time. Gather around the water-bucket, you guys."

He swung on Fenderson again. "I'm going to ask you a few questions and I want straight answers. You said once that I'd treated you fairly; I think maybe I've earned the right to a little confidence."

"Shoot," Freeze said.

"Did you play football before you came to the pros, Fenderson?"

"Yes, in high school."

"I thought so; you didn't go to college, so there was no college record to check, and high schools don't keep much record of that kind of thing."

"What the hell is this?" Neil Boyd asked. "Did you stop the game for Fenderson to tell us about his childhood, coach? Me, I'm not interested."

"You will be," Payne said flatly. "Fenderson, *did you ever get kicked before?*"

The question meant nothing to the rest of the men, but something in Payne's tone told them it was somehow crucial. They looked curiously at Fenderson, who looked back and said nothing. Payne made an impatient gesture. "Hell, man, you're a fool to clam up about it. You ought to be proud of it." He swung on the others. "This guy you've been bucking and calling a snob and a show-off has been through hells you'll never even be able

to imagine. He doesn't show it on his face *because he can't*. Speak up, Freeze—I know it, and there's no point in keeping it a secret any longer."

"All right," Fenderson said suddenly. "You're right, of course. I guess I'll never have the use of my facial muscles again, although the doc says there's a small chance if the nerve starts growing again. I got kicked when I was a kid, just as Payne guessed. It was an accident. It broke a few bones—those set all right, but it killed my facial nerve, the one that controls the muscles that operate the facial expressions."

"Cripes," Murray said. "Can you chew?"

"Oh sure, chewing and talking are deeper-seated; you'll notice that I can't move my lips, though—believe it or not, it was a ventriloquist who taught me how to talk without them without sounding like I was speaking through a tub of mush. But I've got no more expression than a caterpillar." He shrugged. "It used to bother me some, but not any more. I don't mind taking chances now—I figure I can't lose anything worse than what I've lost already."

"I'll be damned," Morrisey said. "Why didn't you say so in the beginning? We all thought you were putting on an act."

Fenderson shook his head, and Payne answered quickly: "That's obvious. What would you have done? If you'd come into pro football with a disability like that, you'd have kept quiet about it until somebody else figured it out, so you couldn't be accused of trading on it. Fenderson wanted to get to the top by ability alone, just like anybody with an ounce of guts."

"A lot more than an ounce," Mechlin said. "Leave me be the first to apologize, Freeze."

"Okay," Freeze said. "I don't want apologies. I sure would like to play ball with you guys instead of against you."

Morrisey grinned, spat into his hands and rubbed them together. "Watch us."

THE crowd watched, too. At the opening of the second quarter Payne fed the ball in to Freeze on the first down, and took it home. The Swallows were a

new team, a solid, driving unit burning with all the enthusiasm they'd lost at the beginning of the season. The plan had worked at last.

The kick was good and the game was tied up—but not for long. The befuddled Seals hit a wall of tempered steel on their first rush, and the ball stayed right where it was for two more downs. The punt was knocked down, and a second later Freeze was away again, weaving and twisting down the field, with Payne and Morrisey tumbling Seals with great pleasure.

They finally stopped him on the ten, but it was strictly temporary. The Swallows weren't doing any stopping any more this game. An irresistible change cracked the Seals' line and Fenderson went through it.

At the half the score stood Seals 7, Swallows 14. The Seals got a rest, but that was all they got. Buckmeister evidently hadn't figured out what had happened—or if he had, he didn't know what to do about it. The second half turned a rally into a steamroller.

When the sixty minutes were up, the Swallows had twenty-seven points showing on their side of the board, and the rooters were going wild at the amazing turnabout of events in this decisive game.

The Swallows were pounding Fenderson on the back as they came off the field. His face was just as it always was, but his eyes were expressing what his features couldn't formulate.

Morrisey waved a knobby finger under Payne's nose. "You," he roared, "are a louse. You put the guy on the team just to get us riled. It was a dirty trick and a dirty trick on Freeze, too. We ought to take you in and duck you in the showers."

"Hey, that's the baloney," Freeze put in. "Payne knew what he was doing. He gave me a better break than any other coach in the league. If I don't mind, why should you guys?"

Payne chuckled. He was feeling very pleased with himself. He was also feeling very pleased with Fenderson and the Swallows and Karen. Next year suddenly looked like a good one.

# SEVEN ROUNDS TO

**H**E could feel it in the clinches; he knew he was the stronger man, and it troubled him!

The champ moved in as usual, the left darting out like the head of a snake, the right cocked and ready. Tommy Clifton, the challenger, backed away across the ring, bobbing his dark head to avoid those rapierlike lefts. He was faster than the champ and he hit harder.

The champ feinted with the right shoulder and then hooked the left to the body. Tommy Clifton gasped and then grinned. He carried his hundred and fifty-three pounds like a featherweight; he came in on his toes and he jabbed twice with the left. His right missed as the champ bobbed under it.

"Shoot it!" Tippy Terrance yelled. "Shoot that right, kid!"

The champ smiled. His left darted out, catching Tommy on the point of the nose, and the tears came into his eyes. But he knew he could take the champ, knew it

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***It would take a ring killer with ice in his veins and murder in his fists to cut down the old champion—not a kid he called his son!***

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definitely. He carried ten years less on his shoulders; he had iron in his legs and he could keep going long after the champ had spent himself.

He jumped into the champ with a quick right and left to the body. He had a lean, fleshless face with bright blue eyes and tight lines around the mouth. His face looked older than the twenty-two years they had in the boxing record.

"Box him!" Tippy Terrance howled. "Box him, Tommy." The manager was a small man with a bald head and a thin, hatchet face. He had both hands on the edge of the ring and he looked up at the two with his piercing black eyes.

Tommy Clifton danced across the ring and the champ followed him grimly. In flashes the champ showed evidence of greatness. He was the better boxer and he knew when to throw his punches. He'd always had a good right and he could explode it suddenly.

Young Clifton looked into Johnny Dolan's quiet brown eyes and he wondered what the man was thinking. The champion's face was expressionless. Dolan had held the middleweight title for three years and he'd been fighting for thirteen years. His face, clean-shaven, showed practically no marks of his profession.

Dolan was shooting the left to the body when the bell clanged. They stood in the middle of the ring and the champion regarded the younger man thoughtfully.

Tommy Clifton grinned and then Dolan cuffed him gently on the head with a glove.

"You move fast, Tommy," the champion said, "and you're hitting harder."

Tippy Terrance was climbing into the gymnasium ring and the little manager was all smiles.

"That left," Tippy told the champ. "He's beginning to throw it like you, Johnny."

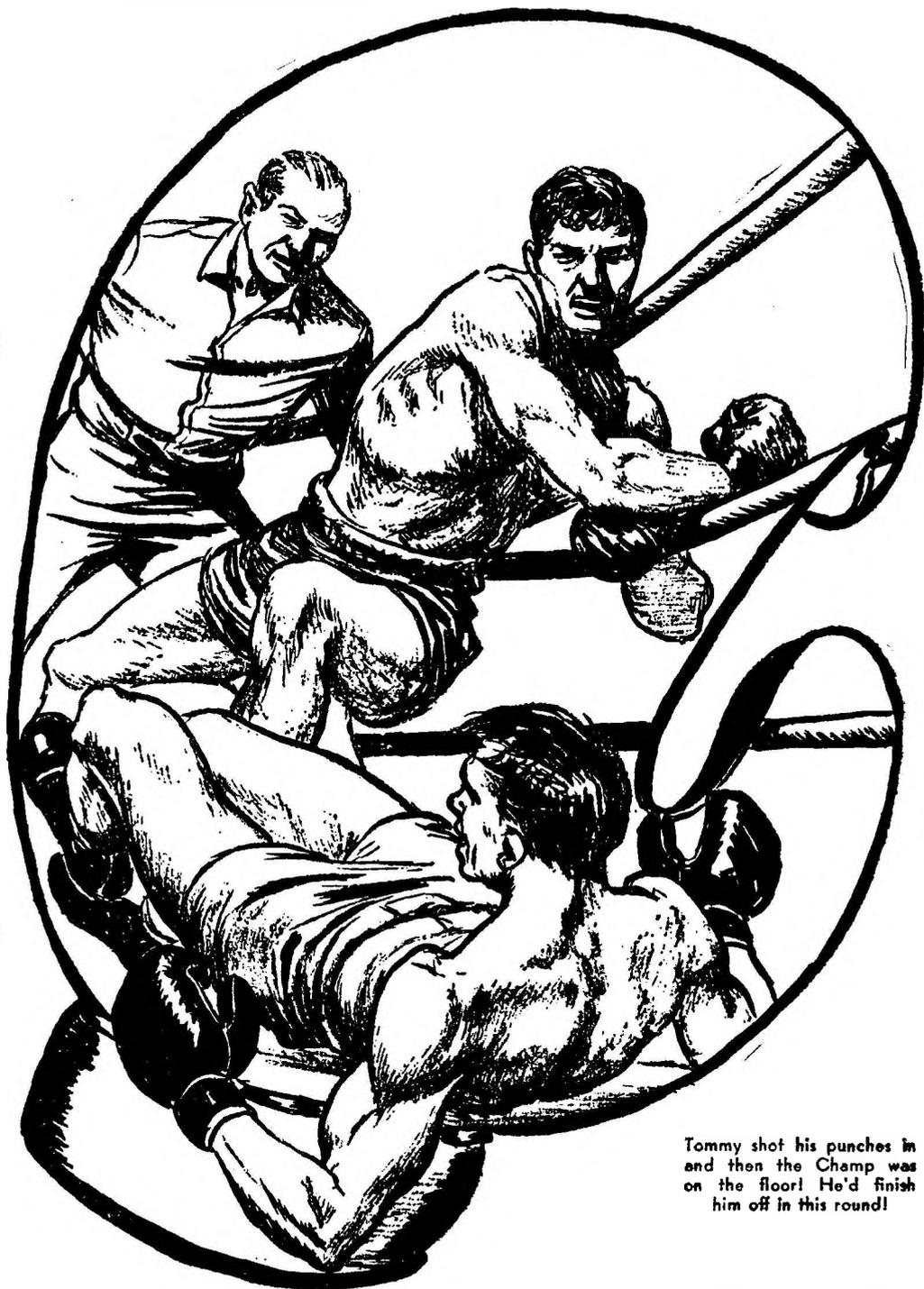
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***SOCK FIGHT NOVELET OF A RING KID TO WHOM THE TITLE***

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# REVENGE!

by **BILL HEUMAN**



Tommy shot his punches in  
and then the Champ was  
on the floor! He'd finish  
him off in this round!

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**MEANT ONLY A CHANCE FOR RED-LEATHER VENGEANCE!**

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Tommy Clifton looked at the two men he loved closer than brothers. He threw an arm around the champ's shoulder and they crossed the ring floor together.

"You'd think I was training for the fight," he grinned, "instead of you, Johnny." He was the champion's stablemate and he'd been fighting welters the past year or so. Johnny Dolan had found young Clifton sweeping floors in Sammy Snell's big gym. The kid, thin, pasty-faced, had been living in a basement room and he'd been eating light.

The champ had stumbled over the kid's mop going through the hall to the street. When the champ climbed to his feet the kid had expected a blow but he was unafraid.

Johnny Dolan looked at the boy's clenched fists and he knew if he threw a punch this janitor's assistant would go after him. Tommy Clifton weighed a hundred and thirty then and Dolan had won the title at one fifty-nine.

"I'm sorry," the boy apologized. "I didn't see you coming, Mr. Dolan." He was sorry but he was unafraid. Johnny Dolan knew the boy would fight; he would fight the champion of the world if necessary.

The champ looked at the sloping shoulders and the thin face with the bright blue eyes. Slowly, in the shadowy hall, a look of admiration swept over the champion's face.

He gave the boy a card. "Come up to see me at the hotel tonight, kid," he said quietly. "What's the name?"

Tommy gulped. "Clifton," he whispered. "Tommy Clifton." It didn't seem possible. Champion Johnny Dolan had spoken to him and wanted to see him at the hotel that night!

**I**N the champ's luxurious suite at the Hotel Bedford, Tommy Clifton told the man his story. He'd come from a small town and he'd boxed amateurs. He won a gold watch and he came to New York to fight professionally. They gave him a four-round opener and he lost it. He was on the floor seven times.

"I hadn't eaten in almost two days," Tommy ventured, "else I wouldn't have

gone down that much. I guess he was the better fighter."

Johnny Dolan listened gravely. "You haven't fought since then?" he asked.

Tommy shook his head regretfully. "They wouldn't give me another match. I was lucky to get this job at the gym. I've been picking up a lot of pointers just watching you fellows from a distance."

Tippy Torrance came in and the little manager blinked. "Another one?" Tippy asked. "You ought to start an orphanage, Johnny."

"This one," Dolan said, "we're making into a fighter." He'd taken Tommy Clifton under his wing. He gave the boy a room adjoining his own. He boxed with him in the gymnasium and he taught him how to throw punches. He saw the muscles in the kid's legs and he showed him the principles of footwork.

In six months Tommy Clifton was fighting in the opening four-rounders. In eight months he had a six rounder and then he began to work his way toward the top. He began as a lightweight and then he went to the welterweights. He was twenty-two and he weighed a hundred and fifty-three. He was getting into the middleweight class. They wanted to match him with the welterweight champ but Tip Torrance thought he was growing too fast.

"I should keep him down," Tip grinned. "He's a growing boy and he likes to eat. He'll be a middleweight." The little manager stopped suddenly when he remembered that he already managed the middleweight champion of the world.

Tommy Clifton climbed down through the ropes and he walked between the two men. Johnny Dolan was training for the Rocky Benson fight and young Clifton as usual worked out with him. They'd sparred together for years. When Tommy was training in Jersey for his big tilt with the tough Italian, Mike Peluso. Dolan went over with him and boxed every day. He sharpened up the boy's punching. He worked like a sparring partner.

Young Clifton glanced quickly at the older man at his side. He'd been noticing it for weeks now. Johnny Dolan was

slipping. Once the man had been able to toy with him when he put on the pressure. With each passing week Tommy Clifton improved, and the champ, in his thirties, went down the ladder.

"We take this Benson," Tippy Torrance grinned. "Either of you guys can take Rocky."

Dolan had fought Rocky Benson before and grabbed a decision. This was Benson's second attempt to take the title.

"Tommy could beat Benson," the champ said slowly. "I know."

Tommy laughed uncomfortably. When he was a welterweight they'd never thought about this thing. Johnny was the bigger man and he fought in another weight classification. They didn't realize that Tommy was growing all the time and that he'd be as heavy as the champion some day.

In the previous night's paper Tommy Clifton had seen the article by the sports writer, Ed Bender. Ed was wondering what would happen if young Clifton, the classy welter, grew into the middleweight class and had to contend with his teacher.

Under the shower, Tommy Clifton stood next to the man who had made him and he knew he could never hurt Johnny Dolan in any way. Dolan was proud of his title and he was training hard for the Benson fight. Johnny had held the title for three years and it meant something.

"You have a punch, kid," the champ said as the water splashed down on them. "You know how to shoot that right."

"Thanks to you," Timmy grinned. "I remember how I looked the first time we boxed."

They were talking around it; they never mentioned the thing, but Tommy was sure the champion had seen that article in the paper. The higher young Clifton rose in the ranks the more probable the thing would become. But they'd never meet because Tippy Torrance managed both of them and the public wouldn't stand for such a match.

Once a rat-faced little reporter had mentioned the thing in Tommy's presence.

"It's tough on you, kid," the news hound grinned, "that Johnny is in the

same stable. Everybody knows Johnny is slipping and you—"

"Beat it," Tommy snapped. "Beat it before I break you in half."

He watched the reporter scooting for the door and it rankled in his heart. He didn't want a title for himself; he didn't want to make money out of the profession. He wanted to stay with Johnny Dolan and Tip Torrance. He wanted to be with his friends and he knew how the champ was feeling. People were talking about the unusual situation. Dolan wasn't the real champ when there was another man in Tippy's stable who could take him hands down.

Tippy Torrance came into the dressing room as they were towelling off and the manager looked at them proudly.

"You boys get some clothes on," he said, "and we take in a show tonight. We get the champ in bed by ten o'clock. I'll let Tommy stay up another half hour."

They smiled at him and young Clifton threw a glove across the room. They were like that; they worked together and the two older men labored for the younger. They'd made a man out of him. He was the leading welterweight contender but he had already outgrown the class.

"I'll get you a middleweight next time," Tippy Torrance said. "It'll hurt you now to take off poundage."

"Sure," Tommy said. "Anything you say, Tip."

They went out the door and walked down the hall shoulder to shoulder. Tippy Torrance, small and dapper, strode proudly between his two fighters. Going down the stone steps of the gymnasium entrance, both grasped an elbow of the little manager and carried him down to the bottom.

"Clownin'," Tippy grinned. "Always clownin'." But he liked it.

At ten o'clock that night the older men pushed Tommy Clifton into his room.

"For talkin' too much," Tippy grinned, "I take back that half hour. Don't try to come out till morning."

Tommy smiled. He watched the two going down the hall. He was humming to himself when he went to bed. He didn't care for titles; he didn't care whether he

ever fought again. He could be Johnny Dolan's sparringmate and be happy.

Going up the steps of the gymnasium the next afternoon he saw two photographers with the cameras outside the door.

"We're takin' a few shots of the champ, Tommy," one of them said. "Mind if we come in? This guy says it's private train-in' today." The photographer nodded to the door man.

The fighter nodded. "Come on in boys," he grinned. "Tippy will be glad to see you. We haven't had much publicity this fight."

Johnny Dolan climbed from a cab and bounced up the steps. The champ had been newly-shaven. He punched Clifton lightly in the ribs and then took his arm. He looked back at the photographers.

"Friends of mine," Tommy smiled. "They're taking a few shots of us." He knew they came to see the champion, but Johnny didn't like pictures of himself. He wouldn't object if the photographers snapped his protege. He was building up Clifton.

**F**IFTEEN minutes later they climbed into the ring and the crowd gathered around below. Tommy saw the photographers setting up their cameras at a distance.

Tippy Torrance tied the gloves and then stood outside the ropes. They put on the headgear and went back to the corners. Tommy Clifton saw Johnny Dolan's face and it puzzled him. Dolan hadn't spoken very much as they climbed into the ring togs.

A bell clanged and they came out into the middle of the ring. Dolan was straight up as usual and he moved the left. It snaked out fast and true and Tommy Clifton had a hard time getting around it.

He didn't mind that left. He bounded around the champion and he hooked his own left to the body. He felt good today but he knew he had to hold himself back. It would kill him if he showed up the champion, but he knew Johnny was slipping. Dolan had been around too long. You could shove him in the clinches. You could feel him give a little with the

punches. It hadn't been like that once.

From the ropes Tippy Torrance watched them silently. The champ threw a right hand punch and Tommy went under it. That blow had been harder than the usual punches Johnny threw at him.

Tommy grinned. He backed away and jabbed with his left. Johnny came in fast with a left hook to the body. As the champ rushed he left himself wide open and Tommy Clifton's eyes opened. Seldom did Johnny Dolan give anyone a clean shot at that jaw.

The sparring partner threw a quick right hand but he purposely held it back. The blow caught Dolan squarely on the jaw but it wasn't hard. Tommy Clifton's mouth opened as Dolan dropped on his haunches.

He heard the cry of surprise and he saw the flashlights pop behind the crowd.

Dolan's face underwent a strange transformation. In the years Tommy Clifton had known the quiet champion, he'd never seen Dolan angry. Johnny was always the gentleman. Even in the ring with Rocky Benson jabbing thumbs into his eyes he'd held onto himself.

The champ came off the floor and his face was white with rage. Tommy Clifton saw the man's taut face and burning eyes. He stared.

Johnny Dolan spat out the mouthpiece. "Rat!" he snarled through clenched lips. He went at the younger man with flailing gloves and drove him into a corner.

"Johnny!" young Clifton pleaded. "Johnny—stop it!" He made no attempt to fight back. He tried to hold back the enraged champion as Tippy Torrance hopped through the ropes.

Down below, the little crowd was roaring in surprise. They'd never seen Johnny Dolan like this. Tippy Torrance had Dolan by the arms and was holding him tightly.

"Johnny!" the young fighter pleaded again. "Johnny—you gotta stop it!"

The champion glared at him. "You brought the reporters in, you little rat. You wanted to show me up!"

"No!" Tommy gasped. "I didn't think I hit you hard, Johnny."

Johnny Dolan laughed coldly. He was

climbing through the ropes. He threw it back over his shoulder like a cold fish.

"I showed you all I knew," the champion snapped. "Now I'm getting paid for it. You want to show me up. You know we can't fight in the ring but you want everybody to know you can take me."

Tommy Clifton hung on the ropes and stared at the man pushing his way through the crowd. Reporters and photographers were clawing for the phone booths.

"Tippy," the young fighter called. "Tippy. Wait!"

Tip Torrance was going down the stairs and running after the champ. The little manager paused at the bottom and looked up. Tommy Clifton saw the cold eyes and the little smile around the man's mouth.

"A lot of times," Torrance said, "Johnny could have put you on the floor, kid. It was pretty cheap."

"Tip," Tommy pleaded. "It was an accident. I hardly hit him." He climbed through the ropes. "Tell him I didn't mean it, Tip. Tell him!"

"Tell him yourself," the manager snorted. "You're the guy started this thing. Your head got too big, I guess. You've won too many fights. You don't like it that Johnny's the champ and you can't fight him."

"I don't want to fight him," Clifton yelled. "I never wanted to fight him, Tip."

Torrance laughed. "So you brought the reporters in to watch you knock Johnny's ears off? It'll be in the papers tomorrow. Maybe Rocky Benson will get a laugh out of it."

The manager walked rapidly toward the dressing room and Tommy Clifton ran after him. They went into the champion's room and Johnny Dolan was sitting on the table.

"Get out," the champion said flatly. "Beat it, quick."

"Listen, Johnny," the younger man began. "It—"

Johnny Dolan stood up and slapped the fighter's face with his taped hand. Tommy Clifton went white. He turned to the manager.

Tippy Torrance stood by the door. "I never thought you'd turn on us, Tommy," the manager said. "We're through. You don't fight for me any more."

Johnny Dolan stalked to the other side of the room and began to yank the strips of white tape from his fingers. Tommy Clifton looked at him and then walked dazedly from the room.

HE went back to the hotel and Bud Wetzel came in later in the afternoon. Wetzel was a fight manager along the street.

"I heard about it," Wetzel said quietly, "and I'm sorry, Tommy. You can fight for me."

Tommy Clifton shook his head. "I'm through. I'm not fighting any more."

Wetzel, big, bluff, and blond-haired, looked at him queerly. "You're a fighter, Tommy. That's your trade. You can't do anything else." The fight manager paused. "You were headed for the title, kid. You'll go places."

Tommy walked to the door and held it open. "You're wasting your time, Bud," he said quietly. He watched the big man lumbering down the hall. He felt sick and tired. The thing had happened so quickly it left him gasping. He was still trying to put the pieces together.

After a while they began to make sense. Johnny had felt this way a long while but he hadn't mentioned it. Johnny knew they were talking about him and his protege and making comparisons. The champion was proud of his title and he didn't want it if another man was the better fighter.

Johnny Dolan had finally snapped under the pressure. He let his feelings go. He hated the man he had made into a fighter. Johnny Dolan had created something he was no longer able to control.

Two weeks later Tommy Clifton sat at the ringside and watched Johnny Dolan outclass the floundering Rocky Benson. Johnny had slipped but he still carried too much in the wine-colored gloves for Benson.

Tommy stood up in his seat on the aisle as the champion came from the ring. Johnny Dolan saw him and laughed short-

ly. He said something to Tippy Torrance and then both men passed on through the cheering crowd.

"You could take him," Bud Wetzel said at his elbow. "You know him, kid. You know his style. Even Rocky gave him a going over in the sixth."

"Sorry," Tommy said briefly. "It's out, Bud." Wetzel was a fine chap and if he wanted to fight he'd like to fight for the big blond-haired man with the gray eyes.

"He'd be right down your alley," Wetzel smiled. "You'd know every punch he was going to throw. You—"

"Cut it," Tommy snapped. Even now he couldn't bear the thought of hitting Johnny Dolan. The champion was his friend even though he'd been a little hasty in that matter at the gym. Dolan wasn't to blame. Those thoughts had been running through his mind a long time and he'd finally snapped.

"Go ahead," Wetzel said. "Drive a truck; get a job at the docks. Sweep streets."

"I'll get along," Tommy told him. He still had money but he knew it would go fast if none came in. That afternoon he moved out of the hotel and got a smaller place on the west side of town. He discovered that Johnny Dolan and Torrance had moved out earlier in the day. They didn't want to be near him.

**I**T went on for a month and it began to get under his skin. He wasn't used to being alone any more. He'd had Dolan and Tippy Torrance the past few years. Once or twice he passed the two on the street near the gym but they ignored him.

He sat in a corner at Sammy Snell's place and watched two heavyweights mauling each other. He was feeling miserable when the champion came in with Torrance. They were laughing the way they used to and Tommy felt miserable.

Bud Wetzel came across the floor and stood before the fighter.

"I could fix up a ten-round match with Farmer Jenkins," Wetzel grinned. "The Farmer's manager is in town and he's looking for a fight. You could use a little spot cash, Tommy. Don't be a fool."

Tommy Clifton stared after Dolan and Torrance and a feeling of bitterness swept through him. He'd done nothing wrong and it wasn't fair.

"Only a sap," Wetzel grinned, "lets other people make a dope out of him. You were going to the top, Tommy. Jenkins is rated a pretty good middleweight. Get past him—"

"Okay," Tommy said slowly. "Get him."

"Now you talk," Wetzel smiled. "You talk like a man."

**T**OMMY CLIFTON moved from his corner at the opening bell and he slid across the ring like a panther. Wetzel had given him three full weeks to get back in shape and it hadn't taken that long.

They had the main event at the little New York Club and the place was packed. The Farmer was always a crowd pleaser and the fans remembered Tommy Clifton, a classy boxer with a sharp right hand, the protege of the champion, Johnny Dolan.

Jenkins waddled out of his corner in a half crouch and with his head behind a hairy left shoulder. The Farmer was nearly baldheaded, although still a young man. He had a fairly good punch when he landed. He threw a right and then a left at Clifton's head.

Tommy danced away and jabbed with the left. He moved in and hooked the same hand to the body and then ripped the right to the jaw. He felt Jenkins give a little and the crowd roared.

"Get him," Bud Wetzel yelled from below. "Get him, Tommy."

Tommy Clifton's eyes hardened. He remembered Tippy Torrance down there. Tippy and the champion always sat together at ringside and they gave him advice. Tonight he was fighting alone.

The rugged Jenkins grinned in his face and tried to come up with a hard right-hand shot to the body. Tommy picked the blow off on his elbow the way Dolan had taught him and then he was back across the ring, moving on the balls of his feet with the left darting in and out.

The crowd gave him a big hand as he stepped in under Jenkin's left and

snapped his own right to the veteran's face. He fought like Dolan; he had the same mannerisms but he was the faster man.

He took the round by a wide margin and walked back to his corner. Big Bud Wetzel climbed through the ropes with a second and began to work on him.

"Friends of yours here tonight, Tommy," Wetzel said briefly. He nodded to the left and Tommy Clifton saw Dolan and Tippy Torrance watching him coldly. The champion's lips were curled in contempt. He spoke to Tippy and the little manager nodded and stared at him.

Tommy reddened and looked down at the floor. He was breathing heavily but he'd been taking it easy that round. The thing was getting under his skin now. The affair was over but Dolan and Torrance still kept it fresh.

He went out for round two and he tore after the surprised Jenkins. He knocked the veteran into the ropes with a heavy right and then followed him along the cords with a series of sharp rights and lefts that had Jenkins about in dreamland.

Wetzel grinned at him when he came back to the corner. "You can be pretty tough, Tommy," the manager said, "when you want to be."

"Sure," Clifton said grimly. "I can be tough." He glanced down at the champion and Torrance. They were still chatting and he knew they were talking about him.

In the third he put Jenkins on the floor for the first time. He caught the Farmer with a long right to the point of the jaw and Jenkins sagged. Tommy stepped in nimbly under Jenkins' wild punches and he tore up with rights and left to the body. He heard Jenkins gasp and then the Farmer backed away. Another left to the chin put the Farmer on his haunches.

He was up at seven and Tommy chased him around the ring. He had Jenkins in a neutral corner and was pounding him with lefts and rights at the bell.

Bewildered, Jenkins staggered to the wrong corner and Tommy turned him in the right direction.

"You end it any time you wish," Wetzel said at the end of the round. "If you'd

like to carry it along a little and sharpen up your eye, that's your business."

Tommy nodded. Wetzel was a good guy. He knew Tommy had had plenty of instruction from Dolan and Torrance. They didn't come any smarter than Tippy Torrance.

**I**N the fifth Tommy put the stolid Jenkins on the canvas again. He dropped him with a sharp left to the jaw and then sent him spinning into the ropes a minute later with a right cross under the heart.

The Farmer was on the way out and the crowd stood up. Tommy nailed his man with another short right. He drove the left into the body and Jenkins doubled up. Another quick right to the point of the jaw and it was all over.

In the dressing room Bud Wetzel stared at him. "You know what this means, Tommy?" he asked. "The Farmer was no bum. He nearly took Rocky Benson a few months ago."

Tommy nodded. The knockout of the durable Jenkins had put him up in the front ranks of the middleweight contenders.

"I can get you Benson," Wetzel said, "and then we'll be all set."

"For what?" Tommy asked slowly.

Wetzel shrugged. "You can be a champion, Tommy. You know you can take Johnny Dolan any time you want to."

"I'm not fighting Dolan," Clifton said quietly. "You know that, Bud."

Wetzel started for the door. "You're the boss, Tommy," he said, "but if it was me and a guy pulled a dirty trick—"

Tommy Clifton went into the shower room and Bud Wetzel stared after him moodily.

A half dozen reporters and photographers came into the room when Tommy came out of the showers. Behind them were Johnny Dolan and Tippy Torrance.

"We want to fight this guy," Torrance was saying. "We're ready to take him any time he's in the mood."

Bud Wetzel came in behind them. "Don't rush things, Tippy," Bud grinned. "We just took care of one guy."

Torrance smiled coldly. "He's the guy

with the big mouth. He brings in camera men and then he knocks down the champion. He tries to show him up after all Johnny's done for him."

Tommy Clifton stood in the door of the shower room and his face was white and tense. He couldn't open his mouth. He stared at Torrance with unbelieving eyes. Tippy had cared for him as a father cares for a son.

"He wants to wait," Dolan snapped. "He wants to wait till I'm past the peak. Then he'll look for a bout when he's sure he can take me. Right now I'll cut him to pieces."

"Talk, kid," one of the reporters nudged the young fighter. "Say something for the papers, Tommy. This all goes in."

The young fighter's mouth was a thin, straight line. "I don't have anything to say," he told him dully.

"No comments," Dolan sneered. "He'll just wait till I hand the title to him on a silver platter." The champion calmly picked up one of the sodden gloves on the rubbing table and hurled it in Clifton's face. The glove struck him a soggy thud and it left a red mark on his cheek.

The younger man took a step backward and the light came into his eyes.

"You better beat it, Johnny," Bud Wetzel said. "You weren't invited to begin with."

"I picked him up out of the gutter," Dolan said, "and he turns on me like the rat he is. He shows me up; he has his pictures smeared all over the papers with me on the floor. It looks nice."

Tommy Clifton picked the glove from the floor. He didn't recognize his own voice. It was brittle and there was iron in it.

"I'll take that match, Bud," he said quietly. "Any time they say."

"Let it wait," Wetzel told him. "They can't drive us into this."

"Any time they say," Tommy Clifton snapped. "That goes." He sat in a chair in the corner and he looked at the floor as the men filed out.

"Meet me at the office in the morning," Tippy Torrance told Bud Wetzel. "I want

to get this down in black and white before he changes his mind."

When they went out Tommy Clifton dropped his head in his hands. He could still feel the sting where the glove had struck his face. He had a worse pain in his heart.

Tippy Torrance and Bud Wetzel made the arrangements in the morning. Tommy's win over Farmer Jenkins had put him in the limelight. Rocky Benson was out with a twisted ankle and Johnny Dolan wanted to fight Clifton right away.

The bout was scheduled a month ahead. It was to go the fifteen round championship limit and to be held at the big Parthenon Arena. Tippy Torrance insisted on forfeit money and Bud Wetzel told his fighter about it.

"They're afraid you'll run out, Tommy," Bud grinned.

"I'm fighting," Tommy Clifton said. He knew he had to fight to get this thing out of his system. He knew he could never sleep. If he took Johnny Dolan or the champion whipped him, he'd feel better. He might be able to forget it.

He didn't see Dolan till they weighed in the afternoon of the fight. Dolan was still a pound or two beneath the middle-weight limit. Tommy came in at one hundred fifty-six, his highest ever.

The challenger watched the champion step from the scales. Dolan hadn't looked at him when he came in. The champion spoke for the first time and the contempt was still in his voice.

"We'll ruin you this one," Dolan said coldly. "We're gonna send you back to mopping halls where you came from."

Tommy Clifton didn't look at the man who had one time been his friend. He stood on the scales and he felt the heaviness inside of him. He'd come through weeks of listless training but he was in shape. He always worked faithfully in the training camps. Tippy Torrance and Dolan had taught him that. His legs were in the best shape of his career. His boxing had been off color but Bud Wetzel wasn't worrying.

"When the bell goes off, Tommy," Bud said, "you'll be in there and you'll be all right."

HE sat in the dressing room while trainer Cap Shane taped his hands. Through the open transom he heard the dull roar as the semi-finalists went through the motions.

Bud Wetzel was with him. One of Dolan's handlers stood by inspecting the taping procedure. Two or three of Wetzel's friends were in the room. Tommy Clifton looked around. Usually, when he fought they had a good crowd wishing him well. Johnny Dolan had a host of well wishers and when the champion's protege went into the ring, Dolan's friends backed him to the limit.

They were all in the other room now and none of them liked him. Dolan was his sworn enemy. Tippy Torrance thought he'd double-crossed the man who picked him from the gutter.

"Ready, Clifton," the boy at the door called. "You're on."

Bud Wetzel slapped his back. Tommy Clifton stood up and wrapped the green and white robe around him. He had a big four leaf clover in green on the white background. Johnny Dolan had picked out the robe for him two years ago and he'd worn it ever since.

"Get him," Wetzel said simply. "You know how, kid."

Tommy nodded. He should know how. He'd been taught how to box by Johnny Dolan; he'd fought with the man a hundred times in the ring; he knew every move Dolan would make.

"He's no dope," Wetzel said as they went down the hall. "He knows what you know and he'll have a bag of new tricks. He's a smart one."

"Sure," Tommy said. He opened the door and the noise hit him in the face. He saw the man in the white bathrobe going down the other aisle. He saw the green shamrock on the white background. He read the letters "DOLAN" beneath the green emblem.

"That's your man," Wetzel said sharply. "He's been talking big, Tommy."

They went down the aisle and Tommy Clifton saw the faces turning toward him. They had read the papers and they knew what he had done to his friend, Johnny Dolan. Reporters had played up

the story. This was a grudge fight between two former friends.

As he climbed the steps the chorus of boos mounted. Johnny Dolan was grinning in the other corner. Tippy Torrance was standing in front of him with both hands on the champion's shoulders.

Tommy sat down on the stool and waited quietly. There were introductions. A man broke through the circle of men around him and shook his hand perfunctorily.

"The lightweight champ," Wetzel said.

"Good luck," the champion grinned. Then he was gone.

They were out in the center of the ring and Tommy Clifton was looking at the gloves on his hands. He felt Dolan's cold brown eyes on him. Young Clifton was fascinated by those gloves. With them he was to cuff and hammer the man who had put him up here. The thought sickened him.

"Watch the low blows," the referee was droning into the microphone for the benefit of the listeners. The fighters knew beforehand what he was going to say.

"Make it a good fight. Break when I tell you."

They went back to their corners and Tommy shuffled his shoes in the resin mechanically. When he turned around he was to face his friend; he was to hurt him and take away his crown if possible.

The bell clanged brassily and Johnny Dolan was on top of him. Dolan was the finished boxer. Dolan was the master of the ring but the champion came in like a longshoreman. He threw a round-house right and it caught the challenger on the side of the face. He went down as if he were poie-axed.

Stunned, the crowd watched him writhe on the canvas. In three seconds or less, Johnny Dolan had sent the challenger to the floor.

"Up!" Bud Wetzel yelled. "Up, Tommy!"

Tommy Clifton watched the revolving posts. He felt his face blowing up on the left side. He had no strength in his legs. Dimly, he remembered what Bud Wetzel had told him.

Johnny Dolan knew that Clifton knew

his tactics and Dolan had perfected new strategy. He'd caught his man with a surprise right-hand shot and nearly finished the fight.

"Six," the referee chanted. "Seven—"

The champion stood in a neutral corner, both arms resting on the ropes. He looked down at the man he had sent to the canvas. Tommy Clifton saw the word "Rat" forming on Dolan's lips. It hurt him; it did something to him inside; Dolan still wasn't satisfied. He was harping on an old issue and he wouldn't let it go.

The challenger felt the blood boiling inside of him. He got up on one knee at eight and he came off the floor at nine. The referee slid in front of him and wiped the resin from his gloves.

Then Dolan was back. It wasn't Dolan the superb boxer; it was Dolan the killer lashing at him with iron fists, beating him to the floor again.

Tommy Clifton gasped from the fury of the attack. He reeled back along the rope and fell into a corner. Dolan caught him with a terrific left hook and he fell through the lower strand.

He was hanging down on the telegraph board when they boosted him back into the ring. The Parthenon Arena was in an uproar. They'd never seen this Dolan before. He was a killer.

"Get in close!" Wetzels roared from beneath. "Get in close, Tommy."

Desperately, Tommy Clifton strove to get behind those pounding fists. Dolan put up a wall of gloves and he kept it mobile. When the challenger rushed him, he backed away and pounded with lefts and rights. When Tommy hesitated, Dolan rushed into him like a maniac and pinned him on the ropes.

Near the end of the round the challenger hit the floor again but he came up wildly throwing punches. He was strong but that first blow had jarred his senses. It would take time before he fully recuperated.

He was falling into the ropes again at the bell and Bud Wetzels clambered through the ropes to grab him and lead him to the corner.

"That was close," Bud said, "but we

didn't get started, kid." He shoved the stool between Tommy's legs. "He's smart, Tommy, like I told you."

Tommy Clifton nodded. He sat in the corner and he blinked across the ring. He saw Johnny Dolan and Tippy Torrance chatting and grinning. They thought they had him on the run.

"A guy like Dolan can't go on for fifteen rounds like that," Bud advised. "He's ten years older than you, kid. Get on your bike for ten rounds. Then go after him the last five. He'll never make it. His legs are shot."

Tommy Clifton nodded. He knew how bad Dolan's legs were. He remembered boxing with him and he could feel the champion's strength go.

"Be patient," Bud grinned. "The worst is over. You'll know what to expect from now on."

**T**HE warning note sounded and Wetzels was gone. Tommy Clifton stood up at the bell and he felt the strength flowing back through his veins. He moved out to meet Dolan and again it was a different Dolan.

The champion came in straight up and he had a left pawing the air. He held the right cocked close to his side and Tommy Clifton remembered that Dolan could hit on occasions and he could hit hard. Dolan knew how to throw a punch so as to get everything behind it.

Dolan's left flickered out and Tommy took it on the nose. Dolan's left flashed to the body and Tommy took it on the elbow. He fainted with the left shoulder the way Dolan had taught him and then he tried to cross the right, but Dolan went inside of it.

The champion's right hammered home to the body and Tommy Clifton gasped. He backed away with Dolan after him, the left darting out like the tongue of a snake.

In the clinches, the challenger felt his strength and he pushed the older man into the ropes. He threw him off and then shot a quick right to Dolan's jaw. The punch connected and Dolan's head bobbed. Tommy Clifton heard the quick roar from the crowd and he stepped back.

Dolan's taut face was before him and the champion rushed off the ropes. A long right caught Clifton on the cheek and half spun him around. Dolan was swinging again—swinging punches like a mad man.

Tommy Clifton backed away. He rode his bicycle with the champion after him. He knew he could keep away from Dolan as long as he wanted to. He was faster on his feet and with each passing round Dolan would be getting slower. After the tenth he'd be able to cut the champion to ribbons.

He was still backing away when the bell sounded.

"You got the idea," Wetzel grinned. "He's your man if you stay away for awhile and let him wear himself out."

Tommy Clifton glanced across the ring. Tippy Torrance was working on the champion's legs. They both knew his plans and they were worried too.

"He has to get you before the tenth," Wetzel said, "and he knows it."

Tommy nodded. He went out at the bell and he thought of those last five rounds. He could go fifteen because he'd done it before. He had iron in his legs but Dolan would be floundering. He could massacre the man; he could pound his face to a bloody pulp. The thought nauseated him.

He kept away from Dolan's rushes that round. During the next three rounds when Dolan tried to box with him, he boxed and he made the man move all the time.

"You got it." Wetzel smiled. "He don't stand a chance, Tommy."

In the sixth round Johnny Dolan went into a shell. From the shell he threw a quick right near the close of the round and the punch caught Tommy Clifton flush on the jaw. He reeled away and then Dolan was on top of him again.

Dolan landed two short lefts and the challenger went to the floor. Dazed, he looked up at the man who had once befriended him and who now hated him. He had to admire Dolan's fight. The champion was using every trick he'd ever known and he was employing them effectively.

Tommy came up at six and he was on

the bicycle when the bell clanged again. He sat in his corner and he looked at the man across the ring. He knew Dolan was beginning to go. In another round or two Dolan would be finished. He'd fight on and he'd never stay on the floor but he'd be finished.

"After the tenth," Wetzel said, "you take him any time you're ready, Tommy." "Sure," Tommy said. He watched Tippy Torrance working frantically on his man. They'd send Dolan out this time to do or die. He knew Tippy's way. They'd take the long chance.

"This is it," Tommy Clifton said when the warning bell sounded. "This is the last round, Bud."

Wetzel stared at him before going through the ropes. It was the seventh round and Dolan was plenty dangerous.

At the bell they moved to the center of the ring and Tommy Clifton saw Dolan's eyes. The champion liked his title and he wasn't giving it up without a fight. He'd go down like a true champion.

Dolan came in low and he held both hands at his side. He bobbed and weaved and he looked for his spot. This was no longer a boxing match. The crowd sensed it. They saw Tommy Clifton drop his guard and then plunge in with flying fists. They roared, and it went through the two fighters.

Dolan was waiting for that rush. He met the challenger in the center of the ring and he met him with swinging gloves. Neither man broke ground as the leather flew. As one man, the huge crowd came up.

Tommy Clifton heard Tip Torrance yelling but he couldn't make out the words. He stood shoulder to shoulder with the man he'd loved and he drove home the punches. This was the way Johnny Dolan wanted to go out. He knew Dolan.

The champion threw a right, feinted with the left and Tommy Clifton lunged at him. As he slid by, Dolan brought home another right to the chin and the challenger went to the floor.

He rolled over on his back, crawled to his knees and came off the canvas swinging. He saw it then in Dolan's brown eyes. He thought he saw the champion grin.

They were back in the middle and throwing punches. The round was nearly half over and neither man had given an inch. Then slowly, Dolan began to yield. Inch by inch Tommy Clifton pushed his man to the ropes. He felt Dolan's arms sag and he shot his punches in.

He was swinging blindly in the corner and he felt Dolan's gloves punching back. Then Dolan disappeared and Tommy Clifton nearly fell through the ropes. The referee led him to a neutral corner and he stood there.

Johnny Dolan was lying on his face in the resin when they counted him out. He was trying to crawl over to the ropes and drag himself to his feet.

When the referee finished the count, the ring was full of people. Tommy tried to help Dolan's handlers carry the fallen man to the corner but he was pushed away. There were tears in his eyes as Bud Wetzel led him blindly to the other corner.

They pronounced him "Winner and champion." Then he was going down the aisle. He didn't remember whether Dolan had shaken hands with him or not. Dolan seemed to have disappeared.

"You can see him in the dressing room," Wetzel urged.

Fifteen minutes later, Tommy Clifton knocked on the door of the former champion's room. The room was empty. Dully, he stared into it. He'd seen that light in Dolan's eyes and he'd been hoping. Now it was all finished.

The ex-champion hadn't even waited to see him. Dolan was still embittered.

"Let's go," Wetzel said kindly. "We'll go back to the hotel."

Tommy Clifton climbed into the cab and he listened to the noises of the city. They rolled around to the hotel and he got out with Wetzel.

"Forget about it," Wetzel said.

They went up the elevator and Tommy Clifford inserted the key in the lock. He pushed open the door and he saw them. He saw the long table and the men around it. He saw the empty seat at the other end. Johnny Dolan and Tip Torrance were standing behind the chair.

Dolan was coming down to meet him. There were marks on the ex-champion's face. He held out his hand.

"Congratulations, Tommy," Dolan said. He nodded to the chair. Tommy saw the cardboard placard with the word "CHAMP" on it. "I wanted to sit there tonight, Tommy," Dolan told him, "but I wanted to earn it. I fought you all the way, kid, and you won it."

In a daze Tommy Clifton permitted himself to be led to the chair. He sat down and looked at the crowd. He saw the familiar faces. Tip Torrance was at his left and Johnny Dolan at his right side.

"It was tough doing it that way," Tip grinned, "but that's how Johnny is. We framed the whole thing on you. Even those reporters were sent there by me. Johnny knew you'd never fight him the way things were and he had to put you on the other side of the fence. You don't know how we suffered, boy."

The tears were in Tommy Clifton's eyes. "Then everything's all right, Tip?" He looked at Bud Wetzel. The fight manager was in it too.

Torrance nodded. "Johnny Dolan loves you like a son but he knew you rated a shot at his title and he had to do it the right way." Torrance paused. "He's a right guy," the little manager added.

Tommy Clifton looked into the face of the man beside him. He saw Dolan's quiet brown eyes.

"Sure," Tommy said. "He's a right guy, Tip. All the way!"

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# DUEL IN THE STRETCH

by WILLIAM L. JACKSON

I'M not trying to say that I'm a better man than my father was; he was just wrong in one basic thing. I imagine that it's that way too many times. A lot of advice is given out in serious moments between the old weathered tree and the green, unprotected shoot, and most of it is sound, solid advice, but every now and then something slips through which may disprove itself

sooner or later. The poor wandering offspring, if he follows this advice, is apt to find out that a good share of his life could have been better spent if he'd just chucked the advice.

The advice just wouldn't work for me. At least I think it was all wrong. I've been arguing with the smart boys around the tracks ever since. Most of them think I chucked a good thing when I pulled

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***Sweetheart didn't have a prayer in this race—and Ace-in-the-Hole was a horse of another color. . . .***

---

like swung the two-by-four—and Jug collapsed on the floor!



off that race at Clear Springs, think I threw away all I'd taken years to get; but I think I'd do it all over again.

Anyway, the race at Clear Springs was only the end of it. It really started when my old man took me aside when I was old enough to climb on a blooded nag by myself. He gave me the only advice then that he ever pressed on me.

"Hal," he said, "I'm going to tell you something, something that'll save you a lot of trouble in the future. I know you're not going to be hanging around me much longer. You're going to go out and see what you can do for yourself as a jockey.

"The one thing I want you to know is this: You're working a game that's hard and fast and full of angles. Just remember that you're a jockey and not an owner. You'll see some shady stuff pulled and some stuff that's plain raw, but don't try to play any angles of your own. You just ride for whoever's paying you, and don't get any grey hairs over somebody else's troubles. Make sure that the horse you're ridin' isn't fooled with, and sit tight. Forget about the other guy. He's out to beat you and you're out to beat him. What happens to the nag he's top-pin' is none of your business. *Just worry about the horse you're ridin'!*"

That was all he ever said to me about the inside of the racing game, and I know that's the code he rode by. And he rode in the big league. Everybody on the inside of the track game has heard of Ace Whippet. He was tops, the best, the guy everybody wanted to ride their derby "winner."

And he got on top by sticking by his rules: *Forget about the other guy, and worry about the horse you're ridin'.* He really got me on top, too. He was running for some of the biggest money any jockey ever dreamed of when he was at his peak. There were people who would have no other rider for their sure winners and people who hated the ground Ace Whippet walked on. He saw a lot of good men and good horses ruined, and he did nothing to stop any of it, when he was actually in a position to queer a lot of the rackets. Men hated him for it, and men hired him for it. Everybody knew that as

long as Ace Whippet rode a top horse he'd ride against any odds and never bat an eye if African stake pits were laid for the other horses running. His motto was every man for himself, and he helped no man. Because of this, he often ran for some pretty shady characters, but he always rode into high money.

Even the men who hated Ace Whippet had to admit that he was good, and they knew that he was smart. He was in the game to win and he usually did. And he took his own ups and downs with no squawks for mercy. Like the time they ganged him at Pimlico and he took three broken ribs and a twisted knee. And the rail riding job they did on him at Churchill Downs. He had a concussion and more cracked ribs from that one. There were men in the core of the track crowd who didn't go for Ace Whippet at all, but he stuck by his guns, and he made his pile all right.

For a long time I followed the advice Ace had given me, and I was doing all right. I graduated quickly from the little racing club tracks on the West Coast up to the bigger tracks in the East, where the smart money was, and finally to the big time.

I saw some pretty raw ones pulled, too, but they didn't happen to me, and I never stuck my neck out—not until the last time. There should be things in every racket that a guy just can't take, and I finally ran up against mine. I've wondered ever since if Ace, himself, would have been able to swallow this one, used to it all as he was.

**I**T all happened when I was working for Lou Wilder. I met Lou Wilder after a race at Saratoga. The horse I was riding beat his nag.

When Lou approached me after the race, I knew who he was. Even if he wasn't as fat and sleek looking as he was, I'd have known he was Lou Wilder. I'd heard a lot about Wilder, and he looked like that kind of a guy. In his forties, Lou is fat and balding, with the oil on his remaining hair making his round head as shiny as the sweat on his smooth face made his features.

Lou Wilder had a lousy reputation, but he was too smart to be caught, and right then I was looking for a smart boy. I could tell by the glitter of the huge diamond in the ring on the hand he extended that I'd found the horse owner I had been looking for. When he blandly explained what my job would be and how he made his money, I was even a little surprised. He was obviously as crooked as the blood lines of some of his nags, and he didn't make any bones about it. I had all I could do to keep from laughing right in his face, and I couldn't help thinking what a good boss he'd have made for Ace Whippet. But I was Ace Whippet's boy, Hal, and I took Lou Wilder up on his offer. I guess all I could really see was the name and the easy dough.

I worked for Lou Wilder for two seasons, and I made the dough all right. We took races at every major track in the country: Saratoga, Delaware, Narragansett, Harve De Grace and the others, and if we didn't win, couldn't possibly win, Lou played it so we still made money, and I got my cut. Lou was careful at the big tracks, though; it was at the little county fair type where he pulled all of the really raw ones. The rubes who bet their money at those places were easy to fool, and Lou had every trick in the bag.

Sometimes I could hardly swallow it—when he put in a fast ringer against some farm lad's pride and joy, or when the race was won the night before at the other fellow's stables—but I didn't kick. Lou never tried to fix the horse I was on and he never asked me to have a hand in any of the strong-arm or night work. I rode, and I got my money, and that was all there was to it; but it was kind of hard to race in some nice little town against nice people's horses and then know that I couldn't go back to that town ever without asking for trouble.

It was after the second season I had with Lou that he told me we were going to Clear Springs. I'd just finished a fast run and was back of the stables with the other boys who worked for Lou, batting the breeze and rehashing the race I'd just run.

"Whippet," Ike Reynolds said, "I

thought for a minute that they had you on that last turn. You've got to keep out of the pack when you're comin' in like that. Some of the other boys are sort of layin' for you."

Ike Reynolds is a tall lean quiet guy who bosses Lou's stables. He tends to his horses mostly and doesn't bother the jockeys, so usually when he breaks down and says something the other guys shut up and listen. I liked Ike, and I think he kind of favored me. I don't know if the other guys caught it or not, but I thought there was some real concern in his voice. I looked at him and began thinking. Ike got around among other stable hands, and he was apt to really know if they were after me or not as anybody.

I nodded slowly and shrugged. After all, there wasn't much I could say. I knew it had been close on that turn. I was in a slot for a minute, and before I got out I thought I could just feel that hard, splintery rail scraping my face.

Big Jug Wilson lifted his ponderous body from the feed bucket he'd been sitting on and looked me right in the eye. "Maybe your luck'll break pretty soon, Whippet," he said nastily.

Jud Wilson is another stable hand of Lou Wilder's, but his work isn't confined to horses only. He is a big man, and he never minded working at night, especially on some dumb rube who didn't know how to fight. Lou Wilder used him more as a protector and persuader than for the work he could get out of him around the nags.

I was just opening my mouth to reply to Jud when Wilder himself strolled up, although I don't know what a little guy like me could have said that would have impressed Jud Wilson.

"Okay, Jug," Lou said through half pursed lips in that oozing voice of his, "lay off Hal. He's just run a hard race out there. Anyway, I've got news for all of you. We're pullin' out for the short season today."

I looked at Lou a little gratefully, Ike Reynolds propped his long body against the stable wall and chewed on a piece of hay he'd gotten somewhere, and Jug Wilson grinned in anticipation, showing his

strong yellow teeth happily as he thought of the rubes he'd meet. He even flexed his hands slightly, making the thick cords of muscle in his forearms move restlessly.

Lou grinned indulgently at Jug. "Yes, Jug, you'll probably have some kind of work to do, too." He looked at Ike Reynolds and me and shrugged his heavy shoulders. "That's about all there is, I guess. You can get the stuff ready to move this afternoon. Our first stop is going to be Clear Springs."

Ike nodded slowly, the tanned skin on his brow wrinkling as he thought for a moment. I was going to ask Lou where Clear Springs was, but I could see by the satisfied look on Ike's face that he had brought the place to memory. It seemed as if Ike had been in every little jerk-water in the states. He invariably knew where we were going when Lou told him the name of any small town.

Waiting until Jug leered at me and walked away after Wilder, I said, "Say, Ike, where in heck is Clear Springs? How far, which way, and for what reason?"

Ike chewed thoughtfully for a moment more before he had all of the details gathered. "Clear Springs is a little place about a hundred and fifty miles from here, up-state. Every year about this time they run off a race something like a county fair. There ain't much money floatin' around there, though, and I don't know why Lou wants to ramble clear off up there unless he's lookin' up old friends, and that ain't like Lou. The only time that town had any really blooded stuff was when Colonel Raines ran his farm there, and you know he died last year."

I nodded absently and tried to figure it out. I could see a trip up there if Colonel Raines was still alive. He was built pretty much along the same lines as Lou Wilder. He had fooled all of the people but a few for most of his life and had been known as one of the greatest horse racers in his time, but when he died people found out what he had really been. Certain parties he had been paying disclosed certain facts about him, and when it all boiled down it left a pretty rotten smell. All the Colonel left behind him was a lousy reputation and a lot of unpaid debts. If the Colonel

had still been alive, it would have been easy to figure out why Lou Wilder was taking us to Clear Springs, but with the Colonel dead it left me stumped.

While I helped Ike pack all of the stuff into the two big trucks and loaded the two horses we were taking along I thought a lot about Clear Springs, but when we were ready to leave the next morning I still held a blank on the subject. We got on the road, with Lou and I in the cab of the first truck and Ike and Jug following us, and I tried to pump a little more out of Lou.

"Which horse are you running up here, Lou?" I said. "*Black King* or *Ace-in-the-Hole*?" Those were the two horses we were hauling. *Ace-in-the-Hole* was fastest by far, but the stallion *Black King* would probably be fast enough to handle any nag the rubes would enter.

Taking another drag on the cigar which was about to drive me from the cab of the truck, Lou grinned broadly. "We may not run either one of them, Hal. Might be that there'll be a horse up there for you to ride."

I didn't argue with him then, but I could see it all clearly at last. Lou had heard from someone that there was a real piece of horseflesh running at Clear Springs and he was going up there to see if he couldn't muscle in on the owner and make some money off the nag, maybe even by threatening to run one of his horses against the newcomer.

"How you going to be sure of a killing on a new nag?" I asked.

"Lou exhaled a suffocating cloud of thick smoke and smiled again. "Willie McKeown runs the track up there, and I know Willie," he said smugly. "You remember Willie?"

I remembered Willie. He was one of the smoothest small time chiselers I've ever met, and he owed Lou more than one favor. I could see how Lou would get his piece of change out of the race, if it cost every other better in town.

"Who owns this nag, Lou?"

"It used to belong to a Colonel Raines." Lou put that wise look of his on his face and I shut up. I knew he wasn't going to

tell me then who owned the nag I'd have to ride.

AND I didn't find out who owned the horse until I saw it. We set up shop outside of Clear Springs that afternoon, close to the track itself, and before dark Lou came back from town with the horse and its owner.

I was loafing around by the stable after coming back from a quick look-see at the track when the truck rolled in. It rolled right up to our rented stable and stopped. I could see the mare through the slats, and she looked like real horse to me. Walking over to the truck, I stood there with my hands on my hips, sizing the nag up, and the owner got out of the truck. I nodded absently as a figure in denims and a blue wool shirt climbed out of the truck. Then I froze and looked again, and not at the horse. It was a girl! And what a girl!

The man's clothing could not hide the feminine roundness of her figure, her face was like a cover girl's, and she had the most magnificent hair I've ever seen. It was a soft chestnut, and was stirred about her peeping ears by the afternoon breeze. She smiled and walked closer and I took a good look at her face. It was just as beautiful close up. Below a smooth tanned forehead, her blue eyes were steady as she met my gaze, and her amused smile disclosed even white teeth. Her cheeks were colored slightly and her freckled nose was turned up just enough.

She looked me up and down as well as I was looking at her and said, "Hello, Mister Whippet. You are the man who's going to ride my horse, aren't you?"

I stammered a greeting and felt my face flush. I mumbled some sort of an excuse for staring at her and turned back to the horse, though I could hardly pull my glance from her face. In my racket I didn't get a chance to meet many girls like her, and she sort of took the wind out of me.

Lou came around the other side of the truck and I stared again. At his side, holding fast to his fat hand, was a little girl. I looked at her hair and eyes and knew that she must be the sister of the

girl standing beside me. Lou grinned, not meeting my eyes, and introduced us around.

The girl beside me was Alice Raines, and the little girl was her younger sister, Nancy Raines. Before I could catch myself, I blurted, "Raines! Then you're Colonel Raines' daughter!"

Alice looked at me as if I had just slapped her in the face. "Yes," she said, a touch of bitterness in her voice, "Colonel Raines' daughter."

I could see that she wasn't proud of the memory of her father, and I wanted to apologize, but the words just wouldn't come. Lou gave me a nasty look and said, "When can we run the mare, Miss Raines?"

"Why, right now, I guess," Alice said. "If Mister Whippet is ready."

I looked at her quickly, trying to tell her with my eyes that I was sorry. "Right now would be swell," I said lamely. "Best time of the day for running."

Lou called Ike Reynolds, and we unloaded the horse. When we got it outside, and while I waited for Ike to put a saddle on her I got a good look at the mare. She was a real horse, all right, probably not trained right and no Derby winner, but real horse. About like little *Ace-in-the-Hole*. She'd win some races and place in a good many, but she'd never be tops.

I led her out to the track, Alice walking beside me, and climbed into the saddle. She took my weight well and tossed her head spiritedly, and for a moment I thought I might have misjudged her. Alice had evidently forgotten my rudeness in mentioning her father, for she was smiling up at me and giving me advice. Little Nancy was beside us, hopping up and down with excitement.

Starting out slowly, I gave the mare a few turns around the track before the timed run. She started fast and seemed to like to run, but she lacked something. Before they gave me the time at the end of the run I knew that this horse was no winner in any real race. She might be able to take this race at Clear Springs, but she'd never pull down any real dough.

I pulled her up and Alice Raines said, "Like her?"

"Fine," I lied, and looked at Lou Wilder. I was thinking that he'd better get into town and have a parley with Willie McKeown if he wanted to pull any money out of the next day's race. Lou was thinking the same. He excused himself, telling Alice that we'd take care of the horse until the race, and left, waddling rapidly toward one of the trucks.

After he had gone, I let little Nancy stay and watch Ike put *Sweetheart*—that was the mare's name, thanks to Nancy—away and I drew Alice aside. I leaned beside her against the fence surrounding the track and breathed in the light intoxication of her perfume. The sun set suddenly and the breeze dropped away to a dead calm. For a minute it was almost as though we were the only two breathing things in the world, and I got all mixed up inside. It was with some effort that I put thoughts of Alice and myself out of my mind.

"Alice . . . I mean Miss Raines," I said, "I think you've got a great horse there, and I'll be glad to ride her in the race tomorrow, but could you tell me what arrangements you've made with Lou Wilder?" I know Lou would have skinned me alive if he'd heard me say that, but Alice changed me somehow, and I couldn't figure out how Lou figured on backing her nag.

"Well," she said slowly, "I hate to admit it, but he's really not going to make much if we win. He offered me a rider for twenty-five percent if *Sweetheart* wins or loses. I don't see how he can make much money that way unless he bets heavily, but he says that it doesn't matter. He was helped by Dad once and he says he owes it to me." She paused and breathed a deep sigh.

I was silent. All I could think of was Lou Wilder doing somebody a favor. It just couldn't be true. Then Alice told me a little more about herself and her reasons for racing *Sweetheart*.

The colonel had left her and Nancy nothing but debts and their land. She had sold right down to bed rock and managed to keep the land and a few blooded horses. She hadn't bred any of these or tried to race anywhere else because of her finan-

cial status. She had taken a job in town and managed to keep Nancy in school. With all of their savings bet on *Sweetheart* tomorrow, they stood to make enough to put the farm back into operation. She had inherited enough of the horse lover from her father so she really wanted to keep at it. If they lost, they'd be all through. The farm would be lost, and she'd have to plan on spending a large part of her life working at a town job to see Nancy grown up and through school. I gathered that Nancy was about the only person in her life who really mattered.

I started getting ideas then, but I put them out of my head. I was just a jockey who rode for a crooked boss. I could never hope for any girl like Alice Raines. I tried to talk her out of her anxiety, saw her and Nancy to their small truck and said goodnight.

After they left I went to the stall of the horse they owned and tried to think of the race tomorrow. Alice kept coming back to my mind, and I still couldn't figure out Lou Wilder's game. I left the stable cursing *Sweetheart* and Wilder and went over to the trucks for a half sleepless night.

I found out Wilder's game almost too late the next day at race time. He rolled in from town with another man. He was a little guy, and when he jumped out of his car I knew he was a jockey.

Lou introduced him as Whitey Temple, and I didn't like his looks any more than I liked Jug Wilson's. "What is this?" I said, forgetting myself for a minute. "Am I running this race or not?"

Lou smiled and winked. "Sure, sure, Hal, but so is Whitey. He's riding *Black King*. Miss Raines is betting about all she has on this race, and I can't afford to see her win. She's got some nice blood stock and good graze pasture outside of town that'll go for a song about tomorrow."

The surprise must have shown in my face because Lou looked at me wonderingly and said, "What's the matter, Hal? Hadn't you figured that out yet?" His face tightened. "Or did you talk too much with Miss Raines last night?"

It was all plain then. Lou Wilder was

playing for much more than the small change which would be bet today. He could afford to have me ride for nothing for Alice Raines when he could get her land and horses for a song the next day. It was a nifty, all right, one of the nicest ones I'd heard of, and I knew Lou had all of the angles covered, but I didn't like it.

Lou must have seen by my face that I wasn't going for it; he nodded to Jug Wilson and the big hostler ambled over to us. Lou looked at Jug and looked at me. "You feel well enough to ride, don't you, Hal?" he said, smirking.

I looked at Jug's big arms and knotty shoulders. "Yeah," I said with mock good humor, "I feel fine. Let's get these horses out to the track."

We watched while Ike Reynolds saddled *Black King*. "We'd better take him out to the track first and get him entered," Lou said. "Miss Raines'll be here shortly to enter her mare." I kept getting angrier by the second as I watched and listened to Lou and thought of Alice Raines. This deal would have been all right if we were pulling it on some other character who'd do the same to us, but it was different with Alice. I kept thinking of the way little Nancy jumped up and down with excitement when she watched *Sweetheart*, and how Alice had looked at me hopefully when I was through with the trial run. I could still hear her saying, "Like her?"

Whitey Temple took *Black King's* bridle and led him from the stable, and Lou Wilder went along with them. He turned at the door and said to Jug, "I want to see Hal out there on top of *Sweetheart* when the first call comes."

Jug leered at me and answered, "Yes, sir, Mister Wilder!"

Ike Reynolds picked up the remaining saddle and lifted it to his shoulder. We followed him as he walked between the stall rows. I was thinking of how Alice Raines' face would look when she saw *Black King*. She wouldn't be hopeful then. I was also thinking of how much I could do to the Raines horse farm with the wad of money I had salted away in Eastern banks. Then I looked at Jug Wilson with the hopeful leer on his face and remem-

bered that I was a jockey, riding for my oats. I was paid to straddle Wilder's nags, not to poke my nose into his business. I shouldn't care what happened to Alice Raines. I shouldn't, but I did.

Pausing at *Sweetheart's* stall, Ike Reynolds looked at me and looked at Jug Wilson and didn't say anything. Then he walked right past *Sweetheart's* stall to *Ace-in-the-Hole's*. "Ike," Jug rumbled, "that ain't the right nag!"

Turning around slowly, Ike lowered the saddle to the floor. "So it ain't," he said softly, that slow grin of his twisting his mouth. Jug gasped in amazement, and my knees went weak I was so surprised.

Ike reached into the stall between *Sweetheart* and *Ace-in-the-Hole* and came out with a four foot piece of two-by-four. Jug roared in rage and leapt straight at him. Ike pivoted lazily and swung his lanky frame out of the way. Jug rebounded from the stable wall, Ike swung the two-by-four, and Jug collapsed on the floor.

Nudging Jug with his foot, Ike looked at me and said, "He'll live. Now help me saddle up this nag. I heard Miss Raines talkin' to you by the track last night, and anyway I'm about fed up with this dog eat dog stuff."

Still trying to pinch myself to see if I was dreaming, I jumped to and helped him saddle the little mare. Watching in sheer amazement, I stood silent while Ike went to a cupboard in the stable and came back with a bucket of black liquid. Dipping a rag into the liquid, he rapidly deyed the stockings and blaze on *Ace-in-the-Hole*. "There!" he said breathlessly. "A ringer! We're going to slip a ringer in on Lou Wilder. Get on. I'll meet you in town afterwards. If Miss Raines gets a good look at this horse before you get her entered, you won't be able to ride this afternoon."

**A**LL of the way out to the judges' stand I felt as if I was walking on air. I felt close to Ike, back there alone with Jug Wilson, and felt good as I had never felt before. It would be worth losing my jockey's license even if I lost the race to see the expression on Lou

Wilder's face when he discovered that we had pulled one of the oldest gags in the racket and slipped a ringer in on him.

I entered the horse and had myself weighed in before I saw Alice Raines. She looked for a long time at the horse, while my throat grew taut with apprehension, and then reached for the binoculars Nancy was holding. I waited until I thought they were focused on my face and winked. I could see her mouth fly open, but I couldn't hear the outraged phrases.

When I got out on the track, I looked through the crowd for Lou Wilder. He was standing by the starting gate talking to a man who I knew must be Willie McKeown. He didn't even look out on the track, but was bent over backward, laughing. He looked at me just as the gates opened and the race started.

It was about what I thought it would be. There were some pretty fair horses entered, but nothing to touch *Black King* and *Ace-in-the-Hole*. Whitey Temple held the stallion down until we were in the stretch, and then we both opened up and tore away from the pack. I laughed and yelled at Whitey when I passed him next to the rail, and he squawked in rage and disbelief. He thought I was riding *Sweet-heart* and that Lou Wilder was pulling some kind of a quickie on him.

I passed the finish line a length ahead of Whitey and *Black King*, and the stark expression on Lou Wilder's face as I flashed by was the prettiest sight I've seen in my life. Laughing, I pulled up and let them drop a wreath around *Ace-in-*

*the-Hole's* neck. I looked back at Lou Wilder and laughed right in the judges' faces. Lou was yelling indignantly at Willie McKeown, and Willie was shaking his head just as vigorously.

I rode away from the judges and out through the crowd to the stables. I tied *Ace-in-the-Hole* up and left. Jug Wilson was up on his feet, but he didn't say a word to me. I went over and got my few belongings and headed for the highway.

I met Ike Reynolds in town and we went to a coffee joint. We were there, figuring on how to get out of town without running into Lou or Jug when the door opened and Alice Raines come in. I turned around, expecting her to yell at me, but she only stood there and smiled. I forgot all about getting out of town then, forgot about Jug Wilson and Lou Wilder. I even forgot about Ike there beside me. I was drawn to her like a bee to honey. Her lips beneath mine were cool and soft just as I'd thought they would be.

I came out of it and began to remember again. Ike grinned his slow grin and one eye closed in a wink. I turned back to Alice and tried to forget everything again.

I haven't left Clear Springs yet, and I'm still trying to forget. Alice does a pretty good job of helping, and you should see Ike Reynolds. Working there on the horse farm for Alice and me he looks as if he never touched a crooked dollar in his life.

If *Ace Whippet* was in Clear Springs now, I think I could listen to his fatherly

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# A SPECIAL FEATURE by James Mackie

illustrated by Phil Berube



**PITCHERS ADOPTED FELDING GLOVES LONG BEFORE BILL DOAK, CARDINAL AND DODGER HURLER CAME ALONG... BUT TOO MANY BALLS HIT TO THE MOUND, SQUIRTED THROUGH HIS FINGERS FOR FREAK HITS AND HE LACED THE THUMB AND FIRST FINGER TOGETHER, PATENTED THE IDEA, AND AT ONE TIME WAS DRAWING AN INCOME ANNUALLY OF \$3,000 IN ROYALTIES //**

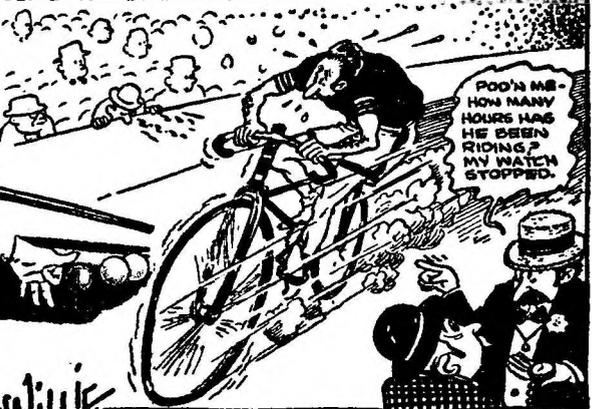
**A RACE HORSE WILL STEP BETWEEN 50 AND 60 FEET PER SECOND, DEPENDING UPON HIS CLASS, THE DISTANCE OF THE CONTEST AND THE CONDITION OF THE TRACK... MAN O WAR, ONE OF THE NIGHTIEST STRIDING HORSES OF ALL TIME, IS CREDITED WITH AVERAGE LEAPS OF 27 FEET, MEANING HE MADE 2 JUMPS PER SECOND, EVEN WHEN TRAVELLING IN COMPARATIVELY SLOW TIME //**



**THE FIRST AUTO RACE EVER RUN WAS ON JUNE 22<sup>ND</sup>, 1894 - FROM PARIS TO ROUEN, FRANCE, THE DISTANCE WAS 78 MILES.**



**THE FIRST OF THE INTERNATIONAL 6-DAY BIKE RACES WAS RUN IN MADISON SQ. GARDEN IN 1891. FROM THAT YEAR UNTIL 1899 IT WAS A SINGLES AFFAIR, THE MEN HAD TO GO IT ALONE, RIDING AS LONG AS THEY COULD, RESTING FOR A WHILE AND THEN RESUMING. THE TIME OF THE EVENT WAS 142 HOURS. PLUGGER BILL MARTIN WAS THE FIRST WINNER, RIDING AN OLD STYLE BIKE TO VICTORY.**



**WILLIE HOPPE, KING OF THE BILLIARD WORLD, ONCE HAD HIS HANDS INSURED FOR \$100,000! HE WON'T DRIVE A CAR FOR FEAR THE STEERING WILL STIFFEN HIS WRISTS! AND HE NEVER GOES TO THE MOVIES, BECAUSE GLARE IRRITATES HIS EYES! //**



★ (More interesting oddities on page 4)

# CHAMPIONS FOLLOW THROUGH

by ERIC THORSTEIN

**T**HE first time you went out on a golf course, somebody told you about relaxing, about how important it is. And probably to prove the point, they told you about Jim Sanderson and his kid brother Luke.

There's a couple of things in that story that never hit the papers. I know, because I was Old Jim's caddy for a long time, and I toted clubs for him all through that match. The title should have been a cinch for him that year, what with the Opens being held on his own home grounds. And Jim was still playing a fine game of golf then. But there was this business about Luke. . . .

There was nothing special about the tournament right up through the fifth day. Jim and Luke both qualified without trouble, and things went pretty much as expected. It was in the semi-finals that the excitement began.



---

***Jim Sanderson was on his home course, at peak form, and in this tournament to win — but the game he was playing was his kid brother's, . . . eighteen holes ahead!***

---

It was Luke's first championship tournament, and of course everybody who knew the two brothers was pleased as punch when the kid qualified. He's a lot younger than Jim . . . the old boy was hitting thirty-three at the time, and the kid was just eighteen. Jim had taken care of him for years, ever since their pop had died, while Luke was still in short pants.

So it was only natural Jim taught the kid golf, and it was only natural he worried about the youngster too. Luke was just one year into college then and he'd won the national intercollegiate a couple months before the big Open. Jim was happy about that, of course, and he was glad when Luke qualified for the match. But there were some things he didn't like so much . . . things the sports scribes didn't know about.

The big surprise came when Luke beat Johnny Burdett in the quarter-finals, 5-3, and made himself eligible for the semis. Nobody had thought the kid was really good enough to take Burdett. But it was no fluke. Johnny was on his game that day, and it was a fine match to watch. I didn't see it, of course, being busy with Jim's bag, but I heard about the whole thing, and they were both playing a top-notch game. Luke won out because he was good, not because Burdett was bad.

Well, then it was time for the semis, and here was Luke playing Hank Kalder and Jim out a half-hour in back of him against Steve Scott.

We got out there in front of the clubhouse at nine o'clock, and after Scott led off with a two hundred and sixty yard drive straight down the fairway, Jim teed up, and he was just stepping up to address the ball, when somebody came running up to me with the news that Luke had taken the third hole, after halving the first two with Kalder. I gave Old Jim the high sign, and he turned around and stepped away from the ball.

He came over to me, and he said, real low, but making it very very clear what he meant, "Listen, Karl, I don't want to know. Get that through your head, and see to it. I don't want to know anything about that kid's game till it's all over. I got enough to worry about right here."

Then he turned around again and went back to the tee, leaving me with my mouth hanging open, wondering what'd happened. It wasn't like Jim. A good golfer learns to take things easy, and I could see from the muscles tightening in his cheeks and neck when he said that to me, Old Jim wasn't taking this match easy at all.

He swung, and it was good. In back of Scott's, but an easy two-twenty, and straight. The only thing was, on that shot I wasn't watching the ball. I was watching Jim, and I was worried right away.

You can always tell from a man's follow-through is he going to play good. Get those muscles knotted up, and the followup is bound to be jerky and cut short. When I saw the club whistle up clean as far to one side as it was on the other, I knew I could relax. This time, it didn't take much to tell me Old Jim was going to need everything I could do for him, and that probably wouldn't be enough.

That first hole was a par four over pretty easy ground, and Jim didn't have any trouble getting his second drive onto the green. He approached with a fifteen-foot putt, slightly uphill, and Scott's ball came up to rest almost on top of his, maybe an inch or two to the side.

That's the kind of thing the gallery loves. Two champion golfers with practically the same shot to make, and the cup—not to mention a cool twenty thousand—waiting at the end of the course.

Scott was a spot closer, not much, but enough so Jim had to take his putt first. He wanted a birdie bad. I was just beginning to realize how much he wanted to win that match.

Old Jim lined up for that putt like his life depended on dropping it in the cup. I think he memorized every half-inch rise in the terrain before he addressed the ball, and then he looked back and forth, and back again, ball to pin, and pin to ball, lining it up for sure.

Well, there was only one thing that could happen. He hit it just right . . . too much too right. It rolled right to the cup, with exactly enough English on it to make the placement perfect . . . and

stopped where a little bit of lip was on the brim, without enough energy left to go over and down.

Scott must have figured Jim had done enough lining up for two. He stepped up without hardly looking, and gave his ball a gentle push, and dropped it neat as you'd want for a birdie to Jim's par.

It went that way. If it hadn't been Jim's home course, it would have been a massacre. As it was, Old Jim was three strokes over par by the time they hit the fifth cup, and Scott was two up, at par, when they teed up for the sixth.

**J**IM had been playing the slowest game I ever saw him go through. It was as if the match hung on every shot, and he spent more time lining them up than he did walking after them. The match up ahead was going fast; I was getting reports all along, and Luke and Kalder were on the thirteenth green when we'd just hit the sixth. Luke was three up with five to do. I knew it, but I saw to it Jim didn't.

I wanted to tell him. I can't remember ever wanting to tell anyone anything so bad. I'd been watching him play those cautious balls, and I saw the tightness in his face, and the choppy follow-throughs. The thing was, I knew why he was so worried, and I was sure if he knew the kid brother was out so far ahead he'd be able to relax and take it easy. But he said he didn't want to know till it was over, and if there's one thing you learn in a hurry caddying, it's do what the boss says.

Driving off the sixth, Jim sliced badly, and landed in the woods a scant hundred yards up the fairway. Scott drove his over two hundred, for a fair chance at an approach on two, and the sixth was a par five. With the kind of driving he'd been doing all morning, the two-fifty over the level part of the fairway was almost a sure thing, for another birdie, and another hole. Jim was going to have to dig himself out of the rough under the branches, and probably hit anyhow one over par.

I found the ball for him, and it was neatly stashed away in back of a low

bush. The only way out was a pitch onto the fairway, and then he'd have close to three-fifty to make up on a single drive to hit par. He might have lofted it for a longer drive, except there were stray branches sticking out overhead, between the bush and the fairway. Anyway he did it, the hole was lost. He knew it, and so did I. He asked me for a pitch-iron, and I handed him a number nine iron instead. He whirled around at me. We were out of sight of the crowd, back in the bushes.

"Karl," he said, and his face was white with strain, except where the little muscles moved, red against the skin, "Karl, you've been my caddie for a long time. Don't get too smart now."

I took a chance. "You can't win this one playing safe, Mr. Sanderson," I pleaded with him. "Why not take a chance. Gambling is your kind of golf."

"I know my own game," he said, but I could see he was half-convinced.

"Maybe you lose a stroke," I added. "Maybe you get back even."

He took the niblick.

When he hit that one, I knew I was right about what was wrong with his game. If he thought he had even a small chance, he was trying so hard it half-killed him. This time, he knew he was down, and what he did didn't much matter. He had to take a short backswing, to keep from hitting a tree, but he lofted that ball clear over the branches up ahead, and I saw the club come around to the other side like it was a pendulum on a clock, and couldn't stop till it hit just the right spot.

The ball cleared the trees at the perfect angle, and sailed on up the fairway. He had plenty of pitch on it; for a little while it was up so high I wasn't exactly sure, staring against the sun, where it was. But then it was dropping fast. It came down fifty yards ahead of Scott's shot, rolled ten feet, and stopped, just the right side of the lake that ran along the other side of the fairway.

Old Jim felt pretty good about that. There's something in the roar that comes out of a gallery for that kind of shot that'd set up anybody . . . and the top

men never get tired of hearing it. Sanderson walked up to that thing and walloped it with a number two iron, to place it fairly on the green two hundred odd yards away, a good twenty-five feet inside of where Scott's long approach had landed him in the long grass.

Scott chipped onto the green, to place twenty feet from the cup. Jim's ball was lying three, for a fifteen-foot putt, and Scott, still playing his quick easy game, knocked his ball to within a foot of the hole, just missing enough English to drop it in. He was lying four with a dead-sure drop for a par five. Old Jim lined up his fifteen-footer, knowing that it could win him a birdie and the hole.

That did it. He'd hit one ball when it didn't seem like he could win, and he'd hit another with the good feeling you get, coming up from behind. But now he was back where perfect golf could win for him, and nothing much short of golf. It was a tricky green, and it needed just the right kind of a putt. Jim could have done it any other day of his life. This time, he walked around, measured the distance, took up his stance, got down on the ground to eye the line-up again, took up his stance again, addressed the ball, and walloped it three feet the other side of the hole.

They halved it at par. Scott was still up two.

**T**HE seventh is the dogleg on our course. It's a pretty sharp vee, maybe a forty-five degree angle, and it goes around the lake. That wouldn't be so bad, except the far side of the lake is plated with a stand of tall trees. It's not very wide, but it's ragged, and the other side of the fairway were weeds pitted with sand stretches. You don't take a chance on that one unless you know the course inside out. Jim did. Scott didn't.

Scott drove down the fairway, like the smart golfer he is. He put everything he had into it, and sent it almost three hundred yards, clear to the turn, where a small corner off the lake would give him a hundred-yard approach to the green on his third shot.

This was the hole Jim knew he had to

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**\*SIGNED UP AS MANAGER AGAIN DEC. 5, 1947**



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*BY WALT MURSON*

**DO YOU LIKE YOUR FUN WITH TONGUE IN CHEEK — OR FOOT IN MOUTH? EITHER WAY YOU WILL ENJOY A GOOD GAG — AND THERE ARE HUNDREDS MORE IN THE NEW ISSUES OF**

**JOKER ☆ GAYETY ☆ SNAP**



I started up to tell him, and I saw he was taking up his stance for a drive, so I waited. And while I waited, I did some more thinking.

I knew what Old Jim was worried about. A caddy gets to know a lot . . . stuff you hear in the locker room, and remarks here and there. Golf pros don't make the kind of money it looks like they do, and a lot of it goes in expenses. Luke was only one year through school, and I knew Jim had made up his mind away back when that the kid brother was going all the way through. He knew what it was to *have* to make your living out of the game, and he didn't want it that way for Luke. The prize at the end of this contest was what would take the boy through. There wasn't enough any other way.

Now Luke had placed for the finals. If Jim made it too, they could both relax. But even if he didn't, there was still a good chance at the dough for Luke. This was all he needed to know, and winning could stop being so important to him. He could take it easy and play golf, without the pressure that was killing every stroke he made.

And then it hit me. . . .

He drove a fair ball near the green on the short eighth. While we walked down, I got up close, and whispered a couple of words.

He didn't answer right away. He walked a few steps, then he turned, and gave me a strange kind of look, and said, "Well, that's *that*."

Then he played golf.

**T**HIS is the part of the story you've heard before . . . how, coming up to the eighth, Jim Sanderson suddenly loosened up, and the whole game changed. The scribes had seen how tight he was, and they didn't know why, though of course plenty of them guessed it had to do with Luke. The smarter ones knew it for sure when they saw how he went easy right after I got a couple of words in his ear, when the news came through about the kid brother winning.

What you heard I won't bother telling

you over again. You know how he turned around and grinned at the gallery once on the eighth green, and started mowing the lawn with his ball. He made the par three there in two, one putt in from a thirty-foot approach, in the long grass.

You know about the hole in one on the tenth, and some of the tricky playing around the sand traps on that wicked eleventh.

By that time, Jim had squared the game. From three down, he was two down at the end of the eighth, one down after the tenth, and square all, going to the thirteenth.

It stayed that way for three holes. They were both fighting. Jim certainly hadn't stopped wanting to win. The way they wrote it up the next day in all the papers, after Luke won, Jim was just fighting for a chance to play off against his brother, for kicks.

That's not exactly the way it was, but

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## SPORTS LEADERS MAGAZINE—FAST-ACTION THRILLERS

It all made a good story and a great game of golf.

The real excitement came on the seventeenth. Sanderson took the sixteenth out from under Scott's nose by a miraculous birdie four, pulling the ball into the cup on a chip shot, by sheer will power.

Old Jim was one up with two to play, on his own course, and with all the psychological advantages. He'd pulled out of a bad hole to come streaking ahead, and on top of that the seventeenth was the kind of hole you had to know. It was full of watertraps, and if you got past them, there were twin sand patches flanking the green, to catch an inaccurate approach.

Scott should have been rattled. If he had been, the game would have ended there. As it was, five thousand people held their breaths, while Sanderson and Scott matched each other, shot for shot, past the water, onto the green, and into the hole, with twin eagles on a par five hole.

And Jim was still one up, with one to win if he didn't want a playoff. He was tired, too. They'd been playing for more than three hours, and the strain was beginning to show.

I wish I could say the eighteenth was exciting. It should have been, but Scott hooked badly, and although he didn't concede, that was really the end of the game. Jim did one of the finest putting jobs I've seen him do, pushing a ball eighteen feet, over a gentle rise and slope, to drop straight in, and took the hole by two strokes, and the game was over.

It was over, that is, for the scribes and the gallery. There was still something left for me to do.

Luke came running up right away, of course. He'd been following the game since his own was done, hiking straight over to where we were, around the middle of the course, without even going down to change. Now he came a-runnin', and grabbed Old Jim by the shoulders.

"Man, what playing!" he shouted.

"Thanks, boy," Jim said. "We all get a streak sometimes." They turned back toward the clubhouse, and I couldn't hear what Jim was saying, but I could see the hurt look on Luke's face.

*Here it is, I thought. Now I gotta do something fast.*

"Mr. Sanderson," I yelled.

Jim turned around, grinning. "What you want, Karl?"

"Could I see you a minute?" I went up close to them. "It's important," I said. "It's real important, and kinda private."

Old Jim looked at me like I was off my nut, but we've been working together a long time.

"Sure, Karl," he said after a while. "Sure. Hey, Luke, you don't mind waiting a minute, do you? I want to hear about your game. Hold on. I'll be right back."

I took him off around a corner of the clubhouse where we could be alone.

"Listen," I said, and for once I forgot to be respectful. Maybe he's the greatest golf player alive, but he wasn't very smart that day. "Listen," I told him, "maybe you don't know who won your game for you today."

"Sure," he said, icy, "I did."

"No," I told him, "I did. Now I'll tell you something else. Luke didn't lose, like I told you. Luke won. You can go back and congratulate him if you want."

He stared at me. "Oh," he said, "I see."

Then neither of us said anything. Finally he looked up. "Karl," he said slowly, "you know why?"

"Yeah," I said, and grinned at him. I hadn't been sure right up till then, but but I finally knew for certain. "Yeah, you were afraid if he got the dough, he'd quit school."

"He wants to be just like me," Jim said bitterly. You wouldn't believe how bitter that was. "He wants to be just like me, so twenty years from now a kid can come along and scare him to death."

"You don't have to worry," I told him. "You can beat the kid easy."

And he did. The finals are something nobody tells a story about because it was just two men playing golf. I got hold of the kid that night, and told him the whole story, and I guess he and Jim got it straightened out between them, because I took one look at Old Jim's follow-through when he teed off the next day, and I knew everything was going to be all right.

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Thousands of Overweight people report sensational results, some Losing 40 Pounds in 40 Days, others enthuse about "How Well They Feel" while Reducing. To achieve same results . . . Just take Protam as directed, Once or Twice a day, according to how fast you wish to Lose Weight. Protam is a FOOD, Scientifically Formulated, Laboratory Tested and Approved, Fortified with energy-giving PROTEINS, AMINO ACIDS, MINERALS and VITAMINS. The Protam Plan reacts quickly . . . Drastically Cuts Down Fat Producing Calories. USES UP ACCUMULATED EXCESS FAT. Lose Ugly Fat Economically, Simply, Pleasantly, without risking your health. Look and feel better, see bulges disappear within the first weeks.

**REDUCE**  
WITHIN 10 DAYS OR  
MONEY REFUNDED

# FREE 10 DAY TRIAL OFFER

ORDER TODAY . . . You risk NO MONEY, not even postage. You must Lose Pounds and Inches within Ten Days or your Money will be Refunded Immediately, including postage. Your decision is final. Just Mail Coupon Today . . . NOW. On delivery simply pay postman \$2.50 . . . begin Losing Fat the first few days. Enjoy New Energy . . . Have confidence in your appearance.

## SEND NO MONEY

ASSOCIATED NUTRITION PRODUCTS, INC.  
Dept. 604, 150 Nassau St., New York 7, N. Y.

Send me in plain package the 8 oz. Protam Plan for a Ten Day Free Trial. I will pay postman \$2.50 plus postage. This money will be refunded immediately, including postage, if I do not safely REDUCE to my satisfaction within 10 Days. I RISK NOTHING.

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