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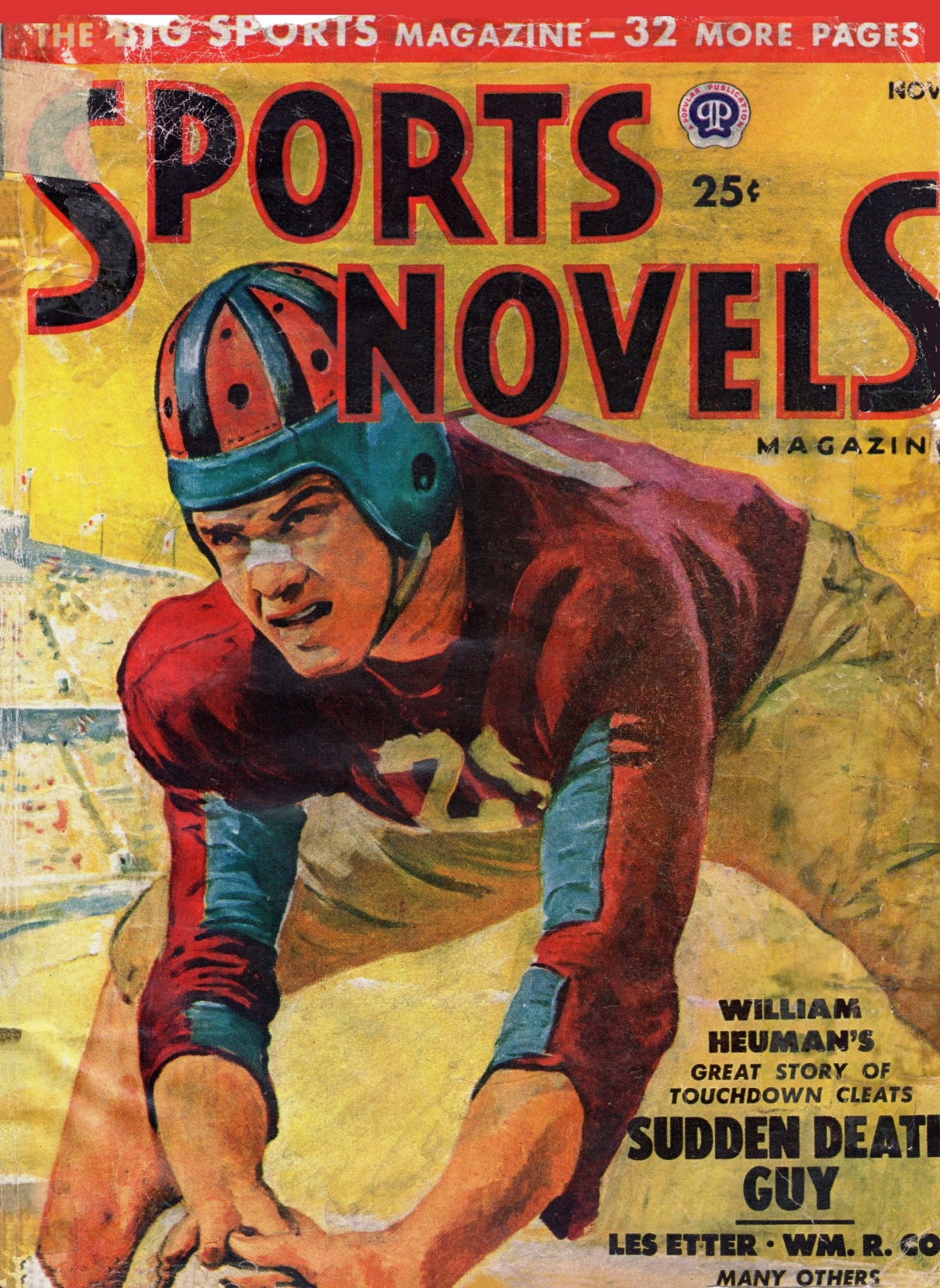

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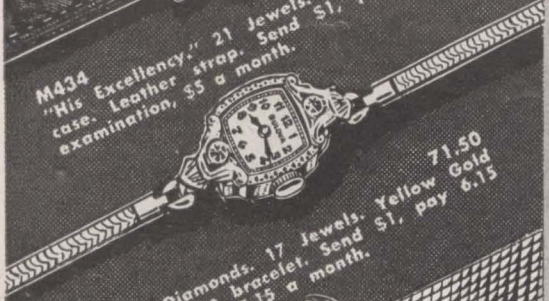

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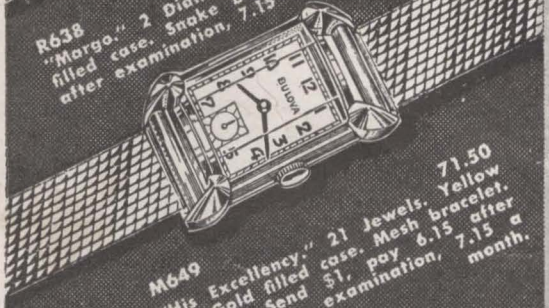

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VOL. 17 CONTENTS FOR NOVEMBER, 1948 No. 1

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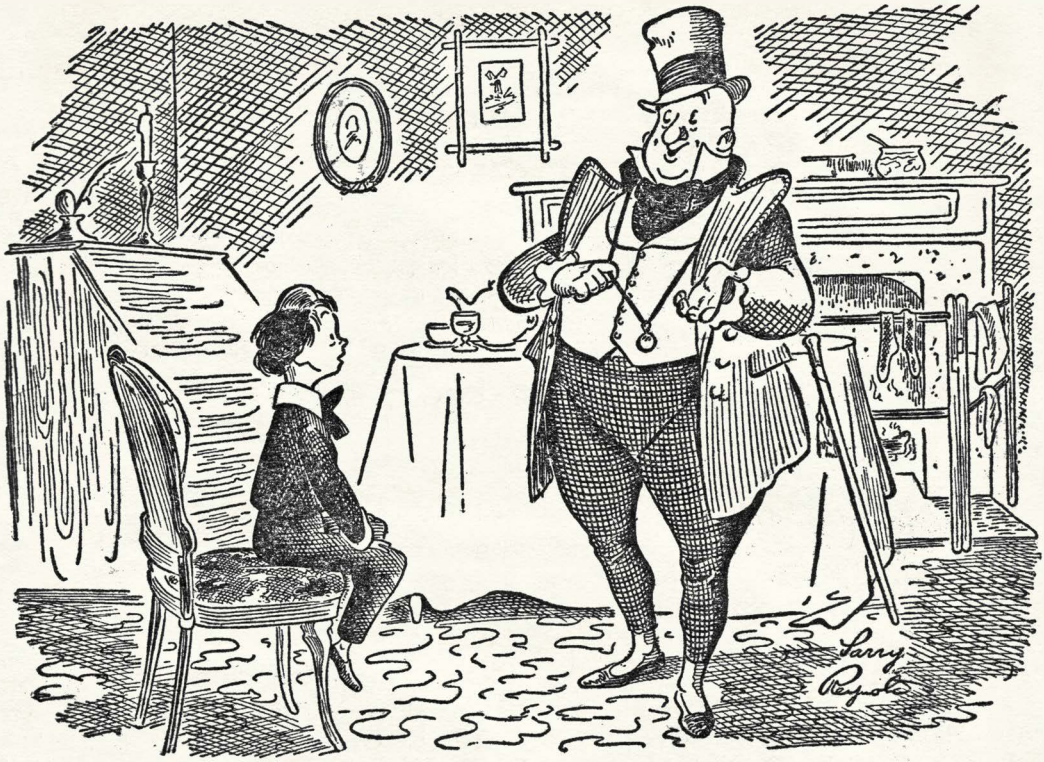

Mr. Micawber was only half-right!

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U.S. SECURITY LOAN

THE HOME PLATE

By John Drebinger

IT IS the ninth inning of a rough, tough and important ball game, an encounter that has had a great crowd of seventy thousand tense and anxious for several innings, practically hanging on every pitch.

For this game, even though played quite early in the season, happens to be a very important one to the Yankees and Red Sox. For, you see, these two clubs had come to the barrier of the American League's 1948 pennant race as virtual co-favorites, but in those early weeks neither party had yet performed up to expected standards.

In fact, things had been breaking badly for both managers, Bucky Harris and Joe McCarthy, and as the schedule had tossed them together before either had a chance to get his entry thoroughly in order, this could be a series in which somebody could get seriously hurt.

Both sides still remembered too well what had happened to the heavily favored Cardinals in the early weeks of the 1947 National League race. Expected to be

off the mark with a flying start, the Redbirds unaccountably dropped nine of their first eleven encounters, and that terrible getaway placed them under such a terrific strain to catch up with the leaders that they never did quite overcome the handicap. In the end it cost them the flag.

Hence the grim determination with which Harris and McCarthy fought each other to escape the trap into which the hapless Cardinals had fallen only the previous spring. However, as this particular struggle swings into its final inning, only McCarthy seems to have cause for worry. Harris, in fact, is sitting quite pretty with not a care in the world so far as this afternoon's events are concerned.

For eight innings Eddie Lopat, a chunky lefthander, whom the Yankees had obtained in a trade from the White Sox the previous winter, has been baffling the vaunted Boston batting order as though operating the ball with the aid of black magic. In that stretch the Bosox have made exactly five hits, all singles, and not a single run have they been able to push over the plate.

In the meantime, the Bombers have rolled up an impressive margin. Three runs came riding home on a tremendous circuit smash by Joe DiMaggio, back in the first inning, and two more tallies followed in the fifth.

The Yanks, therefore, lead, 5-0, and as the struggle enters the top half of the ninth, sturdy little Lopat has to retire only three more men to nail down the much-desired victory. The big gathering, filling the huge Yankee Stadium, awaits anxiously the final kill.

It seems well on the way as Stan Spence, first Boston batter in the inning, flies to Tommy Henrich in right field. One batter is out of the way.

But Vernon Stephens draws a base on balls, and a moment later comes the first

(Continued on page 41)

By William Heuman

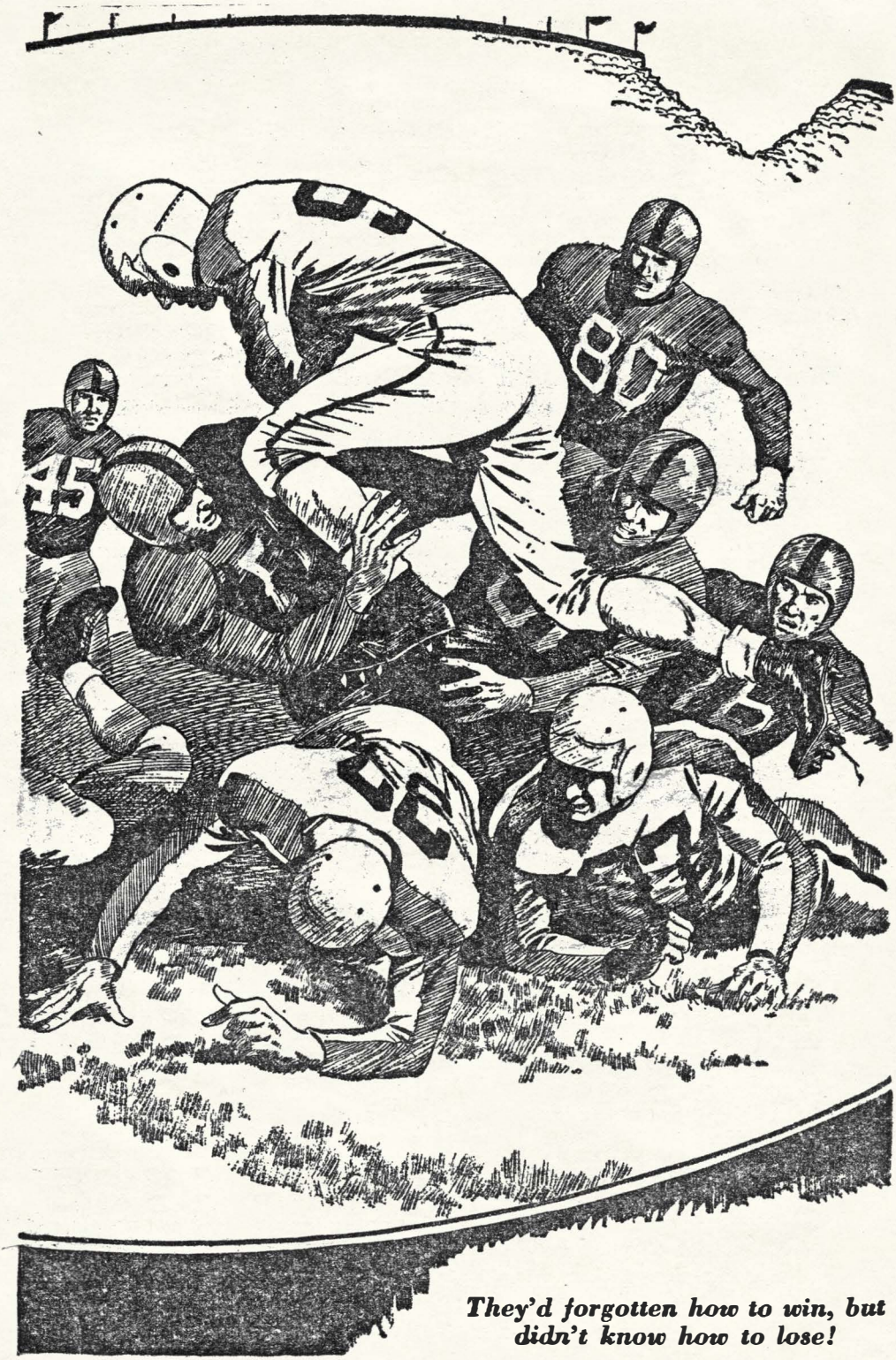
SUDDEN DEATH GUY

He was nearly broken in half by cross tackles, but he held onto the ball and they made another first down. . . .

A Novel

THEY didn't look like football players. For three afternoons they'd been hanging around this big field, taking part in the setting up exercises, running around the field, retrieving kicks, but being generally ignored.

Huck Lannigan, formerly star quarterback of Local 901, Steelworkers' Union, Milltown, tossed the pigskin to Red Grogan, ex-end of the same union eleven, and



They'd forgotten how to win, but didn't know how to lose!

Grogan tossed it back to him, aimlessly, a frown on his lean, freckled face.

Joe Rienzi, fullback for the steel mill outfit, stood by, a blade of grass in his mouth, big hands on his hips, watching the hundred and fifty odd men on this huge field, assembly line for the nationally prominent State elevens.

Huck, to break the monotony, let the ball fall to the ground and then he drop-kicked it the five short yards into Grogan's hands. Red Grogan yawned openly as he caught it.

Rienzi spat the grass from his mouth and said bluntly, "Let's get the hell out of this."

Huck scowled. He was disgusted himself with this setup. They'd talked it over for days and weeks before coming up to State, and they weren't fools enough to think that they were going to set the college on fire during their first week there, not even their first year, but they had expected to be noticed, at least. They had expeted a fair trial on the gridiron, and thus far they'd received nothing.

A harassed State coaching staff, flooded this year with big name prep school stars, and nationally-known high school players, had looked upon them as just three more scrubs, and even the scrub team was overloaded.

Red Grogan came over, the ball in his hands. He said to Huck tersely, "Look, kid, we're no chumps. Those guys back at the mill are payin' out real money to keep us here. They're expectin' us to play football, not mumbly-peg."

Huck nodded. "They'll have to take a look at us sooner or later," he said, but he wasn't sure, himself. The way it looked now, State had its varsity already picked out, most of the men from last year's team, and the second stringers were being lined up from the ranks of the name stars. With this big squad it was almost impossible for the coaches to give every man a fair trial, and there would be many potentially good prospects cast aside along with the hopeless cases.

They'd come to State a week ago, subsidized, strangely enough, by a steel mill worker's union. The three of them were from the vast Fairview Steel Company in the coal and steel district of eastern Pennsylvania. They'd played and starred with the company eleven, and the steel workers, all members of Local 901, and rabid football fans, had decided to send them to college to see how they'd fare with the big football stars. They were still of college age even though the three of them had worked in the mill since they were sixteen.

The Union, tremendously proud of their football team and their three stars, had started the fund which would send them through college. It was not done entirely to satisfy their ego; they realized that they were giving three deserving boys the college education they never would have gotten otherwise, and at the same time they secretly wanted to find out just how good college players were, compared with their own idols.

All through the summer, Huck, Red Grogan and Rienzi had taken night courses, earning the high school credits they'd missed when they quit high school years before to enter the mill. It had been hard work, but they'd made up the necessary credits.

For three afternoons now, before the school had even officially opened, they'd been working out with the football team. They'd had to make out a kind of application, stating where they'd played football the year before, with what school, and none of them had ever played high school football. They'd been assigned with the scrubs, left to shift for themselves while the varsity and the real candidates scrimmaged.

Even the uniforms they furnished to the scrubs were worn, battered from much play. They worked out with the scrubs, and they received only an occasional

glance in their direction. It was very discouraging.

RED GROGAN said, "If these swellheads don't want to give us a chance let's go some place else. There are other colleges and we still have time."

Rienzi nodded vigorously. Rienzi, the fullback, was the biggest man of the three, and he weighed only one hundred and eighty pounds. He packed terrific drive in his body, though, when he hit a line, and Huck had never known where he got it from. Huck weighed one sixty-eight, and Grogan one seventy. In these days it was not much weight, even for backfield men and ends. They were coming bigger in the colleges—big and fast and strong, copying the pros.

"Look," Huck said suddenly, "they're starting scrimmage."

Howie Gardner, State backfield coach, was approaching the corner of the field where the scrubs were tossing and kicking footballs around. Gardner had in his hand a batch of cards, and Huck recognized them as the cards they'd signed in the gym for opening practice.

"Okay," Grogan murmured, "they're givin' us a chance, finally. Let's show 'em how we do it down in Milltown."

"He didn't pick us yet," Rienzi observed. "There's over fifty guys here, an' only eleven play at a time against the varsity."

They were picked, though. Gardner called off their names, along with the names of about two dozen other men. The group trailed after him as he walked rapidly back toward the varsity field. It was evident that this was some kind of tryout. Coach Philips undoubtedly intended to cut down the squad as soon as possible, and this afternoon they'd start the cutting process.

Huck whispered, "Remember, we're not getting too much of a tryout. When he puts you in, go like hell."

Red Grogan nodded grimly. "We've been waitin' for three days," he stated. "We had plenty of rest."

They didn't start with the first group of nervous candidates which took the field against a team composed of varsity men and their substitutes. The varsity romped through the scrubs for a couple of touchdowns, and then Coach Philips gave the scrubs the ball. They fiddled around for a few minutes, making no headway, using the simplest types of plays.

Backfield coach Gardner consulted his cards, and began to make substitutions. Crestfallen boys, who'd showed absolutely nothing in the few brief minutes they were on the field, trooped off, knowing that they were finished, and that that night their names would be posted on the bulletin board in the gym, indicating that they weren't to come out any more for practice.

Gardner looked toward the bench and he called, "Lannigan."

Huck got up. Grogan said to him, "Run 'em into the ground, Huck."

Huck put on his helmet and went out to where Gardner was waiting. The backfield coach looked at him and then at the card.

"Quarterback?"

"That's right," Huck told him.

"Run a few yourself," Gardner said. He yawned openly as he spoke, and Huck flushed a little. He trotted out on the field, fists clenched, not quite sure who was to blame for this. It wasn't entirely Gardner's fault; the backfield coach was plagued every fall with dozens of misfits who never should have been allowed to get into uniform. He had to make a semblance of giving each of them a fair trial, but the trial they were getting out on the field now was only a mock trial. The varsity knew which way the ball was coming practically all the time; the scrubs, playing together for the first time, had no plays worked out, did not know each other, and were all striving

to show what they had, individually, to the detriment of the others.

Huck called the scrubs into a huddle, lined up his play, a straight buck into the line by the fullback, and then stepped into position. He did not touch the ball on this first play, and the fullback was stopped without a gain.

On the second play Huck called it for himself. There could be no deception and he had a pretty good idea how far he would get with the kind of blocking these scrubs were giving.

He took the pass back from center, and it was a bad one as he had expected. He had to lunge to catch the ball, and he was off balance when he started to run. He took two steps, and then one of the scrub backs, anxious to get into the play and distinguish himself, suddenly crossed over in front of him.

Desperately, Huck tried to avoid running into him. His left foot touched the scrub's heel and it was enough to upset him. He was falling forward when a varsity lineman hit him, dropping him for a two yard loss, and that was the only time he ever carried the ball for State.

On the next play there was a whistle and three more scrubs raced onto the field.

"Lannigan out," the referee said.

Huck stared at the man, and then turned and walked from the field. He looked at Red Grogan when he came into the bench. The redhead's lips were tight.

"So you had your try-out, kid. How'd you like it?"

Huck didn't say anything. He sat down on the bench and he watched the new scrub quarterback. It was hard to realize that this was all the try-out they were giving him. He'd expected at least one or two opportunities to run the ball.

A few minutes later Red Grogan was called into the game. The redhead trotted out on the field, grim-faced. He was placed at the left end position, and he was in three defensive plays. Two of the plays went around the opposite end and he was completely out of them; the third play swept around his end, but the varsity ball carrier had three heavy blockers in front of him, and Grogan was all alone. He managed to take out one of the blockers, but the runner went through for a big gain.

GROGAN came out, having displayed none of his offensive power. Grogan was a good defensive end despite his weight, but on the offense he was a terror. At the steel mill he'd been known as the fifth back, and he carried the ball almost as much as the ball carriers. He was sure-fire on passes, and when he got his hands on a ball he was hard to bring down. This afternoon Grogan never touched the ball.

He was laughing when he came in, but it was an ugly laugh. He said to Huck, "I was just thinkin' of all those nights I spent studyin' up to get in here. I read my damn eyes out. For what?"

Huck didn't say anything. He was watching Joe Rienzi now. The fullback was in the game, lined up already in running position, and he could tell from the expression on Rienzi's face that something was going to happen. Joe had seen those two try-outs, and he knew what to expect, but there were times when Rienzi furnished his own blocking when he ran. Huck knew that this was going to be one of the times. Rienzi was a man of iron. He'd worked in the steel mills since he was fourteen years old, and he'd taken on some of the characteristics of the material he worked with.

It was a straight buck, nothing fancy and nothing deceptive, but Rienzi broke from a standing position like a scared deer. He was at top speed in two steps, and when he hit the varsity line he was moving with maximum power. There was a kind of explosion—the whack of leather meeting leather—and then Rienzi was in among the varsity secondaries, still plunging, head down, those powerful legs working like

pistons. He made eight yards, and a big cheer went up from the scrub bench, that being the first gain they'd made against the varsity.

Red Grogan, sitting beside Huck, said, "Rienzi is in."

Huck nodded. Coach Philips and Gardner were watching Rienzi when the fullback trotted back into the huddle. He ran with a peculiar loping motion which made him look slow and cumbersome, except when he opened up, and then even Huck, who'd been the fastest runner on the mill team, had a hard time keeping up with him.

Coach Gardner stepped into the scrub huddle and said something to the quarterback. It was evident that he'd asked him to run Rienzi again because they wanted to see if he could repeat that plunge.

Rienzi fooled them this time by hitting through right tackle. There was no hole for him, but he went through anyway, dragging two men back with him for another five yard gain.

The State coaches had seen enough. Rienzi came out, and Huck knew that on the morrow he'd be given one of the gray varsity shirts. He'd be working out with the varsity squad from now on. When the practice session was over, the huge squad moved toward the gymnasium.

Red Grogan, walking beside Huck, said quietly, "Well, what do we do now? The boys send us here to play football. We'll find our names on the list after we take our showers. Grogan and Lannigan are requested not to appear for further practice sessions. How do you like that?"

"We'll wait and see," Huck said.

They didn't have to wait long. When they came out of the dressing room they found a crowd of players standing in front of the big bulletin board in the gym. They were silent and intent as they scanned the list which had just been tacked up there.

Huck saw his own name, three from the bottom, and then Grogan's. Rienzi's name was not there, indicating that he was being retained. It meant the end of things this year. Next fall they could try it again, but there was no assurance that they would not receive the same dose next season. The same influx of prep and high school stars would be taking up the time of the coaches, and the guys without reputations would be shunted over to the scrub squad to receive the usual cursory attention.

"Anyway," Grogan growled, "Joe will show 'em."

"Not me," Rienzi said at his elbow. "I'm not goin' it by myself. The three of us were supposed to at least make the squad. We didn't figure on this."

"There's not much we can do about it," Huck muttered. He was as disappointed as the others, and he was thinking of the men back at the plant, the men who were chipping in their dollars and half dollars at the Union meetings to foot the bill. Those men wanted to read about what they were doing on the football field; they wanted to hear it over the radio; thus, vicariously, they attend college themselves.

Red Grogan said, "We can't sit here an' just study, Huck. That wouldn't be fair to the boys."

"What do you have in mind?" Huck asked him.

"There's other schools," Grogan pointed out, "where maybe they haven't got so many football players and they'll look at you twice."

Rienzi was nodding emphatically. "I say let's get out of here," he said. "We haven't started anything yet. There's been no classes."

They were leaving the gym now and walking across the campus toward the dormitories. Huck was frowning, but he had to admit that Grogan and Rienzi were right. They weren't at college only to study.

"You still got them books?" Grogan asked, "the ones about the colleges?"

"I have them," Huck nodded.

"We'll look them over again," Grogan said. "We'll pick out a smaller school."

Rienzi found the school, thumbing through the pages of one of the books. He started to grin and then he pointed out the college. There were a few photos.

"Looks like the mill itself," he chuckled. He handed the book to Huck.

Hilltop College was very small, and the buildings did bear some resemblance to the big steel mills from which they'd come, with the exception of the chimneys. The buildings were low, squat, of red brick, unpretentious. They had a football team, and the credits required for entrance were even lower than at State.

"It's only two hundred miles north of here," Rienzi said. "We could make it in one day with the jalopy."

Huck looked at Red Grogan. The redhead was studying the pictures, too.

"We'll be kind of at home there, Huck. It does look like the mill," he said softly.

That night Huck wrote a long letter to the Union, stating the reasons for the transfer, and in the morning they'd checked out of State and were on the road north. They were in better spirits than they'd been since they came to State and had a look at the set-up.

Grogan was saying, "So we go to this little Hilltop dump for a while and we make good with the football team. If we got the stuff next year there'll be guys from the big schools lookin' us over, just like the baseball scouts do. What's to stop us from goin' to a big school if they ask us to, and they make it interesting enough?"

They had two flat tires and radiator trouble on the way up, and they didn't reach Hilltop till the next morning. As they drove through the campus they could see cars parked along the curb here and there, and on the parking lot. Many of the cars were no better than their own ten-year-old job.

Rienzi said, "This is our class, boys."

They had no trouble registering, and they were assigned to a large double room, containing three beds. There were four buildings in the group which comprised the college, and all of the buildings were quite old and in need of repair.

A group of students was digging up portions of the campus and reseeding it; another group was working on an iron fence, painting and repairing it. Three boys were on ladders painting the trim on the windows.

"Wonder if the football team is practicing," Huck said. They were passing a long, low brick building with high windows, which could have been the gym. Moving over that way they saw the bulletin board just inside the door. Huck's eyes caught the word "football" on one of the papers. He stepped up closer and read it.

"Football practice at three-thirty. Bring your shovels."

Grogan gasped, "Shovels?"

"That's what it says," Huck smiled. He said to a boy who was passing, "Where's the football field, Jack?"

"Behind the gym," the boy nodded in the direction.

"We'll have a look," Huck murmured.

THEY walked around behind the gym and for a moment they didn't see anything but a long stretch of field with goal posts at each end, and a rickety section of bleacher seats on either side, capable of holding less than a thousand people. There were no footballs in the air, and no noise.

A group of men in football uniforms were at the far end of the field, working with rakes and shovels, smoothing out the field. Huck counted about seventeen men.

"They're workin'!"

Red Grogan's voice was brittle. "What did we get ourselves in for?" the end asked. "We could have picked any one of a dozen different schools."

Huck started to walk down the slope

toward the field. The three of them walked down to the field and sat on one of the team benches, watching the men work. None of them said anything for a while, but Huck Lannigan could almost feel the disappointment. They'd thought Hilltop would be a small but lively school, with a good football team, playing teams its own size. They were looking at a squad of seventeen men, and there was little reason to assume that there were more. The football practice season was well under way now, with many of the bigger schools having games arranged for the following Saturday.

Even at the steel mill, Huck was remembering, without a paid coach, they'd had two full teams to put on the field. He heard Red Grogan clear his throat.

"Maybe tennis or ping-pong is their big sport here, Huck. We're out of our element," Grogan said miserably.

As they sat on the bench a man detached himself from the group at the other end of the field and came toward them, a rake on his shoulder. He was a middle-aged man, beginning to bulge around the waist, but he had good shoulders. He was whistling as he came up, and twirling the rake around on his shoulder.

"Don't tell me," Grogan whispered, "this guy's the coach?

He had on a soiled sweatshirt and a baseball cap, and he wore the ancient moleskins they used to wear in the Class of '90, the kind you don't see any more on the gridiron. There was a good-natured grin on his wide, homely face.

"How's it, gang."

He didn't sound like a coach either; he spoke like one of the men in the steel mill.

"Hello," Huck said.

"I hope you boys are comin' out for football," the chubby man smiled. He was sizing them up as he spoke, and there was approval in his eyes.

"We had that in mind," Huck said, before Grogan was able to say anything.

"Good," the chubby man smiled warmly. "We're damn—I mean we're very short of material this year. New men at the school?"

"That's right," Huck said. "We just got in."

"Played anywhere last year?" the chubby man asked, and it was the same old question, only here it apparently didn't mean very much. If a man had only held a football in his hands the previous year he was welcome at Hilltop.

"We played with the Fairview Mill team last fall," Huck said, knowing that it didn't mean any more to this man than it had meant to the coaches at State.

"Fairview!" the Hilltop coach gasped. "Not Local 901?"

Huck moistened his lips. "That's right," he said, puzzled.

"Hell," the coach chuckled, "I read all about that outfit. I know the kind of football they play back in those hills. Glad to have you here."

He shook hands warmly with the three of them, and then said, "I know that section of the country; was raised in Twin Junction, that's less than thirty miles from your mill. My name's McCoskey—George McCoskey."

Huck Lannigan gasped, and he heard Red Grogan catch his breath.

"Not—not the George McCoskey from the old Eastern Pennsylvania League?" Grogan said in awed tones.

McCoskey's grin broadened. "I did play years ago in the E.P.L." he admitted.

Huck was staring at the man, remembering all the stories he'd heard of this immortal character, famed in their section of the country for his tremendous play in the pro leagues, when the pro game was in its infancy. Men who knew football inside out had many times compared George McCoskey with Thorpe, himself, claiming there were things McCoskey could do with a football that even the big

Indian couldn't. McCoskey had not been a college player as Thorpe had, and he didn't get the publicity, but in the ranks of the pros he was the top man.

In the Fairview Mill Huck had heard countless stories about McCoskey's exploits on the gridiron by men who'd known and watched him play those rough, bruising games. Now McCoskey, who'd slipped into oblivion, had suddenly turned up as coach of little Hilltop College.

"Have you been here long?" Huck wanted to know.

"Second year," McCoskey said. "My kid plays tackle on this club. I got another one comin' up from high school next year. The wife and I decided we'd like to be where the boys are so I got this job coachin' at Hilltop. It's the only place I could afford to send the boys." He looked at the three and he said curiously, "How'd you boys happen to pick out Hilltop instead of one of the big colleges? I'd think they'd be glad to get you."

Huck glanced at Grogan quickly. He said, "We happened to see it in a book, Mr. McCoskey."

"Well," McCoskey grinned, "you'll be helpin' us out. This is a small school—mostly farm boys. We don't get a big turnout for football, but we got some pretty good boys here. Right now they're fixin' up the field a little for Saturday's game. It was kind of rough in spots and we don't have any maintenance men. If you don't want to fall on a sharp rock Saturday, you better dig it out now. That's the idea."

Joe Rienzi got up. He said, "You got any more rakes or shovels, Mr. McCoskey?"

The three of them chipped in, and then later in the afternoon McCoskey put his charges through a short drill. Huck sat on the bench and watched, and it didn't look bad at all. He'd met Art McCoskey, the coach's son. Young Art was the varsity tackle, a big fellow, over two hundred pounds, and very light on his feet. It was impossible to judge from this incomplete workout how much the Hilltop team had, but Huck liked the way they handled themselves on the gridiron. It was as if they'd absorbed some of the characteristics of their great coach, a football natural if there ever was one.

THE next afternoon they were in uniform themselves, and George McCoskey took one look at them. He watched Rienzi smash the line, and he saw Huck slip through a hole in the left side of the line and dash thirty yards to a touchdown. He saw Red Grogan snake a pass out of the air with one hand, and then twist and dodge for another fifteen yards before he was brought down.

"I hope you guys can learn the plays and the signals by Saturday because I'd like to start you with the first team," McCoskey said.

Red Grogan said, later, "A lot different from State, Huck. They know we're here."

Freeman Teachers College knew they were there, also, on Saturday. The Teachers provided little opposition, but it gave Huck the opportunity to see what the Hilltop Terriers had on the ball.

The opening kickoff came down to him on the six yard line, and blockers in maize and blue shifted over in front of him swiftly and efficiently. He followed Rienzi for a while because the Italian was a tremendous blocker.

The little crowd of Hilltop rooters started to cheer as Huck passed the twenty and then the thirty. He lost Rienzi and he fell behind Art McCoskey. He discovered that McCoskey was an even better blocker than Rienzi. He was a bigger man and just as fast, and he knew more about the business than Rienzi. The big blond boy seemed to know the direction and the intentions of prospective tacklers even before they started to move in for the tackle, and he was able to upset them and still keep on his feet

The other men were blocking beautifully, too, and it was a revelation to Huck. Even at State, the highly-trained specialists were no better than these farm boys George McCoskey had been working with for two years. He'd drilled them in the fundamentals of blocking.

Huck raced sixty yards deep into the Teachers territory before he was run out of bounds. The Hilltop crowd, practically the entire school, eight hundred strong, went wild in the rickety stands.

Huck got up and tossed the ball to Johnny Crandall, who was the quarterback this afternoon, Huck playing at right half. Crandall, a short, stocky, sandy-haired boy, grinned and shook his head admiringly.

They went to work on the Teachers immediately. Rienzi hit the line for eight yards; Huck went offtackle for nine, and then Ben Ford, the left half, skirted the end for the score, not a man laying his hand on Ford as the fast runner rounded the end. The blocking on the play was nearly perfect, and Huck saw George McCoskey punching his left fist into his right hand after the play, a broad grin on his face.

Rienzi said quietly, "That guy, McCoskey, should be coachin' one of the big teams, Huck. He knows more football than half the guys makin' the big money, and he knows very well how to pass it on."

Huck nodded. He'd learned more football from McCoskey in the two days he'd worked out with the Hilltop team than he'd learned in the previous ten years playing on sandlots and with the mill team. McCoskey knew the inside of the game. He even taught Huck a few things about carrying the ball, tricks of the trade from a master of the profession, and on that first run Huck had experimented with a few of the feints McCoskey had used in his day. McCoskey had been a past master of the art of feinting when he ran, and it was an art which was almost extinct in modern football.

On the defensive Hilltop was fully as good as on the offense. The line was fairly light with the exception of Art McCoskey, but they were fast and they'd learned how to shift for each offense.

Out on the wing Red Grogan, also learning from McCoskey, and gifted with great speed and a natural talent for end play, was developing into a prospective All-American—if anybody ever got to see him play back in the sticks.

Young McCoskey was a tower of strength at the tackle spot. The big boy ripped through the Teachers line to nail runners before they could get under way. He went after runners coming around the ends; he broke through to block kicks. He seemed to be in the middle of every play, and Huck realized this fellow wasn't a prospective All-American; he was All-American right now, better than any lineman at State, and there was a reason for it. Since he'd been able to hold a football Art McCoskey had been drilled by one of the great men of the game.

Red Grogan scored the second touchdown of the game, taking a thirty-yard pass from Huck, racing past the Teachers safety man with little trouble. Huck scored the third touchdown on a twenty-five yard sprint around the right end. Rienzi scored number four with a fifteen-yard buck through the middle, driving like a mad bull.

This was all in the first half. During intermission George McCoskey slapped Huck's back affectionately.

"I never had any runners on this club," he grinned. "Now all of a sudden I got three. We ought to go places this fall."

Red Grogan had overheard the remark and he said to Huck rather dryly when they were alone, "We ought to go places, Huck, but where? Did you see our schedule? Next Saturday Buckley, and then the Aggies; after that Campbell, Onadaga,

Westcott. I never heard of any of 'em."

"A small school like Hilltop couldn't get any big bookings," Huck explained. "They don't have a reputation."

"How do you get one," Grogan wanted to know, "beating Freeman Teachers, Buckley and the Aggies?"

"That's the ten dollar question," Huck smiled. "Let's not worry about it this year. We're learning a lot of football from McCoskey."

Grogan looked at him. He said quietly, "Okay, kid. Let's keep learnin' this year."

Huck watched the redhead walk over to the water cooler. He knew what Grogan was thinking, and he didn't particularly blame the man. The redhead came from a poor family. He'd had to scrape for pennies since he was eight years old, and it had taught him to place a double value on the dollar. For the first time in his life, when the Union had sent him to college, Red Grogan had gotten a break, and he wanted to capitalize on that break. He would give the Union what they wanted by starring in college football, and at the same time he would feather his own nest.

Big money was being made by football players these days—in the pro ranks, and often in the colleges. The big football stars at many of the top-ranking colleges were not only being subsidized while they played for the alma mater, but wealthy alumni were setting them up in their own businesses after graduation.

Besides, the pro teams were paying fabulous sums to sign up the All-Americans, and Grogan wanted to be All-American to cash in on some of that high money. Joe Rienzi undoubtedly felt the same way.

IN THE second half Hilltop continued where it had left off in the first. Grogan scored again from midfield on a brilliant run, after taking a pass in the flat from Huck.

Joe Rienzi went thirty-five on a center-of-the-line buck, and then Huck skipped seventy-five after receiving a Freeman punt on his own twenty-five.

Up in the stands they were going delirious with joy. The score at the start of the third quarter was 53-0, the biggest total in Hilltop history.

George McCoskey, having seen enough, benched his first string men and finished the game with substitutes. Sitting on the bench now, Huck saw him shaking his head, and he seemed to be chuckling to himself.

The final score was 61-7 for Hilltop, and the dazed Freeman Teachers walked from the field, looking as if they'd been run over by a steam roller.

"It's not fair," Rienzi observed, "puttin' these kind of guys up against a club coached by McCoskey. It's two different leagues."

In the dressing room Huck studied his own teammates, liking them all the more. They were exuberant over winning, and they were a little surprised by the top-heavy score; but they were not conceited, and this big win had not gone to their heads. They were farm boys, most of them from towns within thirty or forty miles of the college; they were not making a profession out of football. It was a game they enjoyed, and they played it to the hilt because they liked it and they liked George McCoskey. They were amateurs in every sense of the word, unlike the men Huck had seen at State, weeded out from among countless candidates, developed along an assembly line—backfield coaches, line coaches, kicking, passing coaches.

McCoskey came in and said, "You did all right, gang. We take Monday off—no practice." He added slyly, "I got a load of wood comin' down from the yard. I'm hopin' I get enough boys down to work on them stands before they cave in and we have somebody hurt."

Huck, looking at them, knew that every

man on the squad would be down Monday afternoon with saws and hammers to repair the bleacher seats. Huck had a picture of some of the State stars wielding rakes and shovels, repairing spectator seats when they should have been out practicing football.

That night they met Mrs. McCoskey for the first time. The Hilltop coach invited the three of them to the house because he claimed they were neighbors.

Mrs. McCoskey fussed over the three-ex-mill hands as if they were her own children. She had cooked a tremendous supper for them, and it was the first big meal they'd eaten since they left for college.

Huck had a little chat with Art McCoskey, getting to know the big tackle better. The oldest of George McCoskey's two boys intended to be a farmer!

"We have a good agricultural course at Hilltop," he said, "and I like working around on farms. I've done quite a bit of it every summer vacation." He was a junior at the school.

Huck was thinking that this big, mild fellow who knew his way around so well on the gridiron, was in a position to make some good money for himself if he were spotted. The pro clubs were always on the watch for linemen of McCoskey's calibre, and they'd pay him high money for his services.

"Ever think of playing pro football?" Huck asked him.

Art shrugged. "Dad's been thinking of investing the little money he has in a farm about thirty miles from here," he said. "It's a good buy—kind of run down, but I think with the new farming methods we've been learning here, I can make a go of it. I thought I'd go right into that after graduation."

"You could make good money as a pro," Huck told him. "I've seen some of the pro teams play. They'd sign you up on the spot when they got a look at you."

McCoskey smiled a little. "Maybe that's not too important," he said.

"What?" Huck blinked.

"The money," Art McCoskey stated.

Huck Lanningan moistened his lips. He said slowly, "Guess you're right there, Art."

Flying Quarter 2

THEY had little Buckley U. for the following Saturday afternoon, and the game was a replica of the Freeman Teachers win, except that Hilltop displayed even more power. Working with very few substitutions, some of the linemen playing the entire sixty minutes, Hilltop roared up and down the field, scoring almost at will.

Rienzi went over twice; Huck scored on a long run; Red Grogan picked up two

touchdowns on passes. It was 48-0, but it could have been higher. Again George McCoskey took out his backs early in the second half, not wanting to pile it up too much against the hapless Buckley team. It was a nice gesture.

They got a nice write-up in the local paper, and Huck dutifully clipped everything he could find about the game, and sent it to the mill. They'd appreciate it even if it wasn't big-time college football. They had hoped back at the mill that the men they were supporting in college would become big name stars. Here at Hilltop they were unknown; the games weren't broadcast, and the big papers didn't carry accounts of them.

During the week they again worked on the rickety stands, putting in new supports, replacing some of the broken seats, working between practice sessions.

Huck noticed that McCoskey didn't take up every minute of the players' time as had the coaches at State. State had held long practice sessions, keeping the men on the field till dusk. He'd heard that when the regular season began there were also night sessions in addition to the regular practice periods. There were moving pictures shown of the teams they were to play the following Saturday; there were special skull practice sessions, blackboard sketches, meetings of the backfield men.

McCoskey had one blackboard session, explaining to the new men his type of offense and defense. After that he let it rest. He kept his signals as simple as possible. He concentrated upon a relatively few plays, working them out on the field until they were letter perfect, laboring by the hour with the blocking assignments on the plays.

At five o'clock sharp McCoskey called off every practice session and sent the squad back to their studies. There were no night sessions.

"You guys came here to study," McCoskey said, "and not to play football. I'm not takin' any more of your time than you can spare."

Huck Lannigan reddened at the remark. Grogan and Rienzi didn't say anything, but Huck could see that they weren't completely satisfied with the way things were going. They were glad to play under McCoskey, and they appreciated the help he'd given them; they knew they'd become tremendously improved players since the ex-pro had worked with them, but they were still playing small-time football, and unlike the other men on the squad, they really had come to play football.

Joe Rienzi said, after the Buckley game, "We keep pilin' up these kind of scores and pretty soon somebody's liable to sit up and take notice. We'll lead the country in scoring, and even if you're playin' against the Bloomer Girls when you pile up fifty points every game you got to have something."

Red Grogan nodded approvingly. "We could have made eighty points against Buckley," he said, "if McCoskey hadn't taken us out. We'll lay it on them hard next Saturday. I'd say at the end of the season there'll be pro scouts, and maybe scouts from the colleges lookin' us over, and maybe makin' offers."

Rienzi looked at Huck. He said, "What do you think, kid?"

Huck was looking at the floor. He said, "I'll go along with you guys. I came with you." He didn't say it enthusiastically. He was trying to decide how much he owed to the Union, which had sent him to college, and how much he owed to George McCoskey, who was building a remarkable eleven for a small school.

THE Aggies were setups, as they had expected. Before the crowd had settled down after the opening kick-off, Red Grogan took a short pass from Huck, twisted, feinted, reversed his field twice, and chased fifty-five yards to a touchdown.

It was an indication of the way the game was going to go.

Joe Rienzi scored the second touchdown on an off-tackle slant. The Italian shot through a nice hole, straightened himself out, side-armed two tacklers, and sprinted to the goal line for the second score.

Johnny Crandall, the quarterback, laughed and said, "Joe, you act as though you meant business this afternoon."

Rienzi forgot himself for a moment. He said, "That's what I'm in, kid. Business."

Crandall looked at him quickly, but Huck covered it up immediately. "Hilltop business," Huck grinned. "The Touchdown Company."

It was 47-3 at the end of the first half, and during the intermission George McCoskey asked them to take it easy.

"Work on your blocking," he advised them. "Make it letter perfect, and forget about the score."

They managed to score seventy-six points before the afternoon was over, even though they weren't particularly bearing down, and this game got them some publicity. They had a little write-up in one of the big papers, and a reporter came down to the Monday afternoon practice session, had a talk with McCoskey. He had a photographer take a few shots of the field and the team, and then went away. He seemed to be impressed, particularly when he saw half the squad practicing on the field, and the other half with saws and hammers, still working on the seats.

Red Grogan said, "It's something. At least they know we're alive down here. Let's hope somebody invites us to one of the Bowl Games—even if it's only the Meat Bowl!"

"If we can average sixty points a game every game," Rienzi said, "we'll be the top scoring team of the country, and we ought to get in one Bowl game."

They did it the following two Saturdays. Against Campbell U., another small time outfit, they won by a 57-9 score; against Onadaga they racked up sixty-two points against Onadaga's zero, and they had more reporters coming down to get a look at them. The first write-up had given them some publicity; after the Onadaga game they got more.

Huck sent all the clippings back to the mill, giving them a running account of what was going on. They received encouraging letters from friends back there.

Then the talk started about the invitation to the small, comparatively new, Flower Bowl game in Florida. Officials from the Flower Bowl came up to see George McCoskey. Some of them stayed for the Onadaga game and were given an eyeful.

The Flower Bowl game was not nearly as big as some of the other New Year's Day Bowl games, but it would be well attended. After the Onadaga game it was almost a foregone conclusion that they would be invited to the Flower Bowl.

McCoskey held a meeting of the team, and laid the cards on the table.

"If you boys want to go," he said, "it's all right with me. I'll take you, but I don't want you to miss up on your studies. What do you think?"

Everybody wanted to go, not so much to play football and win the Flower Bowl game, but for the vacation and the free trip to Florida. All except Grogan and Rienzi. To them it was the game; it was the big one.

They almost forgot about Westcott, the last team on the Hilltop schedule. The day before the Westcott game Huck had the horrible feeling that perhaps Westcott would upset them and ruin everything.

They didn't know too much about Westcott. The little college had won most of its games against the same kind of opposition Hilltop had been knocking over. They hadn't made the scores Hilltop had made, and absolutely nothing was known about them.

The next afternoon Huck took the field

with some misgivings. His first look at the Westcott team convinced him that the nightmare had not been in vain. It looked as if the red-jerseyed outfit from Westcott was out for blood. They were big men, a fairly big squad for a small college, and they looked efficient.

Huck said to Red Grogan, "Don't undersell these guys. They might show us up."

Grogan laughed.

"We'll run 'em off the field," he promised Huck.

Huck had visions of the bubble bursting. He'd seen over-confident teams before, and nine times out of ten they'd gotten it in the neck.

Hilltop won the toss and elected to receive. The Westcott kicker got off a poor boot, the ball going off at an angle in Grogan's direction on the wing.

The fiery redhead took it and started to run all alone because there was not time to wait for the opposition to form up front. Huck watched him go. Miraculously, Grogan slid between two tacklers, eluded another with a quick feint McCoskey had taught him, and then reversed his field before going down the sidelines. He went the entire distance for the score.

Grogan was grinning when he came back. He said, "They look nice, but they don't have anything."

Before the first half was up, Huck, himself, had gone over for three scores, two of them on brilliant runs from midfield. Rienzi and Ford had one apiece. It was 40-0 at the half, and they'd never looked better. There had been no over-confidence on the part of Hilltop. Only Grogan had done the talking; the other men just played football the only way they knew how to play, giving the best they had.

McCoskey stopped the debacle in the second half with the score mounting to 61-7.

"That clinches the Flower Bowl game. We're in."

THE team came from the field in high spirits. There had been reporters in the stands this afternoon, some of them from big city papers, out to get a line on the little team which was piling up these tremendous scores each Saturday. They'd put on a great demonstration.

George McCoskey came into the dressing room during the celebration which followed. This was the last regular season game, and they'd gone through undefeated and untied, the first time they'd accomplished this feat in the history of the school.

McCoskey was carrying a telegram in his hand as he came in, and there was a frown on his face.

"What's up, coach? Didn't we make enough points?" Joe Rienzi said.

McCoskey shook his head. He said, "I have a little bad news here, boys. I know you're going to be disappointed, but there's nothing we can do about it."

Huck saw Grogan's jaw drop. The redhead was sitting on the bench, just getting out of his shoulder harness.

McCoskey said slowly, "I have here a wire from the Flower Bowl officials. We didn't get the invitation. They're taking a team from the Southwest."

Huck Lannigan let it sink in, and it was hard to believe. The Flower Bowl officials had the right to invite any team they wanted to, and they undoubtedly were after an eleven which would draw. They'd decided upon the southwestern team. That was their privilege.

Red Grogan tossed his cleats into the locker, and that was the only sound in the room.

"There's always next year, gang," Art McCoskey said.

Joe Rienzi got up and stalked to the shower room, Grogan following him. There was little talk in the room after that. Huck got up and walked after them. He overheard Grogan say, "There's no next year for me, not here."

"You want to transfer again, Red?"

"Why not?" Grogan demanded. "Let's be practical."

"They're nice guys," Rienzi said. "McCoskey's the whitest guy I ever met and the best coach we'll ever run across, but there's other things."

"There's big dough," Huck said grimly.

"So what's wrong about big dough?" Rienzi wanted to know. "Who worries about me when I get out of here? Maybe I go back to the mill at forty-five a week for the rest of my life. Everybody can't be president of the bank, Huck. I'm a football player. I got a strong back and a weak mind. This is gonna be how I make my living from now on. It's not a bad way."

"I didn't say it was," Huck told him. "You're thinkin' it."

Huck shook his head. Red Grogan said slowly, "This mean the end of things for us, Huck? We goin' different ways from now on?"

"We came in together," Huck murmured. "We're all in the same deal." He had to concede that there was nothing wrong with Joe Rienzi's logic. The fullback didn't have any particular future even after he'd gotten his college education. He had assets now on which he intended to capitalize; he was doing it honestly, giving the best he had, and after college, for money received.

Grogan said, as if to himself, "Now the football season's over, and what have we got to show for it? We make a good record, we pile up a lot of points, but nobody looks at us twice. We even get sidetracked in the smallest Bowl game in the country. Next year, no matter how good we are, it'll be the same thing. I'm for lookin' around for another spot during the summer."

Rienzi nodded. "I'd bet even McCoskey would tell us to go ahead if he understood the situation. He was a pro player, too."

Three days later, when they were beginning to forget football, the miracle happened. Some of the big collegiate teams were getting ready for their final tilts of the season. An undefeated and untied State eleven, ranked among the top three of the nation, was preparing to meet the highly-touted West Coast U. at the huge State Stadium.

Huck had been reading about the game, rated one of the big contests of the year, and then out at West Coast they ran into trouble. Enroute east, one day out of San Francisco, the train on which the West Coast eleven was traveling jumped the track.

Among the injured were eight of the first string West Coast players. None of them was seriously hurt, but they were definitely out of commission for some weeks. West Coast immediately cancelled the game, giving the State officials a mild state of apoplexy. The game had been a sellout.

Sports writers began to suggest possible last minute substitutes, but most of the big name teams were engaged for the next Saturday, only four days off. Huck never saw the paper which mentioned the name of the Hilltop Terriers as the fill-in eleven for West Coast.

It was George McCoskey who received the wire. State had looked over the write-ups sports men had given to the little college which had established a record for points scored in one season, and State had decided Hilltop had a special appeal. They would be rated ten to one underdogs in a contest with any of the big elevens, but they were free, and they did have a reputation.

Would Mr. McCoskey consider bringing his team to State on Saturday? Naturally, they would receive their percentage of the huge gate expected.

George McCoskey tried to keep it a secret for thirty minutes while he rounded up his squad of twenty men for a meeting, but it leaked out even before he could as-

semble them in the gym office for a talk.

Huck Lannigan knew what it meant; it meant big-time football, dozens of sports writers, seventy-five thousand people in the State Stadium; the game broadcast over a national hook-up.

He didn't believe,it, but he heard it from George McCoskey's own lips a few minutes later as the twenty men sat around in the office, staring at each other, all of them dazed.

"They're liable to rack up a hundred points against us," Crandall muttered. "I hope we make a good showing."

"Showing!" Grogan whooped. "We're gonna take these guys. I've seen 'em I—" He stopped then and finished lamely, "I think we have a good chance if we keep our heads."

"They can only put eleven men on the field at one time," George McCoskey smiled, "and no more. It's against the rules. We'll have eleven, too. I'm not looking for a defeat."

It wasn't much of a speech, but they cheered it lustily, and then they went out to spread the news officially. The whole school was agog with excitement. McCoskey told Huck privately that with the money they'd receive from this one game alone they could put up a new set of steel and concrete stands, seating four times the crowd they got now.

"I'm thinkin' of that angle, too," the Hilltop coach said, "and that's not all. If we make a good showing against State this year we're liable to get some big bookings next fall and the year after. Those games will bring real money to this school, and we need it. Eventually, we can put up a new, modern gymnasium; football can help support the other sports at Hilltop which are dead or dying for lack of funds."

"I hadn't thought about it that way," Huck said slowly. "It will mean quite a lot to the school, won't it?"

"First thing I thought about when I read the telegram," George McCoskey grinned. "I'm a pro guy at heart; I still got my eyes on the high dollar."

Huck was thinking that it was all right that way, the way McCoskey looked at it. It wasn't his own dollar.

Breakaway Guy 3

THEY worked hard in preparation for the State game. Huck received dozens of letters from the plant, wishing them luck. The news was in all the papers now, and the whole east was pulling for them.

Again McCoskey worked on the fundamentals. There were no new trick plays to dazzle State; there was nothing new at all, nothing added. It was the same team which had done well all season, and the same brand of strategy. McCoskey had develcped a fast, aggressive outfit, a truly great blocking outfit, which capitalized on the mistakes of the enemy. What they lacked in sheer power, they made up for in aggressiveness. They would be outweighed tremendously in the line by the big State forwards, two of whom were All-Americans this year; they would be running up against three sets of backs from State, the weakest of the three supposedly stronger than Hilltop regulars.

On the Friday afternoon before the game they had a light workout, and then there was a mass meeting on the campus at which George McCoskey and Art, the president of the athletic board, and the dean, made speeches. The football men sat on the platform, listening, grinning a little at the cheers.

The elder McCoskey gave the finest talk of the evening. It was not good English; it was not intentionally humorous, intended to draw cheers and applause.

George McCoskey said, "This is a big break for us. I'm not worried about our team. I know they'll give the best they

have every minute of the game. I'm rootin' for them. I know you are, too."

He went on to say that they comprised the finest group of young fellows he'd ever known, and that they deserved this break. There had been no shirkers and no loafers even when it came to manual labor, and they'd done plenty of that.

Later in the evening they embarked on the train for State, and the Hilltop coach had them all in their berths before ten o'clock.

The huge State squad came out on the field first, four separate teams, water boys, trainers, three coaches and other assistants. They were arrayed in the brilliant black and gold of State—shining gold helmets and gilt pants, black jerseys with huge gold numerals. They looked big, powerful, and efficient. They moved across the field confidently, a truly great squad which had rolled over heavy opposition, and which was strong three deep in almost every position.

Hilltop trotted through the gate, Art McCoskey in the lead, carrying the ball, nineteen men following him; and George McCoskey walked in the rear, looking a little dazed at this huge crowd of seventy thousand people.

The crowd watched the team come out, and Huck heard the murmur run through them. It was a murmur of disappointment. Some of the sports writers had been playing up this Hilltop team; some of the writers who'd seen them in action were predicting that the sage George McCoskey, one time sensational pro star, had welded together a truly great eleven. They didn't look it as they scattered across their end of the field, kicking, passing, limbering up.

The State backfield coach, Gardner, came over to where Huck was tossing passes to the men lined up on either side of the center.

"Seems like I've met some of you chaps before."

Red Grogan overheard the remark, and Grogan said evenly, "You sure did, and you're goin' to meet us again this afternoon."

Gardner laughed, but the next time Grogan went out for a pass from Huck, he made one of his sensational stabs, a twisting leap, snaring the ball partially with one hand, and then covering it up, saving the catch with the other. He came down and he was moving when he landed, running with that blazing speed Huck had seldom seen duplicated on a football field. Grogan caught a ball and ran with it the way a big cat would. He always seemed to land on his feet and he was never off balance.

The crowd roared when they saw that catch, and there was a little more excitement in the stands. The hundred-piece State band was blaring away in the stands. The press box was jammed with sports writers, waiting for this game to begin, and then George McCoskey came out on the field, grinning a little.

"I see some of your pals are here, Huck," he said.

"Who?" Huck asked.

McCoskey pointed, and Huck nearly dropped to the ground. They were making a lot of noise up in the stands, way up near the rim of this huge bowl, but with seventy thousand people around them, and the State band blaring away, Huck had not heard or noticed them.

They had a big maize and blue banner with the words,

FAIRVIEW STEEL MILLS—LOCAL 901.
OUR BOYS!
LANNIGAN—GROGAN—RIENZI
HILLTOP HELLCATS!

Rienzi and Grogan saw the sign, too. They could hear them yelling now—big, solid-voiced steel workers, only a few hundred strong. The guys who'd never gotten into high school had an alma mater now, and they were proud.

Huck lifted a hand in salute, and the steel workers made themselves heard now. Joe Rienzi spat on the grass.

"We got to give 'em somethin' to yell about, Huck," he said softly.

Huck Lannigan nodded.

State won the toss and elected to receive. Art McCoskey stepped back for the kick-off. The ten small men in maize and blue edged the mark, waiting for the whistle and the kick.

The black and gold was spread out in front of them, three All-Americans on the first team, a star-studded outfit. In the backfield were the four men who'd been acclaimed the most powerful running backs in the country—McGill, Brigham, Craddock and Slater, the right half, All-American.

McCoskey trotted forward, swung his foot, and the ball whirled up into the air, tumbling end over end, and fell into Slater's hands. The All-American sprinted forward, his blockers forming in front of him with methodical precision.

Huck, coming up behind his line, watched the heavy State men tear into the Hilltop tacklers. Men were going down all over the field, and Jack Slater, the ball tucked under his left arm, was opening up. He went past the thirty and then the forty, two blockers still with him. The crowd started to scream as he passed the midfield stripe.

Huck was moving over with him as he swerved toward the right side line. The blocking of the black and gold on this opening run was hard and true, and they were in motion, not starting from a standing position.

It was Art McCoskey who finally broke it up. McCloskey whirled through with his two hundred pounds, ramming into Biff Craddock, State fullback, upsetting him, and reaching for the runner, pushing him farther toward the sidelines.

Huck had been going with McCoskey, and when the tackle opened the hole, Huck shot through, diving low, reaching for Slater's knees. He got both hands on the runner, held on for dear life, and brought the All-American down on the Hilltop forty-two.

STATE lined up immediately, running out of the T formation, with a man in motion on every play. Hilltop had played against a T formation, but not this kind of a T. This was perfection.

Craddock roared through the center of the line after a fake spinner, and made eight yards. Brigham, the left half, took a lateral, and skipped through the right tackle spot for nine yards and a first down.

Then it was Slater again, skirting the right end, heading for the coffin corner and the touchdown, finally run out of bounds by Ben Ford on the seven yard line.

Art McCoskey called for time. The Hilltop team moved back a few paces, and Huck looked at them. For the first time this season he saw uncertainty in their eyes. Even Grogan and Rienzi were't too sure now. Even they had been fooled by those lopsided scores Hilltop had run up.

McCoskey smiled and said gently, "Boys, we're not as bad as all this. I think they've gone far enough."

They had, as far as Art McCoskey was concerned. The tackle tore through on the first play after the time-out, and upset Craddock before the fullback could get going. He dropped Craddock with a bone-jarring tackle, and State was back on the ten yard line.

Then Red Grogan found himself. The redhead whirled in, chasing McGill from behind as McGill tried to round the opposite end. Grogan sailed through the air, his hands tightening around McGill's ankles. The State runner was down for another three-yard loss, and the crowd gave them a hand for their gallant stand.

State tried Slater off tackle on the next play, but Slater, too, was stopped. There was a pile-up—Rienzi was in on it; McCoskey was at the bottom of the heap, and McCoskey had one of Slater's legs pin-

ioned. That was as far as he could go.

State decided to try a placement with the ball directly in front of the posts on the ten. This time it was Tommy Lane, the right end, who broke through, leaped high in the air, and deflected the ball as it started up. Grogan recovered it on the twelve-yard stripe, and it was Hilltop ball, first and ten.

Rienzi said in the huddle, "Let's go now. Let's go."

Johnny Crandall glanced at his face and nodded. Crandall gave him the ball on a straight buck through the middle. Rienzi piled through the hole they gave him and he ripped off eight yards on the first Terrier offensive play. He hit the State line with the numbing force of a hammer, and the crowd gasped.

Up in the stands the Fairview Mill crowd went wild. Huck said in the huddle, "We could work that twenty-three-A stunt, Johnny."

Crandall was the quarterback for this outfit, and a good one. George McCoskey had shifted Huck to one of the halfback spots, but he'd suggested that Huck tip off Crandall on anything he saw and suggest a play. Twenty-three-A was a double-reverse, one of the few trick plays in George McCoskey's system. Ben Ford carried after the ball changed hands three times, and Ford hit around the right side of the line.

It worked perfectly. Huck took the ball from Crandall, faked it to Rienzi, headed toward the left side of the line, and then cleverly sneaked it to Ford, coming the other way.

Huck drew the State secondaries in his direction as he tore toward the far side line. He was actually tackled by one man, but it was Ford who had the ball, streaking up the side line on the other side of the field, and the crowd going mad. Ford went thirty-two yards into State territory before they brought him down.

The Terriers didn't waste any time now. Huck slashed off right tackle for seven yards; he faked another run, and shot a short pass to Grogan, his first of the game.

Grogan snared it out of the air, came down, and fought his way for five more yards to the State fourteen. A demoralized State team called time.

Up in the stands they were howling at this sudden display of power, not quite understanding it. Huck knew the reason for it. The little Terrier line was performing magnificently this afternoon. They were opening the holes for the runners—not big holes, but wide enough for a man to get through. The blocking was out of this world. The first time Huck had carcied the ball it was almost the perfect play. Three of the four State linebackers had been taken completely out of the play, but Huck had accidentally stumbled over someone's foot and fallen into the hands of the remaining man. He'd have gone for

the score easily if it hadn't been for that.

"We got 'em nuts," Rienzi said. "Let's keep 'em that way."

They were ready to go, and Crandall called Huck's number—another fake pass to Grogan, and a sweep around the right end. Grogan went out, decoying beautifully. Huck hesitated just long enough, the ball poised in his hand, sending the State secondaries scurrying back, and then he tore toward the sidelines, Ben Ford, Rienzi, and Art McCoskey coming out of the line to run with him. Again it was perfect blocking.

With the huge crowd screaming, Huck whirled around the end and sprinted for pay dirt. The gold and black team shifted to meet him. There was a terrible scramble in the coffin corner. Huck pounded after his blockers, running nearly on top of them. In the jam on the goal line he thought he went over the line before he was pushed out of bounds, but the referee ruled differently. It was first and ten for the Terriers on the State half-yard line.

Joe Rienzi didn't waste any time. Head down, legs driving, the Italian fullback splintered the middle, bucking like a bull, going all the way across the end zone, men hanging to him. It was first blood for Hilltop.

The second score came even more quickly before the breathless crowd could get settled. State received the kick, fumbled the ball on their own five yard stripe, and then had to kick immediately.

Crandall, at safety, took the punt, and ran it back to the State forty-five. The perfect play followed, with Huck carrying the ball on a simple spinner through right tackle. There was nothing gaudy about the play, nothing breathtaking, but it worked.

They received an ovation after Crandall kicked that second extra point, giving them a 14-0 lead. It was the greatest ovation ever given a football team in the State Stadium.

On the Hilltop bench George McCoskey was grinning, shaking his head as if this performance amazed even him.

Once again in the second quarter the Terriers nearly pushed their heavier rivals over for a third score, but they didn't quite make it. It was Grogan this time, taking passes from Huck, driving the State linebackers crazy with his feinting. They were putting two men on him after awhile, but still they couldn't stop him from snaring those short, bullet-like passes Huck shot at him.

State held them on the three yard line, and the score was still 14-0 at the end of the half, the upset of upsets.

In the corridor leading to the Hilltop dressing rooms there was a jam. Sports writers were there, already clamoring for interviews with George McCoskey. Huck had to push his way through with Red Grogan at his side. McCoskey was up ahead of them, grinning as usual, very modest about the whole business.

A reporter called to him, "McCoskey, why did you turn down that Tech offer?"

Huck blinked. He stared at Red Grogan. Huck said, "Tech offer?"

Grogan gulped, "I—I hadn't heard."

Huck followed McCoskey and the others into the dressing room. The Hilltop coach hadn't answered the question fired at him, but it was undoubtedly true. McCoskey had been offered a job at Tech—Tech, a name school, a power in football, and he'd turned it down!

At Hilltop, McCoskey wasn't making more than two thousand dollars a year, if he got that. At Tech he would receive fifteen or twenty grand for his services as head coach.

There was a lot of excitement inside the Hilltop dressing room. McCoskey closed the door on the reporters until the game was over. When he turned around, Huck was standing in front of him. Grogan and Rienzi were nearby, listening.

"Is it true, Mr. McCoskey, that you had

an offer to coach at Tech and you turned it down?"

The old pro rubbed his jaw, his blue eyes twinkling. He said, "After the Westcott game I was approached by officials from Tech. They made me an offer. I don't know whether they were serious, but I told them I was signed up with Hilltop.

"Maybe I could have gotten a little more dough," McCoskey grinned, "but I like Hilltop, and I get along swell there. My boy likes it. I'm sure my other kid will like it next year. Besides, I feel that I owe something to Hilltop. They got me started in the coachin' business."

That was all George McCoskey had to say. He went around the room, talking to his players, examining their cuts and bruises because Hilltop never had had a trainer on the roster, and McCoskey had taken a course himself in doctoring athletes.

Huck turned to Grogan. He said, "We're splitting up next year, Red. I'm staying at Hilltop."

Grogan didn't say anything. He just looked at Rienzi. The Italian was staring at a scratch on his hand. He seemed to be preoccupied.

THEY went out on the field for the second half, and it was a different ball game. State was not nearly so bad as they'd appeared in the first half. They'd been swept off their feet by the hard-charging of the lighter Hilltop men. That first quick touchdown had dazed them, and they needed the intermission to give them their bearings.

They started to move right after the opening kickoff. They didn't make long gains, but they chewed off the yardage in short chunks. Their heavier line began to use that weight to advantage. They concentrated upon simple power plays, and they managed to retain possession of the ball for long periods at a time, thus minimizing the Hilltop attack.

Against the few substitutions McCoskey was able to make, State sent in entire new lines, fresh lines, fresh backs to smash at the tiring Hilltop forward wall. The gains became longer. They reeled off four and five yards at a clip instead of two and three, and they went off for their first score late in the third quarter, after Hilltop had held them three times on the one yard line. It was 14-7 for Hilltop.

Huck and Joe Rienzi moved up closer to the line of scrimmage to back up the line. They made tackles, but they were getting it, too. Both of them had been in since the start of the game, and so had Red Grogan and Art McCoskey, along with two other Hilltop men, George McCoskey being adamant on the theory that a man in good physical condition should be able to play sixty minutes of football any time.

However, McCoskey hadn't operated against teams which were three and four deep in every position, and those fresh players constantly dashing out on the field gradually had a psychological effect on the Hilltop players. They fought desperately to protect that slim lead, and the crowd, largely a State crowd, was with them.

Three times they held inside the five yard stripe before State pushed the ball over for the second score and kicked the point to tie it up. They were into the fourth quarter now, and they could see defeat coming their way—not ignoble defeat, but a glorious defeat. They wanted victory.

Art McCoskey, face battered and bruised, one eye nearly closed, called time with the ball on the Hilltop twenty yard line, first and ten, and they knew they probably wouldn't get their hands on the ball again this afternoon if they lost it now.

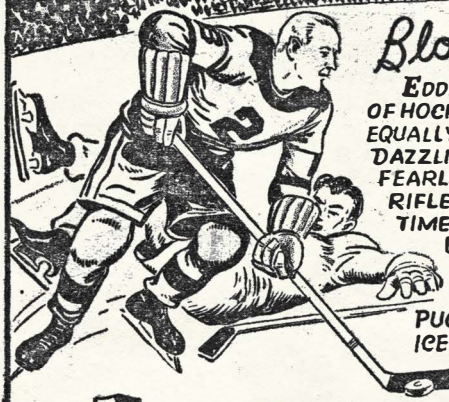
The Hilltop captain said, "We have only eighty yards to go."

(Continued on page 129)

Above the Crowd

by Nelson + Allen

Blond Bullet



EDDIE SHORE, GREATEST OF HOCKEY DEFENSEMEN WAS EQUALLY GOOD ON OFFENSE. DAZZLING STICK-HANDLER, FEARLESS BODY-CHECKER, RIFLE-LIKE SHOT, TIME AFTER TIME FOR 14 YEARS IT WAS DEFENSEMAN SHORE WHO PIVOTED ON A DIME SNATCHED THE PUCK AND WENT DOWN THE ICE TO RAM HOME A GOAL.

Eddie Shore

BORN ON A SASKATCHEWAN RANCH IN 1902, UNLIKE MOST CANADIAN LADS HE DIDN'T LEARN TO SKATE UNTIL HE WAS 14. PLAYED HIS FIRST REAL HOCKEY 2 YEARS LATER AND SOON MOVED INTO THE AMATEUR BIG TIME. TALL AND RUGGED SHORE JOINED THE BOSTON BRUINS IN '26 AND SCORED 12 GOALS HIS ROOKIE SEASON.

FIERY OF TEMPER, HE ALSO QUALIFIED FOR THE "HUNDRED CLUB" WITH 130 MINUTES IN THE PENALTY BOX, A MARK HE SHATTERED BY 35 THE NEXT YEAR!

THE BRILLIANT INDIVIDUALIST SOON TRANSFORMED HIMSELF INTO A GREAT TEAM-PLAYER AND IN 1935 SET A RECORD FOR ASSISTS BY DEFENSEMAN WITH 27. BOSTON REFUSED $100,000 FOR HIM!


WHEN THE MONTREAL MAROONS GAVE HIM A GOING OVER IN AN EFFORT TO SLOW HIM DOWN, HE SHOWED HE COULD TAKE IT TOO. GROGGY BUT STILL GAME, A STICK CAUGHT HIM ACROSS THE FACE AND HE FINALLY WENT DOWN -- AND OUT. WHEN HE CAME TO HE AUTOMATICALLY REACHED FOR GLOVES AND STICK!
THE CHECKUP: 1 BROKEN NOSE, 3 BROKEN TEETH, 2 BLACK EYES, 1 TWO-INCH GASH ON HEAD, 1 CUT TO THE BONE IN CHEEK.
A PERENNIAL ALL-STAR, AS SHORE WENT SO WENT THE BRUINS. HE REACHED HIS PEAK IN 1935, SCORING 7 GOALS AND 26 ASSISTS WITH ONLY 32 MINUTES OF PENALTIES. AND SPARKING AN INFERIOR BOSTON OUTFIT TO THE STANLEY CUP FINALS.
Brimsek "MR. ZERO"
IN 1934 SHORE, JACK PORTLAND AND DIT CLAPPER FORMED THE FAMOUS "ROCK OF GIBRALTAR" DEFENSE THAT HELPED FRANKIE BRIMSEK TO THE STRING OF SHUTOUTS THAT EARNED HIM THE "MR. ZERO" TITLE, AND THE BRUINS TO THEIR SECOND STANLEY CUP CHAMPIONSHIP!
SHORE WON THE HART MOST VALUABLE PLAYER TROPHY 4 TIMES. BOSTON RETIRED HIS NO. 2 JERSEY WHEN HE WAS ELECTED TO HOCKEY'S HALL OF FAME IN 1947.

FOUR LEAF

The shock showed on his face, and he went over like a falling tree. . . .

I SAID, "I won't fight Romero. Why should I line up with that chunk of meat? Tell me one good reason."

"You should fight him for a million dollars," Boley Sullivan said. "That's a fine reason. Can you think of a better one?"

"A million bucks isn't going to be much use to me if I have to hold my head in my lap for the rest of my life."

We were in the dressing room at the Garden. In a couple of minutes I'd be going up to fight Willy Panchard. I thought for a moment of Willy instead of Romero. It was a pleasant change.

All I had been hearing for the last couple of weeks was Romero. I was sick of hearing about him. I was even sick of looking at him, even though I'd only seen the guy for about ten minutes in my life. That had been the night, a month ago, when he'd fought Tommy Noonan.

GLOVER

By Daniel Winters

A heavyweight champ with a lightweight heart . . . a punch-hungry kid whose fists are filled with murder—and three final minutes of red-leather reckoning—win, lose, or dive!

Noonan was good. Very good. I'd had a lot of trouble beating him in fifteen rounds, six months ago. Romero took three rounds to beat him, and it was no trouble. For anyone but Noonan, that is, and the guys who had to lug him, the doctors who had to reassemble him. Romero was hell on legs. He moved like a big cat and he had both hands filled with murder. He wasn't a nice person, and I didn't want to have anything to do with him.

We got the call, then, and I started up. Boley said, "Danny, you better fight Romero."

I turned to him. "You mean tonight? Is Romero up there in the ring? That guy's name is Panchard. Willy Panchard. Remember? Forget about Romero for a while."

We went out, and the crowd gave me a big hand. Halfway down to the ring I heard a guy shout, "When you gonna fight Romero, Danny? When you gonna kill that big bum?"

I waved and smiled, but only with my mouth. Why didn't they forget Romero?

In the ring it was strictly business. Panchard was a good boy. I'd beaten him once before, but it had been an evening's work. I'd have to work tonight, too, I knew.

They finally got through with the introductions, the announcements. ". . . undefeated heavyweight champion of the world—Danny Doyle!" Panchard and I went to the middle of the ring. Benny Slade was working the fight, and he gave us the usual talk. Willy said, "Hello, Danny," and I said, "Hello, Willy." He was civilized, at least. I couldn't imagine Romero saying hello even to his mother.

I went back to the corner, and Boley and Henny Stein were there. Henny was a fine cornerman, and Boley was my manager. Boley took the robe off my shoulders and said, "All right, Danny. Go and get him." He slipped my mouthpiece into place and the bell rang. I turned and went out.

I knew how to fight Willy. He was a puncher who thought he was a boxer. He could hit like a hammer with that right hand, and you had to keep him off balance and not let him use it the way he wanted to. He was a very rugged lad and had never been knocked out. I wasn't going to attempt any miracle tonight.

The first three rounds went the way I expected them too. It was a nice fight. Willy liked to come inside, and I'm almost strictly a counterpuncher, and he was made to order for me. I fed him that left hand and banged him with the right when it was convenient. I was comfortable in there, moving easy.

It was between the third and fourth that I heard the noise, right in back of my corner. A big shout went up, and I turned my head.

It was Romero. He'd come in late and was just taking a ringside seat. He was dressed nice and quiet, like a fire engine, and waving to all the crowd that had recognized him. He looked up at the ring, just then, and I could feel our eyes

meet. He threw back his head and laughed at me.

The buzzer sounded, then, and Boley said, "Just roll along the way you're going and everything is all right, Danny."

I nodded, but I wasn't thinking about Willy Panchard. The bell rang and I went out, but Romero was on my mind. The guy bothered me.

I fed Willy a left hand, and then it wasn't Romero who went under it and came up with a right hand that tagged me right on the whiskers. That was Willy all right.

I landed on my pants. It was a funny sensation. I'd been down before in my life, but not often, and I didn't like it. I shook my head and sat there, and I heard Benny Stein shout, "Six." It was a little later than I thought. That Willy could belt.

I got on a knee and came up at nine, and Benny rubbed the resin off my gloves. He moved aside and Willy came in.

He was hot, that Willy. He'd flattened the champ and he liked it and wanted a little more of the same. I forgot all about Romero, now. Willy came in like a wild wind and threw a wide, terrific left hook. I stepped inside it and blammed a right hand to the chin. Willy stopped dead. There was a funny expression on his face, as if he didn't believe it. I let him have both hands to the head a couple of times, and he went down.

He got up at eight. He was tough in the heart but his legs were made of rubber, now. I hooked the left to the head, then planted a straight right to his chin. He started to go and I piled them in there. It was a left hook that put him down again.

I stood in a corner and watched him try to get up. Game as a pebble. He was on his knees at eight, but at ten he was flat on his face. His clock was all unwound.

The crowd loved it. We left the ring with a terrific hand, and there was Romero, looking at me and grinning.

And all the way up the aisle, guys kept yelling, "When you gonna fight Romero, Danny?" They sounded as if they'd been trained.

THE dressing room was noisy, filled with newspaper guys for a while; then it quieted down and I got a rub and a shower. I was getting dressed when Boley started it again.

"Danny, you ought to make up your mind about it. When are you goin' to fight Romero?"

I stood up and slapped my hands against my head. "Will people stop saying that! I'm not going to fight the guy. Get it through your head."

"Why not, Danny?"

I sat down and lit a smoke. "It's very simple. I'll explain in words of one syllable. Romero is terrific. He comes up from whatever South American country he comes from, and he hits the Coast and murders half a dozen guys—Mike Monello, Johnny Carter, Sailor Otis, Patsy Palermo and the rest. He comes East and does the same thing. He is dynamite. He is also twenty-five years old and strong as two horses."

Boley said, "Yeah, that's right."

"Now we'll talk about me. I am not twenty-five years old. You know how old I am but the papers don't. Say thirty-two. I am not as strong as two horses. Not even as strong as one horse. He would murder me. I would go around mumbling for the rest of my life. I have a wife and two nice kids I enjoy seeing and talking to. Romero would fix that, all right."

I got up and tied my tie. "The hell with Romero. Let him go fight a wild ox."

"But the dough," Boley said. "It would draw a million and a half. Maybe two. Almost a million for you."

"I don't want a million dollars that bad. I have plenty of money. I've got the factory, besides. A very nice factory that makes plastics which I don't know anything about, but which sets me up for life."

Boley shifted in his chair. "I meant to tell you about that, Danny. The factory, I mean. You ain't got a factory any more. It burned down this afternoon. I didn't want to tell you before the fight."

I looked at him and saw he was on the level. It was hard to take, but there wasn't anything I could do about it. I said, "Okay, so it's insured. We'll build another one."

Boley fidgeted. "I meant to tell you about that, too. There's somethin' peculiar about the insurance. It don't cover a fire that was started by mice. The insurance is off, Danny."

"Mice? What the hell would a mouse be doing, starting fires?"

"They found out the thing was started by a couple of mice nibblin' on some inflammable stuff. The insurance don't cover."

I looked at him. "You and your brother-in-law who's in the insurance business! He never heard of mice? Didn't his mother and father tell him things?"

I sat down and thought about it. The business had been fine, the thing that would carry Helen and me the rest of the way and provide for the kids, but good.

Then I thought about Romero. I said, "I'll think of something, Boley. But no Romero. I'm not going to have my brains beaten out just because of a couple of mice. That doesn't make sense. I have to meet Helen. But I'll see you tomorrow."

I went down to Healey's, and the fight crowd was there, and Helen had our table in the corner. Everyone wanted to know when I'd fight Romero, but I stalled them off.

Helen looked very lovely in a new hat. She smiled at me and said, "Were you surprised? You look very silly, Danny, lying on your back with your legs up in the air."

She sees all my fights. I said, "I just wanted to show you something a little new. You've never seen that one before."

"I don't want to see it again, either. I didn't like it. Were you hurt?"

I shook my head. "I'm all right."

We ordered, and I thought about the factory. I wouldn't say anything to Helen about it until I'd worked something else out. I thought about Romero. He wasn't the answer I was looking for.

You think of the devil, and sure enough, there he is. I heard a loud laugh at the next table, and I turned my head and there was Romero. He was sitting with a guy named Gill Dorgan, who managed him, and a couple of pretty girls. And when I turned he saw me.

He didn't waste any time. He got up and came right over to the table. He said, "Ha! Thee champion! Thee Danny Doyle!"

I said, "Hello." There wasn't anything else I wanted to say. Between him and the factory, I was in a fine stew.

Romero said, "When you fight Luis Phillipe Romero, hah? When you get killed, hah, Danny Doyle?"

He thought that was very funny. He laughed and laughed, and everyone in the joint turned to look at him.

I said, "Go away and sit down, Romero. I like a little peace with my meals."

He leaned forward, stuck his finger into my chest. "You are afraid of Romero, no? You are afraid he kill you, no? You are no champion. You are a bomb! A champion bomb!" He thought that was very funny, too. He threw his head back and laughed again.

I could feel Helen's eyes on me, quiet and waiting. I could feel anger running through me. The evening had brought a little too much trouble.

I'd ordered grapefruit to start with, but I gave it to Romero. I pushed it into his face, then slugged him on the chin with a right hand. It wasn't the way a gentleman would behave, and I knew Helen would give me hell afterward. But I'd taken enough punishment for one night.

He went over a table, upsetting it, and the place was in an uproar. Eight guys sat on Romero and a couple of them held me.

I said, "I'll fight you tonight, you slob. In the alley, if you like. Or if you want to wait a month and pick up a couple of bucks, we can make it in the ball park."

Romero was too busy to talk, what with a guy sitting on his head. But Dorgan could talk. He said, "That's on the level, Doyle?"

I waved my hand around. "A hundred people heard me say it. See Boley in the morning and you can sign stuff."

They lugged Romero out, roaring like a wounded lion. I sat down and looked at Helen and waited for my bawling out. She said, "That was a very nice punch, Danny."

She's a surprising woman.

I WENT up to the camp with Henny Stein and a couple of boys to work with. Boyle stayed in the city to patch up some of the details, but he would follow us.

On the train, Henny said, "You think you can lick this guy, champ?"

"What do you think?"

He looked at me. "Well, the road's gotta end someplace. You been around a long time, champ."

He was right. I had no kick coming. I didn't mind being beaten. The only objection I had was to getting killed.

I worked hard. I'm always in shape, but for Romero I wanted it to be something special. I wanted to go all the way, and when I finished I wanted my head to be on my shoulders.

Three days before the fight I was tapering down. I'd worked nice and easy, and the rub and shower had been good. I was walking down the road, all by myself, when the big car came along. It stopped and someone said, "Hello, Danny."

I looked. It was Johnny Arcade and a couple of his guys. Johnny was a bettor. A very big bettor.

I said, "Hello, Johnny. What are you doing so far from Broadway?"

I didn't like him, I didn't dislike him. He'd never bothered me. He was a little chunky guy. I'd heard some stories about him that weren't nice, but you couldn't be sure.

He said, "I won't waste your time, Danny. You going to beat this guy, this Romero?"

I shrugged. "I dunno."

"Look, Danny, give it to me square. Yes or no."

I thought about that. What difference would it make? He was asking for an opinion, and he wasn't writing for a newspaper. What he knew he'd keep to himself.

I said, "He'll probably win."

He nodded. "Like I figured. I'm gonna put a load on him, Danny."

"That's your business."

"And I'd like to put down a chunk for you. Say about fifty thousand."

That didn't smell so good. I shook my head. "Thanks, Johnny, but nothing doing. I make out all right."

He frowned. "I like to have some insurance, Danny. I don't like my money to be walkin' around without a leash. Let me put down that fifty grand for you. We'll make it seventy-five."

It was a nice piece of change and I wouldn't be taking any chances. What Johnny wanted was to be sure I'd lose. He'd pay for that.

I said, "Look, Johnny. You asked me a question and I gave you an answer. That's all. Period."

He shook his head. "I don't like to leave things hangin' loose like this. I like to be sure. Let me lay a chunk for you, and—"

I said, "So-long, Johnny." I walked down the road. I decided I didn't like Johnny Arcade. If a man wants to gamble, it's all right with me. But let him gamble.

I went into town the day of the fight. I saw Helen for a few minutes, then went to the commission offices for the weigh-in. Romero was feeling fine. He made a try for me, but someone held him off. In a towel he looked terrific. I knew I wouldn't enjoy being in there with him that night.

Boley and Henny and I went to a hotel where it was nice and quiet, and played some cards during the afternoon. I had a sleep and ate early, and about five o'clock there was a knock on the door.

It was Johnny Arcade. He was dressed like a Christmas tree, and so were the two guys with him. Boley let them in and shut the door.

Johnny said, "Well, Danny, you change your mind?"

"About what?"

"About Romero winning."

I shook my head. "We're all grown people here. I figure Romero to win. He's got too much for me."

Johnny smiled and nodded. "Okay. I'll bet that lump for you, Danny. But now it'll be a hundred grand. Just a little present from me to you."

I said, "Look. You don't seem to get the idea. I don't want any presents. Tonight I'll get a couple of presents. Romero will give me plenty, and from the gate I get almost a million. I'm not greedy."

Johnny Arcade dropped the smile. "I'd like you to take it, Danny. I'll feel hurt if you don't."

"That's a shame. I don't like to hurt anyone. But nothing doing."

He walked to the door. "Only thing I say, Danny, is that you better be right. You figure Romero to win. Okay. But you better be right."

They went out, and Boley looked at me. "What the hell was that about?"

I shook my head. "Nothing." But I didn't feel too good. Suppose something silly happened? But I knew it wouldn't. I'd seen Romero fight.

They couldn't have put a baseball into the ball park that night. The place was packed and they were turning away thousands at the windows. We went down the aisle and the crowd roared. Boley was right beside me, and he was frowning.

He said, "I hope you didn't make any mistake with Johnny Arcade."

"I hope so, too." I was a little worried about that, but only a little. I'd remembered some unpretty stories I'd heard about Johnny. But he had a safe bet. He wouldn't be bothering me. The only one

I was really concerned about was Romero.

He was in the ring. He was smiling, bowing to the crowd, walking around the ring as if he owned the joint. He didn't lack confidence, that guy.

They introduced fourteen guys before the fight, and I was getting jittery when they called me and Romero out to the center of the ring. It was a fine night for me. Either Romero would beat my brains out, or Johnny Arcade would send a couple of his thugs to do the job. All I stood to win was money. Which was a compensation.

Marty Callahan was working the fight. He told us the things we knew, then we went back to the corners. Boley said, "Be careful out there. Be cautious."

"If I wanted to be cautious, I would have bought a ticket to Pittsburgh this morning." He put the mouthpiece in and I couldn't say any more. The bell rang and I turned and went out to meet Romero.

He was something to see. He looked like a cat, with his dark, intense face, and he moved like one. He looked slow, but I knew it was just a natural gracefulness. He had as many muscles as Heinz has pickles, and they were all moving, easy and free.

He was a hooker. He just walked into you, chin hidden behind the heavy shoulder, looking for a spot to hit. I could handle most hookers. All except this guy. I knew I could handle him for eight or ten rounds, before my legs started to go. The legs that weren't so young any more.

I stabbed him, hit him on the forehead. His lips were pulled back in a grin, and the mouthpiece was white, a nice target. I jammed the left into it. It didn't even slow him up. He kept coming in, and I stabbed him and stepped back.

Near the end of the round he hit me with a left hand. He came in under my left, hooked to the body, then raised the shot to the head. It felt as if someone had hit me in the ribs with a brick, then slammed me on the side of the head with a ball bat.. The guy could belt.

I DID fine for five rounds. He was coming to me and I liked that, but he was coming too fast, hitting too hard. I knew he'd begin to catch up with me soon. He just kept shuffling in, the shoulder protecting his chin real nice, hooking with the left, the right hand all set to go.

Boley said, "Danny, you're doin' good. You will take this bum."

I said, "Sure." I could begin to feel it in my legs already, because Romero moved me faster than the others had. He had more to hand out, more to keep away from than the others. I knew that once he teed off on me a couple of times, it would be curtains.

I went out for the sixth and stabbed with the left. It landed a little high, on his forehead, and before I could throw it again, jam it out there, he was inside.

He was as strong as a bull and he wanted to punch, so he punched. He didn't hit me with much, because when they come inside I know what to do with them. I rapped him around the ears a couple of times and shoved him away.

But he didn't go away, or as far away as I figured. I started to jab, but he was inside before I knew it. He hit me three rocking shots to the head before I knew what was going on.

It slowed me down. I could hear the crowd roaring and I tried to crab out of there, but he wasn't having any. He caught me in a corner and poured it to me. I don't know how many times he hit me before I want down.

I was sitting there, one leg doubled under me, when I heard Marty Callahan yell "Six!" I had the middle strand of the rope in my right hand, and I used it to pull me up. The legs were all right, I found, as Marty wiped the gloves off.

Romero came for me as soon as Marty got out of the way.

But I was working, now. I'd been a little careless and I'd been shelled for it, and I wasn't having any more for a while. I showed Romero a few things I had picked up in the last fifteen years.

I went away. No pedaling, just a constant movement to keep him from getting set. I'd catch what was coming to me in a little while, but in the meantime I'd give him a hard time.

In the next three rounds he saw more left hand than he knew existed. I kept it in his puss all the time, jabbing, hooking it, always sending it in there until he was sick and tired of it. He stood in the middle of the ring, finally, completely disgusted, and waved at me to come in to him.

But I knew he'd get me soon enough. The legs had been over-used. I could feel them start to flutter, start to drag a little. He wasn't as helpless as he thought. He'd been hitting me in the body, and now they were really beginning to hurt. He was chugging them in there, beating the ribs off me.

In the tenth he came to me and I stabbed at him but it was weak and he got inside. He hit me in the body with both hands, and then I got it, all of a sudden—his head, right in the face.

He backed right away, and I could see him standing there through the blood that was streaming from my eye. He had his hands raised in that gesture that is supposed to tell the crowd, *It was all a mistake, ladies and gentlemen. I'm a very clean fighter. I regret this deeply. . . .*

But through the blood I saw something else. I saw the light in his eyes, the fine, satisfied little smile on his mouth. He'd been working for that shot for a long time, and now he was happy.

He came in to me, reaching out his gloves in the conciliatory gesture the crowd loves. I punched him right in the mouth with a very swift right hand.

I threw the works, then. I knew I was finished. Between the eye and the legs, I couldn't go another three rounds. While I had it, I might as well spend it. Romero would walk out of here knowing he'd been in a fight.

He took my punch and grinned at me. He stood in the middle of the ring and motioned again for me to come in. I walked to him, and he was surprised.

I hooked him with a left hand, jolted a right home to his head. I buried the left hand in his belly and busted him another on the chops with the right. His back was against the ropes and he was fighting back.

He walked me across the ring, punching. He was beating me to the shot, and I couldn't slip back into the rhythm of the thing.

It was a right hand that dropped me. I was hurt, not too badly—but I was tired. I didn't know whether I could get the legs to take me back up again. Callahan counted five and six, and I was on my hands and knees, looking at Romero.

He was grinning like the cat who knows where the cream is hidden. He was looking out at the crowd, then he turned to me. And he laughed.

That brought me up like nothing else could have. He came to me easy, nice and deliberate, and as he started his hook, I put the straight hand right across.

It was a hell of a punch, and I could feel the hand go. It felt like a bag of marbles, inside.

Romero stood there, the shock showing on his face. I took my time and hooked the left to his head. He went over like a falling tree.

I stood in the corner and watched him. My throat was raw, trying to pull breath into my lungs. The eye streamed down, and I rubbed the blood away so I could see him. If he got up I was licked.

He got up at nine. Marty cleaned off

his gloves, got out of the way, and I walked to Romero.

His eyes held a glaze, but he saw me. He threw the right hand, and it curled around my neck. I sank the left into his body, then whipped it to his head. He went down in sections, and he stayed down. He didn't move as Marty counted.

The place was a madhouse. I sat in the corner and Henny fixed the eye up, and then it took half an hour, and a half dozen cops, to get to the dressing room.

It had been going on for half an hour when Boley came over to me. He said,

"Someone wants to see you, champ."

"Who?"

"Johnny Arcade." Boley looked scared.

I STARTED to get scared, too. I had forgotten about Johnny Arcade.

I was scared at first, and then I started to get sore. Who the hell did he think he was? If he wanted to bet, let him bet, but not bother me about it.

"Come on in," I said.

He shook his head. "Alone."

I grabbed him by the collar and yanked him into the room. All the crowd turned and Boley said, "Danny! Take it easy!"

"What do you want to see me about?"

He said, "It's private. Personal."

I shook my head. I said to the crowd, "You all know Johnny Arcade. He bet on the fight. He bet on Romero."

Someone said, "Who the hell didn't?"

Arcade said, "Look, Doyle—"

"But Johnny bet a lot of dough," I said. "And he wanted to bet some for me. A hundred thousand he wanted to bet for me. Isn't that right?"

He didn't say anything.

"But I wouldn't let him. I told him I figured Romero to beat me, but I wasn't betting. His money or mine. And now he's sore, aren't you, Arcade?"

Morgan, of the *Express*, said, "I get it. Now he comes around to take it out on you. Right?"

I looked at Arcade. "I wouldn't know."

Some other guy said, "This'll make a hell of a story. Why, if anything ever happened to you after this, the cops'd grab Arcade so fast that—"

Arcade seemed to come awake. He started shaking his head. "You got me wrong, Danny. Dead wrong." He was smiling, now, like a sick fish. He was as white as the wall. "I lost dough, sure. But not a big bundle. A little one." He slapped me on the shoulder. "We all thought you were through. Ha-ha, you sure fooled us, Danny, boy.

"I just wanted to stop by and offer congratulations," Arcade said.

I nodded. "That's fine. Thanks." And I knew I was in the clear, had nothing to worry about from him. He wouldn't do a thing, not with every newspaper in the city blowing the whistle on him.

He headed for the door. He was sweating like a pig. He said, "So long, champ."

There was more noise, more pictures. I was tired. They finally let me get a shower and a rub, and just as I was dressing, Boley said, "Champ, there's someone at the door wants to see you."

I thought of Arcade, but he wouldn't be back again. I walked to the door. It was Helen. She grinned at me and winked.

She said, "Champ, I'm getting hungry."

"I thought it might be someone else," I said. "Did you bet on the fight?"

She nodded. "Certainly. I lost three dollars on you."

It was a great world. I grabbed my hat. Boley said, "Champ, about the factory. They find out it wasn't mice. It was rats."

"Does that make it all right? The insurance, I mean?"

He shook his head. "No. The deal on rats is the same as on mice. I just thought you'd like to know."

I threw the hat at him and we went out. It was a fine night, rats or mice.

(Continued from page 7)

Red Sox tally over the plate as Bobby Doerr blasts a triple between DiMaggio and Henrich in right center. A wave of uneasiness grips the Yankee bench as Manager Harris, flanked by his two alert coaches, Chuck Dressen and John Corriden, watches every move. Down in the Yankee bullpen, where for so long nothing has moved, there is now a great display of activity as several relief pitchers start warming up with feverish haste.

Sam Mele, young outfielder of the Bosox, now whacks a single into center. It scores Doerr from third and the McCarthy forces have two runs in.

Carefully, Lopat pitches to Birdie Tebbetts. But he doesn't pitch carefully enough, for in the next instant there is a loud crash of bat meeting ball and the white pellet streaks into the right field stand. It is a home run, scoring Mele, and the Sox, who only a few minutes before had appeared so hopelessly out of it, now have four runs tucked away. Only one more is needed for a tie.

Time is called as Coach Dressen comes out of the Yankee dugout to notify the umpire that a change in pitchers is about to be made. Out of the Yankee bullpen emerges a familiar figure. It is Joe Page, the Bombers' extraordinary relief artist, who somehow simply dotes on these tense situations.

Jauntily he steps to the mound, takes a few more warm-up pitches and then, with no more concern than if he were flicking a cigaret ash from his sleeve, he strikes out Jake Jones whom McCarthy has just sent up as pinch-hitter.

A moment later comes another flurry of excitement as Billy Johnson, Yankee third sacker, fumbles a grounder—and the Bosox have the tying run on first. But Page still remains unperturbed. Coolly he fans Johnny Pesky for the third out, and the ball game is over. Page, by brilliantly turning back the Sox belated rally, has saved another important battle for the Yanks.

Down in his dressing room under the stands, Harris slumps exhausted into a chair, as tired as if he had pitched the entire game himself.

"Wow, but that was a close shave," exclaims the Buck as he mops his still perspiring brow. "Almost waited too long before calling on Page. But with one out and with three runs still to work on after Mele hit that single, I was still hopeful Lopat would make it. And I wanted him to finish that game, if possible, because it would have given him more confidence in his next start. Eddie, you know, has a peculiar complex. He has a notion he can't work himself into his best form in the spring. I'd like to correct him of that idea.

"Percentage also was slightly in my favor, I thought, because with Tebbetts up I had reason to believe Lopat would again handle him easily. Twice before he had come up today with a runner on first and each time Birdie ended the inning by slapping into a double play. But this time he caught an outside pitch and clouted it into the seats. It almost cost us the ball game. But those are difficult decisions to make."

AND the astute skipper of the world champions is eminently correct. For of the many problems that daily confront the manager of a big league ball club as he masterminds his charges through a stiff conflict, none is more difficult than the one involving the changing of a pitcher.

Many a game has been rescued, such as the one we detailed above, by the timely intervention of a relief pitcher. Many another has been lost because the relief came too late or because the wrong relief worker was called from the bullpen. Merely making a shift in pitchers does not always solve the problem.

THE BOMBER FROM MURDERERS' ROW

By BURGESS LEONARD

Eight guys without a tomorrow . . . a star who'd sold out his yesterdays . . . and one last slide-slug-and-spike inning that could make them champs—today!

THERE was a new name gilded on the frosted glass of the door to the inner office of the Falcons, or Stub Owens would not have been opening it. But he helped its progress with the toe of a well-worn shoe. Stub's blue serge suit was shiny, and shrunken from too many trips to the cleaners. He looked seedy, and he did not care. He walked in with a sneer on his wide, strong face.

"Little" Stub Owens. He was short; so is a tombstone. Those great, horny hands could almost tear the cover from a baseball—some seasons back. There was compact, solid strength in his sloping

A Novel

Stub put his head down and ran, with the howl of the crowd spurring him on. . . .

shoulders, choppy speed in his stride, stubborn pride in the way he carried that black-haired, big-jawed head. But he jammed his big hands into the pockets of the coat that fitted too tightly, because they were trembling a little.

Prim little Josiah Muckenfuss elevated himself slightly from behind the mahogany desk and craned his neck, his pale blue eyes searching for scars where Stub's foot had struck the door. He glared at Stub and said in his testy, schoolmarm voice, "You haven't changed, Owens. You still have no manners."

A big man was leaning over Muckenfuss's desk, freckled, red-haired arms supporting the hulk of his body like pillars. Luke Long, manager of the Falcons, straightened slowly. His hands clenched into fists. Small features distorted in the mass of flesh that reddened around tiny black eyes.

Luke Long sputtered, "Welcome back to baseball, Judas. I'm sorry I didn't order out a brass band. You deserve one. You sold out the only pennant this team ever had a chance at. You broke the heart of the old man who picked you out of the gutter and made a pitcher of you, and sent him to an early grave. You killed Uncle Dan Bordeau for fifty thousand in dirty Mex money. And now you've got the guts to come crawling back to the club you knifed in the back."

Muscles humped at the base of Stub's jaw, but his gray eyes remained calm and cold. He laughed contemptuously. "Crawling? To the Falcons? I could have rotted down there in semi-pro ball for all the Falcons cared—until another club got interested. But when the Giants wanted me the good old, dog-in-the-manger Falcons got busy and rattled the chains on me. I'm not back here by my choice."

"Nor mine," Luke Long gritted. "And I'm gonna send you so far into the bushes—"

"Now Luke, you promised," the acting president of the Falcons warned in his querulous voice, Muckenfuss was a fifty-year-old bachelor, known to the team as "Old Lady." He had been Old Man Godfrey's assistant, and now he was guardian to Mary Godfrey, the Old Man's only daughter. "You have been pestering me for another decent pitcher. Owens was—once. We must subjugate our personal feelings to the welfare of the organization and give Owens a trial. Perhaps we can obtain that pitcher without needless expenditure. Owens's greatest virtue is that he comes to us cheaply."

"Cheap is just the word for Owens," Long roared.

Stub's fists came out of his pockets. The buttons on his coat strained as his chest bulged. His words were quiet and toneless, prelude to a storm, "I can take just so much. And I've had more than I can stomach."

He moved with cold deliberation toward the bigger man. The red-faced Long shifted position quickly and waited. Muckenfuss made choking sounds of distress. But the outer door closed with a forceful jar, and a clear, feminine voice asked with transparent innocence, "Am I interrupting anything?"

Stub stepped back and let his hands fall with a sigh of exasperation. He said, "Frankly, yes."

He recognized the girl in a moment, but the shock lingered. Stunning beauty in a complete stranger is not hard to credit; but when you remember scrawny limbs, pug nose and teeth braces, sloppy skirts and shrill giggles, you search defensively for traces of these things while your senses stagger before an array of graciously gentle curves, pearly skin touched with rose, glossy black hair middle-parted to accentuate the delicate lines of a heart-shaped face. Mary Godfrey was very beautiful, very poised, and very scornful. The hazel eyes that had once followed Stub's every pitching motion with the glaze of hero

worship blinding them, were now brilliant with scorn.

Her words, low and clipped, came to him across a glacier. "Welcome, prodigal. Welcome back to the club you ruined. I only regret that dad or Uncle Dan Bordeau isn't here to receive you—at the business end of a Louisville Slugger."

Stub's face was a carving in stone. He said quietly, "The suspension was five years. They're finished."

"They won't ever be finished," she flung at him. "You might as well understand that now. Everyone who had loved Uncle Dan—who didn't?—will hate you the rest of your life. The great Stub Owens, the best pitcher in baseball. What a laugh. You were a six-for-a-dime third baseman the first time he saw you. You'd had your two tries at the big time and brawled them away, and you could have withered away in the bushes if Uncle Dan hadn't seen something in that peg across the infield."

Stub asked softly, "Did I ever deny it?"

Crimson splattered her cheeks, slap-quick. Her scorn was like a whip. "Deny it? All you did was take away the only thing life had left for him. He was dying of leukemia that last season, the year you won eleven straight. He had a good team and a better than fair mound staff, and the best pitcher in the league for a stopper. You sold a pennant along with your soul when Jose Caligua dangled a fifty-thousand bonus before your eyes. They say the Blues had tears in their eyes, some of them, when they knocked Uncle Dan's team out of the pennant race. You wouldn't have known that, counting your pesos down in Mexico."

Stub pronounced deliberately, "Like all women, you talk too much." He turned toward the desk, jerking a thumb at the open contract. "This mine?" He picked up a pen and signed without a glance at the contents; he knew what he was getting: the bare minimum. But his signature was big and bold.

Luke Long barked, "Tomorrow you go against the Panthers and Ace Orkney. Until then, stay out of my dressing room."

Mary Godfrey's voice was small and choked, but it filled the big office, "I—I never before pulled for the Falcons to lose a game. Tomorrow I pray for it."

Stub's lips curled. Strong white teeth flashed. He said, "It has been pleasant, friends." He walked out, swaggering his stocky weight. The swagger lasted all the way to the street before his shoulders drooped, and the scared look came into his eyes.

THEY looked a little like Bordeau's Bully Boys; some of them had been. They had the look of battle about them, and they were loud, even here in the dressing room. Stub went in quietly. He had a moment to study them before he was discovered.

Doll Cudahy still held down second, a blonde man with a kewpie face, and a stomach like a Chinese idol. Rhinegold was a fixture at first, mean and massive, erratically deaf; he couldn't hear you ask for a match if you shouted, but he could hear a whispered curse all the way across the infield. Mahoney was playing right-field on his doddering legs, the mark of the sunfield branded almost black on his bulldog face, but he knew that crazy-angled wall like a spider knows its web. Boss Snapp and Tobe Rale were here, thriving beyond a pitcher's normal years, Boss fattening, Tobe withering.

There were rookies. He recognized only Trueblood, the shortstop. The boy was unmistakable. His muscles were bacon slices plated over scrawny bones, and he looked as though a line drive might carry him into the outfield; but he had enough hands for two men. They dangled, a giant's hands, seeming to pull his thin shoulders down.

Rhinegold saw him first. Their eyes locked. For an instant a rueful, hang-

dog smile was born on Stub's wide mouth. It died quickly, withered by the flame in the first sacker's green eyes. Rhinegold shouted, "There he is, the dirty son—"

Stub had heard it all many times before. He reddened a little, but his face was stonily passive as he walked down the line of lockers, searching for an empty one. He ran a gauntlet of curses and black glares. Something touched his arm from behind. He whirled, dropping his valise. Luke Long laughted in his face as Stub unclenched his fists. The manager jerked a thumb.

"There's a rusty nail in the wall over by the door. That's for transients. Hang your clothes on it."

Stub shrugged. One corner of his mouth dipped into a fixed sneer. He hung the old blue serge coat on the nail. Doll Cudahy doubled with mirth. He jibed, "Some comedown. Fifty grand to a rusty nail. Why don't you buy you a locker, Mister Moneybags?"

Stub swung around slowly. He said reasonably, "Nobody griped more than you about the Old Man's pennypinching, Doll. You guys had it better because a few of us jumped the league. The owners got scared and came across. Seems to me you ought to be thankful for what you got out of it instead of squawking about what a traitor I was."

That was his first and last peace offer. It was swept away in the vehemence of their tirade. He turned his back and stripped. When the room grew calmer, button-eyed, spear-chinned Trueblood splattered the tile with tobacco juice and announced, "That don't look like no fifty grand package to me."

"Careful, son," Boss Snapp warned. "He might floor you with a roll of hundred buck bills."

Stub had to grin at that. His grin was sour. There was a dog-eared fiver tucked away in a corner of his billfold, and some loose silver in his trouser pockets. All the money he possessed now in the world.

He came out of the dugout and blinked for a moment in the sunlight. The commotion started in the stands just behind the dugout, but it spread so spontaneously that he knew they had been waiting for him. Somebody's lunch smote him a soggy blow in the back. He turned in instinctive anger, and a soft tomato creased his chin and burst against his shirt. He did not bother to wipe away the mess, and he dodged nothing, even when a pop bottle whirled past his head and bounced on the grass. After a while the first salvo was exhausted, but the thunder of hatred still numbed his ears. They were good haters, these Falcon fans.

Luke Long approached him, now that it was safe, and jerked a thumb at the underslung, shuffling, brickyard blonde who trailed him. Long said, "Your catcher. Name of Ruffo."

Stub looked the boy over. There was too much brass to the big mouth and not enough alertness about the eyes. The boy looked slow, and his broken fingers confirmed the judgment. There was a bad scar to the left of his nose, and two missing teeth under it; he hadn't ducked fast enough one day.

Stub asked quietly, knowing suddenly how it was going to be, "No offense, kid. How many games have you caught this year?"

Anger flared in the red face. Ruffo snarled, "You got your guts, you—" But Luke Long cut him off, smiling smugly as he explained, "Frosty Ivers needs a rest. Wallace has a headache. Ruffo needs experience. He's your catcher."

Stub tapped the ball slowly into the pocket of his old glove. He tried to grin as he said, "Okay, kid, we'll get along. I warm up slow. I'll let you know when I'm ready for the curves."

Ruffo sneered with the scarred side of his mouth, gums red and ugly where the teeth were gone. He warned, "You're

wasting that sweet talk. I got to catch you, but I ain't got to like it."

Stub began to throw, just lobbing the ball. The storm went on in the stands. The words were lost, but the tone was unmistakable. He continued to throw. The crack of the ball into the mitt was louder now, a bullwhipping lash. The good sweat trickled down Stub's back. He walked over to Ruffo, saying, "I'll hook a few. What signals you want?"

Ruffo said with harsh indifference, "Just throw the ball, Shorty. I'll catch it."

Stub's mouth made a pale line. He walked back to where his spikes had scuffed the earth. He wound up. He had never had perfect form. He was jerky. He looked like a "crooked arm" pitcher, even though his weight rolled into every pitch. He threw, horn-hard big fingers tearing at the cover of the ball.

Ruffo put out his mitt at belt height. The ball streaked toward it, clawing at the air. It dived suddenly, ducking the mitt completely, brushing Ruffo's leg on the outside, just above the knee. Ruffo just stood there. His face was no longer red. His eyes bulged, white-rimmed.

Stub called for another ball. He began his windup. Ruffo came out of the trance. He choked, "Wait a minute! You want to kill somebody? I'll give you one finger for the fast ball, two for that screwball thing—"

Then he was walking out to the mound, and hatred seemed to be thickening the very air, resisting his stride. The roaring increased. It was a tangible force, a club against his ears, beating him numb. Stub began to feel sick.

Will Crofft settled himself to hug the plate, a heavy-shouldered little man with round, unwinking eyes, a good lead-off man for a fine ball club. Every fan in the park was yelling for Crofft to kill that ball. There were no Falcon fans today.

Stub dropped the resin bag. His hands were trembling. He had waited five years years for this moment. But he had not dreamed it would be like this. He wound up dazedly, habit whirling that nerveless arm. The ball struck the dirt a dozen feet in front of the plate. The whole ball park shrieked in grim delight.

Stub caught the return peg. He tried to shut his ears to that overpowering roar. If only they would be quiet for a few seconds! But the fury of it increased somehow. He could not think. His fingers trembled as they gripped the ball. It sailed five feet above Ruffo's mitt.

He could not find the plate. Crofft walked on four pitches. There was derision in the thunder from above now. It was the one thing that could have saved Stub. He got mad. He squared his shoulders and tilted his jaw. He shook off Ruffo's choice of the fast ball, nodded to the screwball signal.

Pat Donner stood laxly to the left of

the plate, a slender man with wrists almost as thick as his small ankles, a crafty pull hitter. Stub checked the runner on first, stretched, and fired the ball at the plate; and five years of waiting went into that pitch. A thin streak of white streamed from Stub's right hand to the plate, and when the hook took hold it veered as though glancing from something solid. Donner never moved.

FOR just an instant there was complete silence in the ball park. Then there was a shriek as Ruffo lumbered back to his right, chasing the ball that had glanced from his mitt. Crofft was sprinting for second. Ruffo grabbed the ball and threw, and Stub knew instantly from that slow and full-armed sweep, that the catcher would never stick in the big time. Trueblood pulled down the peg with a leap. Crofft's slide gave him margin to spare.

Stub threw the fast ball, and speed made it flutter. There was enough take-off to make it rise a little. Donner's bat nicked it, angling it up against Ruffo's mask. Crofft, who had broken for third, trudged back to the keystone sack. Ruffo called for a pitch-out, but Crofft only feinted and trotted back, his keen eyes measuring the throw which third baseman Rube Gold had to leap forward to trap in the dirt.

Crofft made his bid on the next pitch. It was the screwball again, and Donner just backed out of there, shaking his head. Ruffo fumbled the catch for an instant. His peg was waist-high and outside the base. Gold had to relax the sturdy block he had spread in front of the sack, and Crofft slid in, safe.

One down. Kid Chalmers was the batter, the Panther prize rookie, grace and poise in every line of his rangy body. He was pounding the ball at a .340 average, and Stub had had no briefing on Panther hitters. Catcher Ruffo was less than a help; he called for a low hook on the inside. Chalmer fell away and chopped his obvious enjoyment, and Stub swore bitterly at the contact, knowing he had tossed that one into the gravy bowl for Chalmers.

The ball bounced from the rightfield wall. Crofft breezed home. Chalmers pulled up on second, held up by Mahoney's throw. The ball had richocheted off the angling wall as though drawn to Mahoney's glove. Of all who had watched the play, only Stub reflected that a faster man might have pulled down the liner on the fly.

Stub mixed them for Romero, the Panthers big man, and the clean up slugger lifted a change of pace to the shortfield. "Hands" Trueblood loped back and wrapped his glove about it. Two down. French Legay, the stocky, cocky Panther catcher, crowded the plate. Stub remembered Legay, and it was no consolation. He put every twist he owned into three pitches. He bent pretzels around the flailing club. Chalmers stole third on the second pitch. Frenchy missed the last one by inches, then plunged for first as Ruffo dropped the ball. The catcher scrambled for it and threw wildly. Rhinegold leaped forward, cutting off the ball on the rise, smashing into Legay with a good block and tag as the Frenchman tried to plow him under. Rhinegold held the ball, laughed, and thrust it under Legay's nose before walking to the dugout. They liked their baseball tough, these Falcons.

Stub marched up to Luke Long, hunched on the bench. Hands on hips, Stub glared down. He said coldly, "I want a catcher."

Luke Long produced a plug of tobacco and worried off a hunk with yellowed teeth. He said with no show of anger, "We wanted a pitcher five years back. You got Ruffo. You'll always get Ruffo."

Stub stood over him, fists clenching, knowing that Luke Long would rather give away a ball game than give him an even chance. Boss Snapp, hands folded across his massive stomach, said with

heavy calm, "You start something, *señor,* and somebody else will finish it with a ball bat."

They were all watching him narrowly, arrogant in their challenge. Even Trueblood had turned back from the bat rack, bumping the butt of his stick on the top step of the dugout. Stub said sourly, "Sorry to disappoint. I've got business."

He sat down, jarring the bench. On the mound Ace Orkney was jerking down the bill of his cap, facing the plate. He was a tall man with thin hips and spindling limbs, and a great barrel of chest and back muscles. A grim, hawk-beaked man with a neck that curved forward out of hulking shoulders, he was rated second-best pitcher in the league. The Falcons had not beaten the Ace in two seasons.

But the Falcons were not awed. Hands Trueblood refused to fall away from the blistering fast one Orkney heaved high and inside. Somehow the skinny shortstop twisted around and chopped his bat awkwardly. The ball struck wood just above the batter's hands and sailed just over the Falcon first sacker's head, and Trueblood beat it out.

Brief seconds later Orkney trapped Trueblood cold off the bag; the Ace was very good with that snap throw. The runner was out by a hopeless margin. There was no excuse for the brutality of his high-spiking slide, peeling six inches of skin from Nick Romero's forearm. Trueblood bounced up and cocked his fists as huge, slow-tempered Romero called for time and stared in annoyance at the red, blood-beaded welt, muttering, "There wasn't no call for that."

Trueblood barked back, "You block the bag on us Falcons, we amputate."

The Falcons spilled out of the dugout, yapping, with Luke Long leading them. The Panther infielders rallied more quietly behind Romero. Kid Chalmers, the third baseman, snapped, "You guys are strictly the nuts. You can out-fight, out-yell and out-spike any team in the league. The only thing you can't do is play baseball. We've played you six and we've whipped you six, and we're getting plenty fed up with having somebody spiked out of every series."

The umpires broke it up. The roused Panthers were muttering to themselves as they went back to position. Orkney struck out Kilrain. Rube Gold drove a lashing liner Chalmers leaped high to take, and the side was retired.

The Panthers' single run held up as the innings passed scorelessly, but not without event. The Panthers loaded the sacks in the third, and again in the fifth inning. Each time Stub pulled out of it by fanning two consecutive batters. As early as the fifth, he began to wonder if he could go the route. When he bore down with every pitch, he could handle the Panthers; but the semi-pro ball he had been playing had not conditioned him for this. And when he tried to coast, the Panthers blasted the ball. A capable catcher could have eased him over the rough spots. Ruffo could not remember the batters from one inning to the next; in fairness to the boy, Stub had to admit he was hanging onto the curves better. But Stub had to veto more signals than he accepted, and it was a strain.

The Falcons were no help. They hit Orkney occasionally, and they were long ball hitters. Rube Gold smashed out a triple to open the fifth. And with nobody out, the Rube tried to steal home. The Panther catcher tagged him out five feet in front of the plate. So Cudahy's clean single, that could have scored him, was wasted.

After the first few minutes, Stub knew that what he had suspected was true. They looked like Bordeau's Bully Boys, but there was a difference. Uncle Dan's teams had liked their baseball rugged, but they knew how to play for a run. They had played to win. These Falcons were screwballs. They would rather start a riot than

a rally. They spiked for meat instead of bases. Their unholy reputation fascinated them more than vague hopes of finishing in the first division. They were the despair of umpires, the darlings of the bleachers.

STUB went to bat to open the last of the eighth. He had been good enough with the stick to win him a couple of trials in the big show as a third baseman; and he had been the best hitting pitcher in the majors. He stepped into Orkney's fast one and drilled a single off of Chalmers's glove.

Stub took a good lead away from the bag, yelled and feinted a dash as Orkney fired the fast one under Trueblood's bat. Stub repeated the act as Orkney studied him with sombre eyes, and whipped a fast curve that broke too wide. Stub reduced his lead by a step as Orkney prepared to pitch again. Stub had been studying Orkney throughout the game. He was sure a slow ball was coming up, and he broke for second with the short stretch.

Head down, arms pumping, Stub heard the plunk of the ball into the mitt, and knew it would be close. He took off in a long slide for the inside of the bag, and the ball thwacked hard on the meaty part of his back as his spikes hooked into the sack. Stub heard second baseman Reeder swear as he dove for the loose ball. Reeder looked at Stub oddly, and his comment was sour. "First clean steal I ever see the Falcons make. And a pitcher's got to do it."

Stub fretted on second while Trueblood lined out to Chalmers, and Kilrain lifted a pop-up for the catcher's mitt. Rube Gold got himself into a two-and-none hole immediately, swinging at Orkney's curves. The pitcher sailed a waste ball high and wide; but everything looked good to Gold. He barely reached it with the end of his bat, and raised a lazy fly ball that Romero could not quite reach. Rightfielder Donner had to come in and play it on its dying hop. The third base coach's hands were set to brake Stub. The pitcher kept going.

There was a chance. Donner had had a long run after that punily bouncing ball, with no chance to set himself for a throw until he picked it up in full stride. Stub was gambling on an inaccurate throw. Panther catcher Legay hid the plate behind a massive block. The ball came in high, but not wild enough to move Legay's anchored bulk. Stub came in low. His fierce lunge spilled Legay backward, and the ball rolled out of the dust cloud as Stub rolled over and reached for the plate. He left Legay swearing in a somewhat subdued monotone and walked toward the dugout. He had tied up the game, 1-1.

And the crowd booed him. He gave no sign that he heard. He just pulled the brim of his cap a little lower, to keep his eyes in the shadow. He was sure now that nothing he could ever do would suit anyone in this ball park.

Rhinegold bounced a fast hopper to Romero, and the Panther first sacker stepped on the bag to retire the side. Stub walked out to the mound. He was tired. He had wrung too many screwballs from his arm today, and his sprint around the bases had beggared his strength.

Wildness came to plague him. Keen-eyed Kid Chalmers watched two pitches miss corners. Stub tried to sneak a slider over, and the pitch did not break. Chalmers stepped into it with a dragging bat and pulled a single through the hole to Cudahy's left. Chalmers took an insistent lead as Stub pitched a ball and then a strike to Romero. Stub changed the pace on a low curve, and big Romero swung early, bouncing the ball straight at Rhinegold. The ball was hit hard, and Rhinegold fumbled it. Stub covered first base, but Rhinegold made the percentageless try for the double. Chalmers had the jump on the play, and he was tough enough to

keep it. He went into the bag on his stomach, chopping Trueblood down, and both runners were safe.

Hands Trueblood bounced up, balled his right fist and heaved it in a long arc as Chalmers was rising. The surprised Panther, off balance, threw up an arm and went down from the block. He sprang up full of fight, a rangy, powerful kid. His own teammates rushed out and shouldered him away from the smaller Trueblood. The officials chased Trueblood out of the game; but the Falcon fans cheered as Luke Long walked the boy to the dugout, a heavy, hairy red arm across the thin shoulders.

Squint Squires, utility infielder, shuffled out on broken-down arches to play the short-field. He was no Trueblood, and he proved it at once. He bobbled Legay's double-play offering, and recovered barely in time to nip the lumbering Frency at first, with Chalmers taking third, Romero second. One down.

Chalmers, still red-faced with anger, jockeyed for a lead. He slid back as Stub failed to trap him. Stub pitched for a long time to Sebastian. He traded part of his arm for the two hooks that angled Sebastian's attempted bunts foul and broke up the squeeze play. But as third sacker Gold moved back in relief, Stub lost the edge of his speed. Sebastian fouled four pitches back against the screen. It seemed fated to go on endlessly until the batter finally lifted an infield fly into Cudahy's hands. Two out.

Pike, the redheaded shortstop, gripped his light stick and glared at Stub. Pike was not supposed to hit much, but he had stirred up bad medicine with that thin stick today. Stub threw a slider, and got a corner. He lost his advantage when he missed the inside corner, and Pike bobbed his head back easily. He tried his downer, and it was inches low.

Ruffo called for the screwball. Concentrating savagely, Stub threw it. He felt the precise bite of his wrist into the long whip, and knew it was good. The ball slithered under Pike's bat. It skidded from the heel of Ruffo's mitt and rolled ten feet behind the plate.

Stub raced for the plate as Ruffo chased the ball. The fiery Chalmers was thundering down the path. With calm, sad resignation, Stub blocked the plate and waited. The play could have but one result. It was hopeless; it was the thing that had been building all this long, bitter afternoon. He had the dull thought that somehow the thing had been predestined as he waited for a throw that was going to be too late, and did not shrink from Chalmers' spikes.

HE COULD stand erect, Stub discovered. The pains were all dull and remote, though the sickness in his stomach was acute when he looked down to where the blood had balled the dust darkly. There

was a big lump at the base of his skull, and his right leg felt numb, even with iodine burning the slashes. The sound from above hurt most. It was a bullfight crowd smelling blood. Luke Long's grim smile floated hazily close, and the faint, harsh voice demanded, "You quitting, Owens? You going to alibi or take your licking?"

Stub turned slowly and held out his hand for a new ball. The umpire looked from him to Long, then dropped a baseball into the open hand. The ball felt strangely huge and heavy. Stub walked out to the mound, the torn sock flapping.

Ruffo's mitt was far away. Batter, catcher and umpire were performing a weird dance. Forgetting Romero, now on third, Stub went into the full windup and threw the fast ball. But there was something wrong with it. It seemed to float for long seconds, long enough for a savage smile to form on Pike's face as his bat came around in a lofting sweep. The ball climbed over the rightfield wall. The crowd roared. Another man came up and hit the ball. The crowd roared more. It was a happy sound. Stub pitched to two more men, and they hit the ball.

Then Luke Long came out and said to him, "You're through, bum. And I mean, through."

Stub walked slowly off the field. He knew dimly that he must hold his head up, and he must not limp. He had to do these things; he did not know why. A soft banana struck him under the ear. He kept walking.

He went into the dressing room and stuck his head under a cold shower. When he came out, his uniform was dripping, but his eyes were clearer. And very hard.

He kicked off his shoes and picked up a bat that was propped against a locker. Trueblood, half dressed, shouted, "Hey, that's mine. Where you going with that bat?"

Stub walked down the corridor and stopped at the door of the visitors' dressing room. He propped the bat against the wall. The Panthers were coming in now, noisy and happy. The first group brushed past him as he leaned against the wall. Then he called in a quiet voice, "Chalmers!"

He waited until the rangy man turned, until he saw the flash of fire in blue eyes, and the ripple of motion as Chalmers started to swing. Then he hit the tall rookie with a full right hand to the jaw, and Chalmers went down in a heap, his head resting on Stub's feet. Stub stepped back. The Panthers started for him. He picked up the bat and held it almost carelessly, but his eyes held them back. Chalmers was on his knees, moaning a little, rubbing his jaw with both hands.

Stub said coldly, "Don't spike no pitcher, kid. Get him out with your knees or knock him out of the park head-on, but don't spike no pitcher."

For seconds it seemed that they would rush him. Ace Orkney broke it up in purely negative fashion. There was no liking in the big man's face as he glared at Stub across the body of a fallen teammate, but his eyes revealed a grudging sympathy. Orkney flicked an indifferent glance at Chalmers, now shaking his head dazedly, and walked silently through the door. The others began to follow him.

Stub turned his back on them and walked down the corridor. Trueblood was standing a dozen feet behind him. The kid seemed dazed. His hands moved up woodenly as Stub thrust the bat impatiently at him.

Stub said harshly, "Take this thing and cut your baseball teeth on it, kid. Maybe the bleachers crown you lightweight champ of the ball park for swinging a haymaker, but you don't make no double plays in the locker room, nor you don't bang out no bingles in the showers. It just ain't smart to get yourself chased."

He went back into the dressing room. The aura of combat clung to his hard face. Cudahy was sitting on the padded table, griping to the trainer about a sore muscle in his thigh; but when Stub growled, "Get off that table, bub," Cudahy slid off without protest. Stub stripped and relaxed his pitching arm for the fingers of old Seagraves, the trainer.

Cudahy stiffened suddenly, his eyes fixed on the scars around Stub's elbow. The second baseman slapped his hip and exclaimed, "Hey, Luke, this is good. Look what the big shot picked up in that fast Mex league. The chump got a sore arm curving 'em for bushers."

Luke Long crossed the dressing room with big strides, his smile growing. The black eyes gloated. Long exulted, "No wonder he didn't last down there. If that ain't justice for you! You didn't figure to get that bad arm in the bargain when you sold us out, did you, Shylock Owens?"

Luke Long turned and walked away suddenly, and his dark eyes pinpointed a thoughtful gleam.

2 Good Hit—No Field

STUB had his dinner alone, and killed the early hours of the evening in a movie. The town seemed big and strange and lonely after five years. He had no friends, and he shied away from the companionship of the taverns; he'd learned his lesson well. Uncle Dan Bordeau, a driving demon in the ball park, had been a wise and gentle teacher. He had taught Stub much more than how to harness the dynamite in his right arm.

He was back in the lobby of the hotel early. Luke Long had his back to the cigar counter, facing several fans and a pair of newspapermen. Luke was saying, "You know how it is when the medicos get through chopping on a pitching arm. They're never quite the same. He went pretty good for a few innings, but you could see that arm going toward the end today."

Keen-featured Sam Snider of the *Examiner* mentioned, "Owens took a pretty tough going over there in the ninth before he started serving up those home run balls."

Luke's geniality wavered for the briefest moment before he said smoothly, "I begged him to come off after Chalmers bumped him up a little there. He swore he was okay."

Snider questioned, "You don't think Owens can win games in the big time, Luke?"

Luke Long waved a big hand in protest. He said carefully "Don't get me wrong. I don't like the guy. I was one of them Falcons Owens gypped out of a pennant, remember? And I was a special friend of Uncle Dan Bordeau, the whitest guy that ever cussed an ump. If anybody ever bit the hand that was feeding him, Owens did it to Uncle Dan. I don't like Owens. But I need pitchers so bad I'm willing to give him a chance."

Stub shouldered abruptly through the crowd. He asked curtly, "Does that chance include a catcher who can hang on to the ball?"

For just an instant Stub thought that Luke would hit him. The moment was quickly gone, and the manager was saying over Stub's shoulder to Snider, "Ruffo is pretty raw. But he hits like Hades. You saw that double, and he was robbed a couple of times. He rated the try today."

Snider's voice prodded gently, "The man asked you a question, Luke. The way he asked it would seem to demand a direct answer, unless you want people wondering what Owens means?"

Luke Long was boiling inside, but he did a creditable job of controlling his features as he retorted, "I don't think many

people will care what Owens means. I run the Falcons, Snider. I ain't got to state my reasons for playing a man."

Snider persisted, "Then I can quote you—"

"Don't try to give me that!" Long barked. His shoulders hunched, but his eyes were uneasy. The Falcon manager was in a corner. He had the physical equipment to fight his way out of corners, but this was not a situation for his big, freckled fists. In his uncertainty, he let his anger bluster for him, "You better not misquote me again, mister. I'm giving Owens a fair chance. Next time he can pick his own catcher."

Luke Long glared around him, his breath coming hard. The realization of what he had said piled new fuel on his burning anger. He pushed through the crowd and walked quickly out of the lobby. Sam Snider turned to Stub. He prompted in that casual voice, "We were talking about the way Ruffo threw your game away—"

"We were?" Stub exclaimed innocently. "I can't remember even mentioning Ruffo." He looked around him and appealed to the crowd. "Anybody hear me mention Ruffo's name? Looks like you're a minority of one, Snider. Get yourself a story the hard way."

He was grinning coldly as he left the reporter frowning annoyance. The opportunity had been unexpected, and he had played it well. At least he would not have to pitch again to awkward, glass-armed Ruffo. But he passed the newsstand, and his elation vanished. The sports final was prominently displayed, and the headlines were jarringly conclusive:

STUB OWENS FAILS
IN COMEBACK ATTEMPT

He bought a paper and carried it up to the room he was to share with Doll Cudahy. The second baseman was out. Stub sat down on the bed and read Sam Snider's story.

Stub Owens, who once decided that Mexican gold outweighed the fame of being baseball's leading hurler at purse-pinching Falcon wages, might as well have remained in the land of *mañana*. The erstwhile ace of the Falcon mound staff took a steady pasting from Panther batters and was finally shelled from the hill in the ninth as the Panthers disposed of the Falcons by a 6-1 margin.

Owens, once virtually unbeatable, seems to have lost his effectiveness. Though he threw some remarkable curves, he was constantly in trouble. In fairness, it should be mentioned that he received typical Falcon support, which isn't good; but most of his troubles were of his own making. Owens, now thirty-one, seems to have had his heyday.

Most experts believe that Owens did about as well this afternoon as he is going to do. That comeback climb is tough. Owens has been away from major league baseball five years. He may have all the pitches he once owned, but throwing them is no longer a habit. He was straining today, and looked like a tired old man in the ninth.

Owens is still probably a fair-to-middling chucker. As such, the Falcons—both fans and players—want no part of him. If he can win consistently, they will probably endure him; but his trial will be brief.

After today's game it was reported by a reliable source that Owens is still suffering from the effects of an injury to his pitching arm, incurred during his brief stay in the Mexican league. Owens could not be reached for comment. . . .

Stub's big hands crumpled and tore the paper. His gray eyes smouldered. He did not care for Snider's opinions, but he could ignore them. The thing that worried him was the "sore arm" rumor. It was not true. A specialist had removed bone chips from his elbow. Stub had rested the arm for a year, even learning to eat with his left hand. Except that he had to warm up slowly, his arm was as good as it had ever been.

But falsity removes no wings from a rumor. Few clubs will gamble good money for a sore-armed pitcher thirty-one years old. Stub guessed Luke Long's intention instantly. The manager meant to scare off the other clubs with the sore-

arm hoodoo, and get Stub waived out of the league. Once back in the minors, Stub would never make the big show again. He could spike that deadly rumor only by winning. This chance with the Falcons was the only one he would have; he would win—and quickly—or lose forever.

Cudahy had not come in when Stub went to sleep. The pitcher was awakened much later by a loud commotion and the light in his face. Cudahy and Boss Snapp had come in together, holding each other up in staggering gayety. Snapp, in no better condition than Cudahy, was insisting on putting the infielder to bed. They reeked of beer and good fellowship. Doll Cudahy's owlish eyes focussed on Stub.

Cudahy whispered in a conspirational tone, "Look at 'em, Boss. Don't he look funny, sittin' up on 'at bed? Mad at us, 'at's what. Stub's mad at us!"

Fat Boss Snapp pushed fumblingly at Cudahy. He insisted, "You got to go bed, Doll. You got work tomorrow. I don't."

Stub, still shocked, barked, "If I was pitching tomorrow I'd beat your brains out for this, Doll."

Cudahy giggled, "I'm a bad ole rummy. I usta be a ball player, but no more. Whassa use? Team's gone to pot. Luke don't care'f I take on a couple, just so as I play ball."

Stub snapped, "A fine lot of ball you'll play tomorrow."

Cudahy punched Snapp affectionately, laughing, "Hear that, ole big fat Boss? He don't know from nothin'. Owens, you don't know from nothin'. Whose turn is it to pitch, answer me? It's Boss' turn, tha's who. You think he'll pitch? Tha's all you know. Li'l ole rookie boy Heber's gonna pitch, 'cause we lose anyhow. Boss don't pitch against them big, bad teams. Boss'll open against them lousy Jays, so he can win fifteen—"

Boss Snapp stiffened, and his eyes grew less round. He warned roughly, "Doll, you shut up. You talk too damn much."

Cudahy tried to put an arm around the fat man's shoulder. He said appeasingly, "Aw, Boss, don't get sore. Ev'body knows Luke gives you an' ole Tobe the soft spots, so you can get bonuses, so you can split with him—"

The fat man's fist landed suddenly on Cudahy's cheekbone, spilling him across the bed. Doll, cursing vaguely, was trying to struggle up. Stub bounded out of bed, grabbed Snapp in a hammerlock, and shoved him into the hall. He locked the door and heaved the muttering Cudahy back on the bed, and the old infielder gave up the struggle with a heavy, whistling sigh.

CUDAHY had declared that Boss Snapp would not pitch the finale against the Panthers, and that was the way it was. Luke Long came stamping into the dressing room and jabbed his forefinger under the nose of Ned Heber, the quiet rookie southpaw.

Long barked, "Heber, I ought have my head examined for it, but I'm gonna give you one more chance. We paid a load of dough for you; we coulda saved money by forfeiting those four games you've lost for us. You're pitching for your life out there today. Lose this one and we lose you—deep in the bushes."

The slim Heber swallowed with an effort. He gulped, "Yes, sir."

The manager bellowed back, "Don't 'yessir' me, busher. Plain old Luke Long, that's me. The toughest man on a tough club. And I don't like phony titles nor bushers that dress like models."

The boy flushed, but Stub liked the calmness of his tone as he assented, "Okay—Luke."

Stub watched Ned Heber as the rookie warmed up. He looked like a pitcher. He was a little light at a hundred and sixty pounds, but his frame would accept weight gracefully with maturity. He had the

smooth economy of motion that would ration his strength over the long innings. But somehow Ned Heber had lost four games without a win. Luke Long was giving up on him. Luke would not, Stub reflected, care much about the kid anyhow. He was not the Falcon type. Heber was too quiet, he dressed too carefully, he had come into baseball from a college campus.

For two and one third innings Heber looked like a pitcher. He had a good curve, unusual control, and a fast one that slithered in with a definite hop. Working smoothly, Heber set down seven Panthers without a hit, striking out two. When Pike grounded out weakly to open the third, Stub saw big-nosed, leathery-faced Lazzaro, coaching at first for the Panthers, nod to the Panther dugout. Manager Boyd came out, and the pair walked to the on-deck slot where Everhart was tossing away an excess pair of bats. There was a short conference.

Everhart waited out a two-two count. Then he lashed his bat into the path of a sweet-breaking curve and planked it on the rightfield wall, sliding into third under Mahoney's throw. Heber seemed calm enough, striking out pitcher Rudy Gompers, but Crofft waited on the curve and scored Everhart with a clean single. Suddenly everybody was hitting. Donner singled, sending Crofft to third. Young Chalmers slammed out a double, scoring both runners. Romero drove a terrific liner into Rhinegold's hands. The first sacker could not hold it, but picked up the ball and beat Romero to the bag for the third out. It was 3-0 for the Panthers.

Heber walked in slowly. He looked discouraged, but there was steel in his jaw. Long rasped, "It's a pity we don't play two-inning games. We got a two-inning pitcher."

Crafty old Gompers got the Falcons out in order. Heber went back to the mound. He threw the fast one, and Frenchy Legay blasted it to Cudahy's left. The Doll was a step too slow, and Legay rounded first, bluffing a break for second. Heber bored the ball in there low, and Sebastian bounced the ball off Rube Gold's chest as the Panthers flashed the hit and run. Gold picked it up too late to try for Legay, and pegged out Sebastian at first. But Pike hit safely, then Everhart. The Panthers had run the lead to 5-0 before Heber could get them out.

Heber was a bewildered young man, hesitating at the water cooler, not wanting to face Luke Long. Stub got up and walked over to him. He said quietly, "I figured for a while Lazzaro was stealing signals. He's the best thief in the business. But it's not that. You're tipping them, kid."

Heber flushed a little. Stub snorted grimly. He said, "Yeah, I know. I'm the louse who, et cetera. But you're going to listen to me. You're showing 'em something on that curve. I think they're seeing your palm. And I know you're tipping the fast one. You get your fingers set on it quicker, you don't hold it in the glove so long. It's a dead giveaway. So there it is, kid. They're set for you. If you're smart you can beat 'em at their own game."

He walked back to his seat and left Heber staring after him. Gompers made a routine chore of three Falcons, and Heber went back out there. He took the signal, fingered the ball with that too-abrupt grip, and went into his windup. Chalmers swung mightily at what he thought was the fast ball, and the curve broke cleanly under his bat. He backed out of the box and stared up first-base line as he rubbed dust on his hands. Old Lazzaro cocked his head and shrugged.

Heber turned to stare into the Falcon dugout. There was wonder in his eyes. He seemed a little taller as he stepped to the mound again. And after that it was a good, tight ball game. The Falcons scored a run in the fifth and two more in the seventh, Gompers got tougher as the

shadows crept across the infield, and the Panthers ran the game out 5-3. Manager Luke Long was not around for the finish. He tried to prolong a bitter dispute on a close play at first, and the head ump banished him. It created a furore in the stands. Fans were grumbling more about the umpire's persecution of Long than the three straight the Falcons had dropped to the Panthers.

Stub walked unceremoniously into the Falcon office the next morning. Old Lady Muckenfuss carefully marked with his forefinger an entry in a ledger he was explaining to Mary Godfrey before he looked up and pursed his lips in annoyance.

Muckenfuss burst out, "Owens, ball players don't come in here unless sent for. See Long about your troubles."

Stub said bluntly, "Muckenfuss, don't let Long sell this Heber kid. The boy has found himself. He'll be all right from now on."

Muckenfuss trembled with indignation. He exclaimed, "Owens, you are getting getting above your station. You aren't paid to judge talent, and your observations are not appreciated. And for your information, Heber has been an expensive disappointment. He has failed to win in five starts. Long is perfectly justified in disposing of him."

Stub insisted, "The kid is going to be great—for the Falcons or somebody else."

Muckenfuss sniffed. "I don't have to argue the point with you. Heber is no pitcher."

"He's no pitcher like Cyclone Sellars was no pitcher. Or like Jim Rolf wasn't good enough for the big time," Stub roared. "We had Sellars, and we had an option on Rolf. Now Sellars is the best pitcher in the league for the Blues, and Rolf wins his twenty every year for the Cats. You let this kid go, you'll be sorry."

Mary Godfrey blinked. She removed her surprised gaze from Stub's angry face and demanded, "Do you mean to tell me we owned Cyclone Sellars and Rolf, and let them go?"

Muckenfuss bit his lip nervously. He swallowed painfully and admitted, "Sellars we owned. We made a mistake. I know nothing about any option on Rolf."

Stub said grimly, "We had him. Uncle Dan took the option on my recommendation. Don't take my word—look it up."

Mary Godfrey said in a clear, cold voice, "I am learning things, Mr. Muckenfus. Of course I am a mere woman, but I fail to understand some of the deals the Falcons have made."

MUCKENFUSS protested nervously, "Sellars could not win for us. Who could have foreseen what happened when we sold him?"

"A good coach could have seen it," Stub charged scornfully. "And he had 'em, brother. Uncle Dan had Lazzaro, Agros-

tini, and Puffer Bell for the pitchers. Luke Long canned the smartest coaching staff in the league and made jobs for his own sidekicks. Sure Sellars lost games. He was tipping his pitches—like Heber was doing until the fourth inning yesterday. If Uncle Dan had been alive one more season, Sellars would have won those twenty-six games for the Falcons last year. Muckenfuss, don't let Heber go!"

Muckenfuss sputtered, "Owens, suppose you attend to—"

Mary interrupted him. Her face was hard to read. She said, "Mr. Muckenfuss, in a very few months the control of this club will pass into my hands. Though at present I can only suggest, I have a good memory, and I am not likely to forget it if my request is not granted. Give this Heber one more chance."

Stub looked from Muckenfuss, who was fighting for self control, to Mary's firm, calm face. He nodded shortly and turned to go. The crisp voice called him back. Mary suggested, "You don't like the way the Falcons are being run, Mr. Owens?"

"No," Stub told her. He was going to let it go at that, but she ordered, "Go on." Stub shrugged. He said, "I don't know what the Falcons are: Maybe a last place club, maybe first division. I do know they ain't what they're being run for—a fifth place outfit. That's where they'll land, no higher, no worse."

The hazel eyes were puzzled, sparked by intense interest she demanded, "Please explain that."

Stub shook his head. He said, "Maybe Muckenfuss is right. I'm getting above my station." He turned and walked out.

The Jays came to town. The Jays were an impoverished club from the weakest baseball city in the league. They made ends meet by selling off all promising talent periodically. This year the Jays, playing cast-offs, were sure to finish in the cellar.

The Falcons beat the Jays three straight. Long sent his three best pitchers to the slab, and the Jays collected four runs in three games. Stub rode the bench and watched Boss Snapp, Tobe Rale and Ike Whitely overpower the hapless Jay batters. They were pretty good pitchers, Stub discovered. They were not so good as their records indicated, but all were first-line hurlers. Snapp particularly had a lot of stuff left.

The Jays continued on their cheerless way and the third-place Ducks replaced them. The Ducks were a young club, powerstocked and eager. They were sluggers. They had Ritchie Berg and Killer Keefe both gunning for the home run crown in their sophomore seasons, and a whole batting order of hitting fools. Their pitching had been miserable, with only the seasoned Doolittle to anchor them; but the big bats kept them in the middle of the fight for the top.

Ned Heber pitched the first game. Luke Long had made it plain that the choice was forced on him when he sent Heber out with a negative blessing.

"So you get another chance. Maybe them big blue eyes count, now the club has got that feminine touch. So go out there and blow us another game. I hope you got your bags packed."

Heber pitched a three-hitter. Luke Long, humped down like a huffy toad on the bench, was wordless as the scoreless innings moved along. The slender lefty had everything that day. He duped the Ducks, he crossed them, he threw the fast one past them. He had no lead until the eighth, when Kilrain tacked a single to Trueblood's double, and the Falcon shortstop slid home safely. And Heber made that one run stand up. He beat the rampant Ducks, 1-0, and no runner got farther than second base against him. Heber made the last put-out himself, a pop fly directly into his hands. He walked off the field quietly, trying not to smile, but happiness in his eyes. He did not say a word

when he came into the dugout. He just handed the ball to Stub and walked on.

Luke Long did not show up in the dressing room.

The papers announced that Rex Doolittle would pitch the second game for the Ducks. Long was described as uncertain. Stub knew better. Behind Doolittle the Ducks were very hard to beat. Luke Long would find no tougher spot for Stub.

He went to the park early the next day, intending to get a long warm-up. There was the usual crowd around the players' entrance, kids with autograph books, out-of-towners who had never seen a big-league ball player, a throng of idlers and a few moochers. And there were some, apparently, who gathered daily to hurl insults at Stub Owens. As usual the crowd turned ugly when Stub's short, compact figure was sighted. He had been pelted with paper cups several times. Once a drunk had taken a poke at him.

He pushed through them swiftly, looking at no one. A thin faced, unshaven man in shabby clothes planted himself in Stub's path. The ferret-featured man shouted thickly, "Ya bum, Owens. Ya cosh me money when ya went ta Meshico. I'm gonna punch ya dirty ugly face, thash what I'm gonna do."

Stub blocked the wild, feeble swing impatiently and thrust the drunk out of his way. There was a surge of the crowd around him. He saw hard, intent faces set in cold purpose. In the instant before someone grabbed him from behind, Stub realized that this was no spontaneous attack. There were thugs in the crowd, and they meant to do him harm under cover of the massing mob. Strong arms locked around Stub's. He heaved mightily, hearing the sudden blast of a cop's whistle.

He was breaking free when something smashed against the bicep of his right arm. He felt as though the arm had been severed. He twisted around. The ferret-faced man was wielding a blackjack with expert, short-armed motion that slashed the sapper again across Stub's arm; then he whirled and fled with flying steps as a burly cop came charging through the crowd, chasing the attacker.

Stub went to his knees as his captors gave him a parting shove. Pain held him there for a few seconds while he rubbed in panic at the crushed bicep of his pitching arm. When he got up, it was too late. The crowd had swallowed the thugs. The cop and his quarry had vanished. The crowd, now silent, gave him room, watching with puzzled eyes.

Stub walked slowly to the players' entrance. There was not a thing he could do. In the confusion, it was possible that no one had seen the "drunk's" two close, savage blows. The cop was gone. Stub had not caught his number. There was the possibility that the cop had been a phony, part of the gang. It had been very neat. His arm was crippled on the afternoon he had to pitch for his life in the majors, and no one would believe it.

Perspiration was streaming down his white face as he went into the dressing room. Luke Long was there, as Stub had somehow known he would be. The manager's face had no expression as he said, "You're early, but that's good. You work today."

Stub told him dully, knowing helplessly what the answer would be, "I can't pitch today. I had an accident.

THERE was a futility about the whole thing, like the last moves of a checker game when the opponent has all the kings. Stub was trapped. They were just going through the motions. Luke Long rubbed his jaw and stated with unsmiling sympathy, "Now that's too bad, Owens. Because I've already told the papers you're pitching today—that sore arm is ready—and this's your last chance. So you can pitch, or I'll get me some waivers on a lame-armed chucker."

Stub turned his back on the manager. He said in a low, toneless voice. "I'm sort of hoping you let me go quick, Luke. Because that's the day I'm going to stomp your face through a floor."

Long's taunt had the calm of a man who doesn't have to get mad, "That'll be the day, busher."

The minutes raced by inevitably. Then he was out there on the mound, with the good haters up in the stands deluging him with a rain of invective, and a bundle of sickening pain in his upper right arm. The trainer had rubbed some life into the bruised muscles, and with it, new intensity of torture.

Stub knew what was going to happen. Somehow he did not care so much. The peculiar, detached sadness that had calmed him while he waited for Chalmers's spikes dulled his senses now. The feeling that the Big Umpire upstairs didn't intend for him to make good in the majors was a potent drug. He just wanted to get this thing over, and beat Luke Long to a whimpering pulp, and get to some place where the people had never seen a baseball.

Frosty Ivers, blonde, blocky and efficient, framed the target as Fred Floss of the Ducks stepped warily into the rectangle. Ivers called for the fast one. Floss stared at the thing that limped past him, suspecting a trick. He swung on the second cripple and trotted into second with a ground-rule double as the ball rolled into the bull-pen. Chetnik hit the first ball, an attempted curve that wrung streams of perspiration from Stub's chalky face. It was a ground ball, too tough for Gold, who managed to slow it, holding Floss at third while Chetnik pulled up at first.

Frosty Ivers, puzzled, started out to the mound. Stub waved him back. He threw a pain-conceived curve at Big Ritchie Berg's knees, and it floated fatly. Berk knocked it out of the park. Three runs came home. Then Killer Keefe was up there, showing horse-sized teeth in a grin of anticipation. Somehow Stub got two strikes on the huge kid. And then his arm gave out completely. He threw three straight balls that did not come close to the plate. He steeled himself, gathered his strength, and guided the ball toward the target Ivers was standing to frame. And he turned and watched with glazed eyes as the ball climbed over the leftfield stands. He had never seen a ball hit quite so hard, nor travel so far.

Fireman McKinley was walking out across the leftfield grass. The stands were singing, "Bye, bye, Owens," as he truged slowly to the dugout. Luke Long met him. The manager said evenly, "Turn in your suit, Owens. You won't need it no more. You don't need to bother coming to the park after this. Just stick to your phone for the news. The waivers oughta start coming in right away."

Fast Ball Finish 3

IT WAS the morning of the last game with the bludgeoning Blues when the phone finally rang. Stub picked up the receiver and Mary Godfrey's voice said without emotion, "Mr. Owens, you will please be at the Falcon office in twenty minutes." And Stub knew that this was it. His bags were packed. He just hoped he would not have too much trouble locating Luke Long.

But when he went into the office, the Falcons were all there. A small, gray-haired woman was seated beside Mary at the desk, chattering in a gay, fluttery voice. Mary put a hand gently on the woman's arm. She said, "This is the last of the boys, Mrs. Bordeau. You may remember Stub Owens?"

Uncle Dan's widow protested mildly, "How could I forget Mr. Owens's many kindnesses during our bereavement? When I was simply prostrate with grief,

Mr. Owens stepped in and managed everything. Hello there, Mr. Owens."

Stub said, "Hello, Mrs. Bordeau," in the tone one uses to a small child. It was not that the woman was dumb; she could play a violin, write sonnets, and quote Proust without reflection. She was completely charming and utterly impractical. Uncle Dan, Stub had often reflected, had found her helplessness as appealing as her delicate charm. She did not understand that there was any difference between a dime and a dollar—there had been a streak of that kind of simplicity in Uncle Dan, too.

Mary said, "One of the reasons we invited you up here, Mrs. Bordeau, was to ask—somewhat belatedly—if there is any way in which the club can help you or your children. The boys thought a great deal of your late husband. I am sure that neither they nor the club would think of permitting Uncle Dan's widow and children suffer any hardship—that is, if it crossed their minds at all."

Mrs. Bordeau beamed. She exclaimed. "Why, bless you, child, for your thoughtfulness. We are getting along fine. Of course, you may recall that my husband's estate was much smaller than could have been expected. As I recall, there was a little more than two thousand dollars, besides the house. I never really worried about it. 'Have Faith,' I always say to myself, 'and something will always come along.' And something did. Mr. Owens invested the money for us with most remarkable results. Every month I receive a check for two hundred and fifty dollars. Mr. Owens is so clever about such things."

In the hard, astonished silence that gripped the room, Mary had the only usable voice, and there was a peculiar dryness to her words as she said gently, "Yes, Mrs. Bordeau, Mr. Owens is a very clever man." She stood up and pressed a button on the desk. "I can't tell you how much we have enjoyed having you with us, Mrs. Bordeau. One of the ushers will drive you back to the hotel. I will call for you before the game. We have a special box for you and the children. If there, is anything you want, just call me."

Mrs. Bordeau smiled shyly. She said in that childish voice, "There's only one thing. I don't know much about such things. But could it be arranged that Mr. Owens pitch today? I do not understand the game very well, but I liked to see him play. He always seemed so—so vital and invincible."

Mary said, as the usher came for Uncle Dan's widow, "We might be able to work that out for you, Mrs. Bordeau."

The door closed softly behind her, but the echo lingered in the silent room. Then Rube Gold laughed shakily, "I got a couple of C's I was gonna blow in a crap game. Maybe I'd better get Mr. Owens to

invest 'em in a nice annuity to support me in my old age—"

Mary Godfrey's eyes silenced him. She stood very straight and slim behind the desk, tense as a drawn sword. Small hands were as white as the handkerchief they worried. Her voice was bitter.

"I have had to revise a number of beliefs that were very dear to me, these past few days. I always thought my dad was some sort of god, and I could not see his faults. He started this club on a shoestring. He had to be tight those first years. And he never got over the habit. Uncle Dan Bordeau was drawing less pay as manager of the Falcons than a lot of just fair ball players were being paid on other teams. But he had a big job, and he was a target for every panhandler in every town."

Rhinegold said slowly, "I never saw Dan turn down a single bum. One time he borrowed a fiver from me to give to a moocher. He was some guy, that Dan. One time he fines me two hundred berries for getting tossed out of a game, and pays it out of his own pocket. He never had no sense about money, Dan didn't."

Mary's grim, haunted voice snapped, "He was a great guy. And his widow and children could have starved, and the good old Falcons who loved him so loudly, wouldn't have given it a second thought. Except one."

Luke Long said loudly, "So we got a hero with us. For my money, he's still the bum who sold us out of a pennant—"

"Shut up, Luke," Mary ordered flatly, and something in her voice froze the manager's mouth just as it was, open wide. Her voice changed as she asked deliberately, "Stub, you had a lot of trouble winning the last two games of that eleven-straight string?"

Stub shrugged.

Mary went on, "In fact, when I examined the records, I discovered that you won those games with your bat instead of your pitching. You gave up a lot of hits, and the strikeouts dropped off alarmingly."

Stub muttered, "You can't win 'em all."

Mary ignored him. "In fact, the idea occurred to me, your arm might have been going bad about that time, Stub. The conviction grew so strong that I took the trouble to call Jose Caligua down in Mexico City. I had been brought up to hate the man as a pirate, but I found him a gallant gentleman. And a real friend of yours, Stub, in spite of reported disagreements. Once he understood what I was getting at, he was helpfully frank. Stub, you had won your last game for the Falcons that season when you walked off the field with number eleven. Your arm was all shot."

RHINEGOLD slapped his heavy thigh with a blow that sounded like a shot. He chortled, "Rooked that Mex pirate, by glory! Rooked him for a fifty-grand bonus with a dead arm."

Mary said coldly, "He never rooked anyone. Caligua knew about the arm. He was paying fifty thousand dollars for advertising. He was stealing the leading pitcher in the majors. He was satisfied. Stub's contract called for no pitching unless he felt like it. He pitched a few games, played third base most of the time, and managed Caligua's ball club. Is that right, Stub?"

Stub was hunched in his chair, elbows across his knees, still staring at the floor. He said wearily, "What's the use? It was all a long time ago. I was going to hand Uncle Dan a pennant. I pitched too often, and the bone chips broke loose in my elbow. A good doctor told me they'd have to be cut out, and the arm would have to be rested for at least a year. Then Caligua came along and upped his offer to fifty grand just for signing. What could I do? I'd of cut off an arm for Uncle Dan, but I couldn't win him another game, much less a pennant. I tried to do the next best thing.

He was dying broke, the guy that made me a pitcher. What the heck, the least I could do was see his family got along."

Doll Cudahy asked in a strained voice, "Dan knew?"

Stub did not raise his head. They saw the muscles bulge along his jaw. His voice was very low. "I had to promise Caligua nobody would know about the dead wing. I kept the promise. I reckon Uncle Dan died hating my guts."

"So you came back here with your arm fixed, and all you wanted was a chance to pitch," Mary went on. "Instead of Uncle Dan's tough, hustling club, you found a brawling mob that fills the stands by showing them everything but baseball. You found a manager who keeps the boys happy by closing his eyes to the hours they keep. The same manager who gets himself tossed out of games when the Falcons are taking a bad licking, to give the crowd something to cheer about. A manager who, underneath his tough talk, knows he is incompetent, and won't have anybody on his team who is likely to recognize the fact that he doesn't know enough baseball to be managing a team."

Luke Long was out of his chair, howling, "Now you lissen to me, little miss—"

Mary's voice rose sharply, "You'll do the listening, Luke. And you won't like it. You poisoned the Falcons against Stub because you were afraid to have him around. You let a miserable rookie catcher throw away one game for him."

Luke snarled, "He had Ivers that second time."

The girl's words lashed like a whip. "Luke, there is a big Irish cop who wants to talk to you. It seems that somebody blackjacked one of our players across the pitching arm the other afternoon. Now this cop is not only a whizz of a sprinter, but a good man with his fists. He had a confession out of the tough before he ran him in. I've managed to stall off headquarters up to now, but they are wanting to know what to do about a manager who will hire thugs to cripple one of his own—"

Luke Long shouted in a thin, high voice, "It's a lie! It's a frame. I don't know nobody by that name."

Mary told him, "We don't want a scandal. Maybe we can avoid it. But one thing we can be sure of. You are fired, Luke."

"You can't fire me," Luke screamed. "I reckon Muckenfuss is still running this club."

"Mr. Muckenfuss and I have reached complete accord. He wishes to retain some connection with the club. He has no choice in this matter. I don't want to see you again, Luke."

Boss Snapp stood up, balling his fists as he waddled toward the ex-manager. The fat man rumbled, "Well, well. And now you ain't manager no more, Luke, mebbe we oughta have a little talk about them bonuses I been splitting with you."

For an instant Luke stood his ground. He had more than his share of animal courage. But little Tobe Rale was coming behind Snapp, raising a chair above his shiny bald pate. And suddenly there was no fight in Luke Long. He turned and walked out swiftly, mumbling oaths.

Mary looked tired, but she still stood there, tense and hard. She said, "Stub, you told me once that this was either a first-division club or a tail-ender. Will you find out which it is? I am offering you Luke's job."

Stub did not answer for a long time. When he spoke, he still did not raise his eyes. "I came back here as a pitcher. If I can't win, I don't want to stay. I'll try the Blues this afternoon. If I beat them, I'll take the job."

He was still sitting there with his head down when the last of the Falcons went out. Then Mary's hand was on his shoulder. He looked up finally, and saw that there were tears in her eyes. She had been poised, but now her control broke.

She said, "Stub, I'll never forgive myself. I had more sense when I was thirteen, when I thought you were the only man in the world."

In his dull weariness, a sharp thrill fluttered. But he felt very old, very uncertain. He answered slowly, "Mary, I don't know if I can win in this league any more. Until I find out, let's leave things like they are."

And then it was the bright, hot afternoon, and the magpie chatter of the Falcon infield behind him rose against the background of disgusted boos from above. And Eddie Braswell, first of those terrible Blues who had scored twenty-eight runs in two games to crush the Falcons, was fitting his lank frame to protect the plate, the yellow bat alive to the twitchings of powerful hands. Frosty Ivers gave the signal, a low curve outside to the right-handed slugger. Stub wound up and his arm flashed, and fingers and wrist snapped as though trying to shake the cover loose from the ball. The path of the ball was a milky blur, and just in front of the plate the horsehide went crazy. Braswell's mauling bat missed it by a foot. Thunder cracked from Frosty Iver's mitt, and the ball popped out.

Frosty bent and caught it on the bounce. He walked out to the block and handed Stub the ball. The blonde, flat-nosed man said simply, "I heard 'em talk, but I never believed it. I hadda see it myself. I won't drop no more, kid."

He did not. He caught every one of the twelve pitches Stub blazed down the path. And three Blues were down. The top of baseball's most feared batting order could not get a foul among them.

Stub walked to the dugout. His face was tense and expressionless. He could not relax.

CYCLONE SELLARS loomed high and wide on the mound for the Blues. This was the kid Uncle Dan had bought, and Luke Long had traded away for an infielder whose name was forgotten after only four years. Sellars was throwing his five out there, making a sound like a big gun salute. Trueblood went out and yelled something shrill and insulting. The huge, bland and pink-cheeked pitcher did not seem to notice. He only struck Trueblood out on three pitches. Kilrain flied out, and Gold whiffed.

Stub went back to the hill. Joe Rudolph brought the heaviest stick in the majors to the rectangle. That bat had won him the homerun crown for five years. It gave him only one foul now as he went down swinging. Then Red Tuscon fanned. Brock Arnold lifted a weak fly Cudahy camped under. Stub walked toward the dugout in almost complete silence. From far away in the bleachers a loud voice suddenly decided, "That's my pitcher. Oh, you short boy!"

Nobody took up the cry. It wasn't much. But it was something, after all the bitter years.

But the Falcons went down one-two-three. There was not much anybody could do about Cyclone Sellars when the big boy was right. He was today. Stub took his worn glove out of his pocket as Mahoney scowled at a corner-nipping third strike. He started walking, and strong fingers touched his elbow. Frosty Ivers said, "Don't wear off your arm, kid. Let 'em hit in the dirt. You got a team out there to help."

Stub muttered, "Okay." But he hadn't really heard the catcher. He couldn't quite believe that he was getting a chance to pitch. Luke Long was gone, but some baffled, uncertain part of Stub's mind was waiting for some new hoodoo to pop up and defeat him. He struck out Smith. Wyrick lifted the first outfield fly of the game, and Kilrain backed up just a little to take it. Sellars fouled two into the screen. Stub struck him out with a curve that seemed to sputter in Ivers's big mitt.

The stands quieted. The strain was building as the pitchers' duel shaped. Sellars moved Dost out of there with three pitches, simply overpowering him. But an inside pitch skidded across Ivers's chest as the catcher tried to fall away. Sellars came in to apologize as Ivers got up. They weren't bad guys, the Blues. They were just so good it made you mad.

Stub stepped to the plate. From far away that lone voice bellowed, "Win yer own, Owens. Put it away."

Pitcher studied pitcher-batter. Stub's mind was racing. Sellars had come up the year after Stub left the league. He might not know that Stub had won games as a pinch hitter. But Sellars would take no chances. The big boy satisfied himself with Ivers's lead off first, then bent a whizzing curve over the outside corner, just at the knees. Stub reached for it awkwardly. He missed by a laughable margin. He did not offer as Sellars whipped the high hard one under his chin, and he jerked his head back nervously. He edged away from the plate a little when he took his stance again. Stub hoped he knew what Sellars was thinking.

Stub stepped across the plate as the big man's arm flashed. If he were wrong—but he was guessing right. Sellars had moved him back from the plate, was going for the outside corner. He felt the bat bite crunchingly into the twist of the horsehide. He put his head down and ran with the howl of the crowd spurring him. But the first base coach was grinning, yelling for him to take it easy, and the ball was a white dot hanging for just a moment over the rightfield fence. Sellars was cutting no capers, but the big boy looked stunned.

Trueblood was waiting with a big hand and a wide grin at the plate. Stub touched the rubber and walked toward the dugout. The stands were making some noise. It was not very cordial, but there was grudging approval in the sound.

Trueblood struck out. Stub went to the mound with a 2-0 lead over the great Blues. The head of the batting order was up again. And trouble came abruptly. Stub had two strikes on Braswell. The lanky batter, crowding the plate with hit-or-get-hit determination, was a little slow as a fork-ball delivery broke inside and nicked his shoulder. Braswell grinned and trotted down to first.

Stub gathered himself as swarthy Buck King dropped excess bats and stepped to the plate, his thick brows making a single black line above keen, dark eyes. King swung on the first ball. It was not much of a hit, a dinky effort that floated back too far for Rhinegold, too short for Mahoney. Fleet, fearless Braswell slid into third. King cannily timed the throw and took second on the unsuccessful play for Braswell.

Ivers walked out to the mound. Stub shook his head before Ivers could speak. "I don't put no winning run on base."

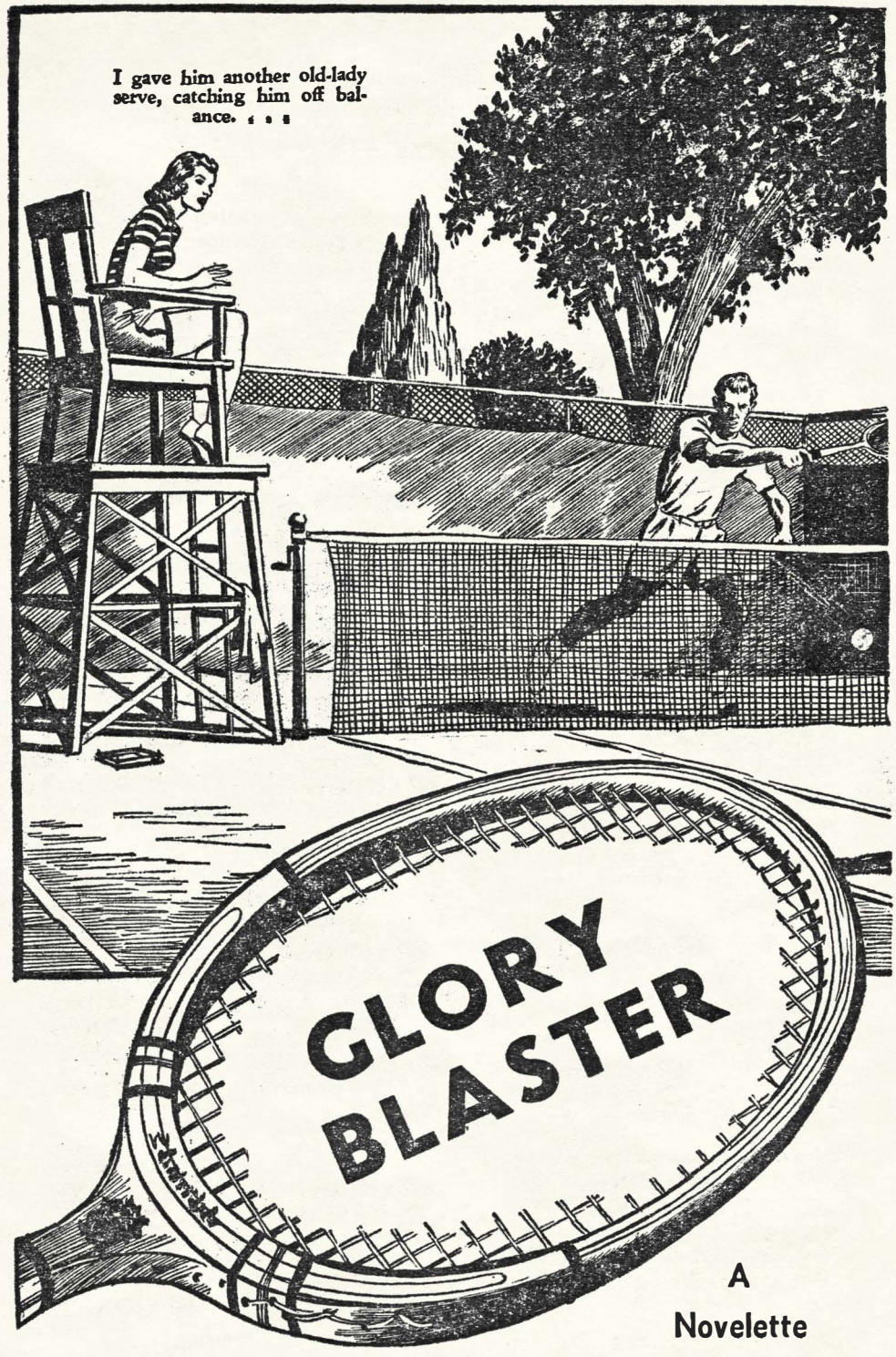
Ivers nodded, grimacing a little, and walked back. Stub walked around the mound, knowing that this was it. All his future depended on this moment. If he blew a two-run lead on the Blues, he'd never get it back.

Lank Lineback was tweaking that bottle bat across the plate. His eyes narrowed and gleamed when he saw that Stub intended to pitch to him. The crowd saw it, too, and the roar was a little warmer.

He threw the fast one high and inside. Lineback fell away and lined it a little less than a mile—barely foul. Stub wasted one. Lineback did not move. Stub threw the screwball. Long-armed Lineback hopped forward as he swung, almost catching the pitch before the hook took hold, fouling it again on the line.

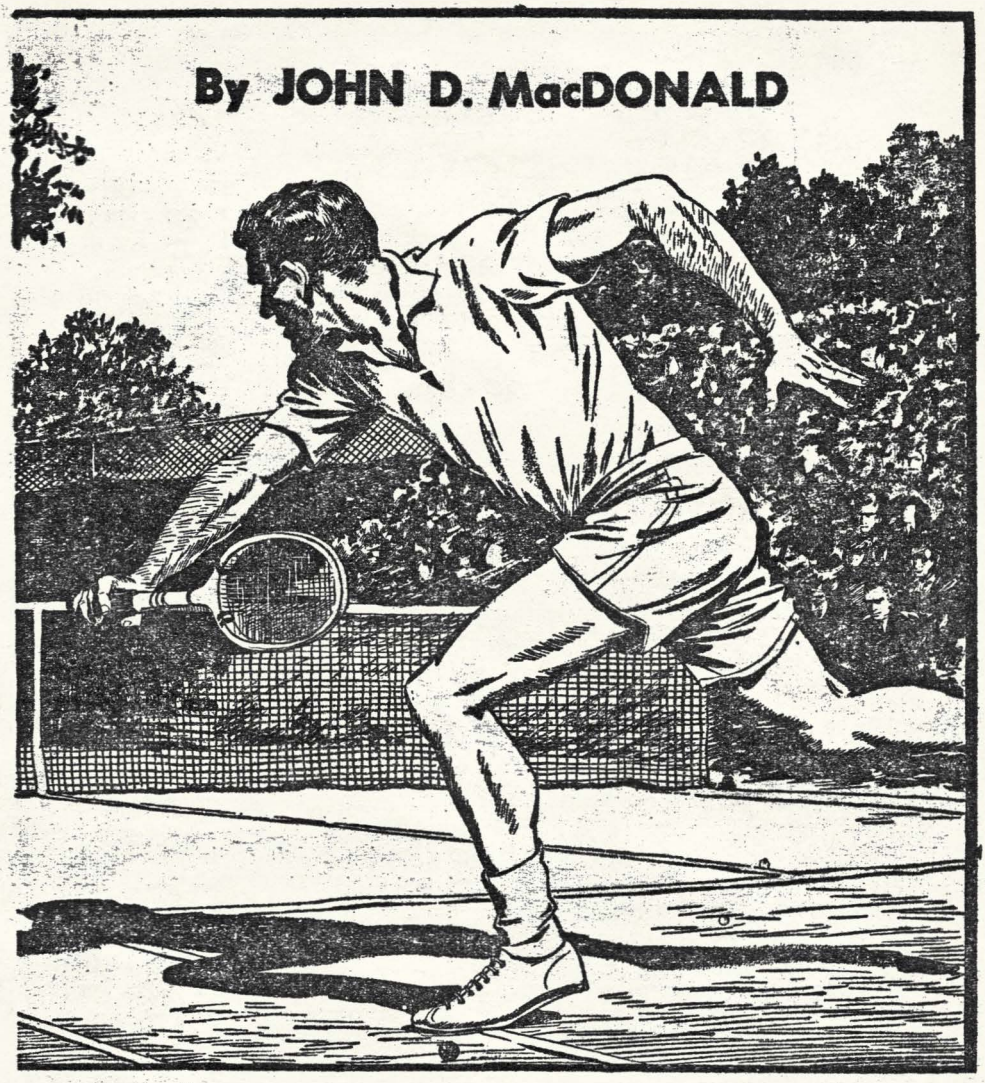
Stub fooled around with the resin bag. He took plenty of time before offering a waste ball, but Lineback sneered at it. Ivers called for the change of pace.

(Continued on page 128)


I gave him another old-lady serve, catching him off balance. . . .
GLORY BLASTER

A Novelette

By JOHN D. MacDONALD



When lightning plays along the baselines and match point stands between hell and glory— a wrong guy needs more than the right racket —to meet a champion's thunder!

WHEN Ralph Wandelle—"Rafe"—was playing in your city, keeping his Roman-coin profile toward the expensive seats while daintily booming service aces at your local tennis stars, I was the dark and sullen-looking citizen who trotted around with the bats and did everything except run out with a bit of lace to dab the nasty old sweat off Wandelle's classic brow.

Not that Wandelle is a bad guy. He is just a thoroughgoing, triple-plated stinker.

In the tennis world, you have never heard of Joe Patton. That's me. Prior to the international fracas, I was a tennis

bum—albeit a young one. Long hours in a bunk, wall-type, navy issue, gave birth to a dream for yours truly. It started with a bit of cruel self-evaluation, wherein I said to myself, "Joe, you'll never be really big time in tennis. You will clean up minor tournaments until your legs give out and then you can settle down and be a bore the rest of your life."

But that didn't please me. It seemed as if there ought to be some way wherein even a citizen such as myself could make a lifetime living out of a well-loved game.

And I do love it. Tennis is as psychological as poker, as fast as hockey and, in the top-flight brackets, as rough a game as man has devised.

So aboard that tanker in the Pacific, a plump gal which we called the *Baggety Ann,* my dream took shape. A neat little professional club. Perfect courts. A little bar. A pool. Instruction by the noted Joe Patton. Exhibitions now and then. A stiff fee for lessons. The whole layout to be in California.

It was a fine dream, but it required that old green stuff which is so elusive and is laughingly called cash.

It cost me three hundred bucks for the plans alone. And the contractor's estimate was one-five-zero thousand, including the land.

And that's how I ended up nursemaiding Ralph—pronounced Rafe—Wandelle on his pro tours for one hundred a week plus expenses.

About the Wandelle—the only thing not wrong with him is his tennis. When he was booming up through the amateur ratings they accused him of being a picture boy, all style and no fight in the clutch.

The first time he got his name in the papers was when he was winning all the junior medals in California. In the pictures you saw his laughing lean face, with the curly blonde hair on top. "Nice kid," you said.

Not if you knew him.

I had run up against him just before the war. Competitively. He had that stroke on his forehand drive that turns the ball into a heavy lump of putty. You get your bat on it and it feels like hitting a concrete post.

Volley with the guy and you begin to feel as though you're under artillery fire. Muff one just a little, give it a shade too much height, and he's up to the net and creaming it so hard with a smash that all you see is a puff of dust—but you get to hear the whistle as the ball goes by.

And he plays a ball with legs, the kind that hits the tape, clings, crawls over and falls dead.

He brushed me aside just before the war with a 6-3, 6-1, 6-3, and I trudged off the court wishing I'd never heard of the game.

Anyway, I was around loose and got a call from Hal Gorder who was agenting Wandelle's pro venture, and Hal had somehow heard that I was looking for cash. Hal is a tubby, naive-looking little man with a deft feeling for double-entry bookkeeping. I left my fleabag room and trotted over to the deluxe hotel to have breakfast with the two of them.

They had a suite with one of those little walled-terrace effects and the sun was very pleasantly bright on the orange-juice.

Hal Gorder took me out on the terrace and there was the Wandelle, tanned, blonde and beautiful. He wore egg-shell slacks, a lemon-yellow jacket and a powder-blue scarf at his throat. He looked like a retouched color photo of himself.

"You remember Joe Patton, Rafe?" Hal said cheerily.

The Wandelle gave me a long, cool appraisal. "Vaguely," he said in a liquid, purring baritone.

"I've heard of you, too," I said, pulling back the hand he didn't seem to wish to shake. My tone of voice made not the

slightest dent in the Wandelle armor.

With his build, I might have played better tennis. Six-one, about one-seventy, with hands and wrists like a blacksmith.

Hal had me sit down and in a minute the waiter came and took my breakfast order. "We can offer you a job," Hal said cheerfully.

"One minute!" Wandelle snapped. "The money he gets will come out of my cut, you know. I'm willing to pay him, but I don't want to sit here and listen to you dicker with him. I'll be through here in a minute."

"Maybe I don't want to work for you," I said, knowing that I was flushing with anger.

He looked at me coldly and I was suddenly very conscious that the shirt I had put on when I got up had a frayed collar. His smile was small, almost tender. He dabbed his classic lips with the napkin, stood up and said softly, "I think you will, Patton."

He walked into the apartment. A few seconds later the corridor door slammed.

Hal sighed. "To me, kid, he's a property. I don't have to like him. Tell me right now if you need money bad enough so you can keep from busting him in the mouth."

I thought of the architect's plans back in my room. "How much money?" I asked.

He smiled. "One hundred a week and expenses. Expenses include all your meals, rooms, train and plane fares, wear and tear on your work clothes and equipment."

"I'm single," I said. "Taxes will be steep. I better have you pay the taxes, too, so the hundred is net."

He thought it over. "Okay, we'll do that too. Johnny Post had the job until yesterday."

"I don't see any bruises on Wandelle."

"Johnny led with his right. There's a tiny bruise on Ralph's middle knuckle on his right hand. Too small to notice."

"Oh. What do I have to do?"

"You get the schedule of the matches from me. You get cash for the traveling expenses. You travel with Wandelle, make the reservations, check the playing surface and court markings, give out the local publicity releases, take care of his bats, practice with him every chance you get and make like you're the guy he's going to meet next—and keep the women away from him."

"Do I light his cigarettes, too?"

"He doesn't smoke and he doesn't drink. He saves his money."

"Anything else?"

"Yeah, and this is what browned Johnny off. Wandelle will not consider you his social equal. He won't want to eat with you or even sit with you on the train and so on. You'll have to act like an employee."

I took a deep breath. I thought of the sixteen thousand bucks in the bank, the money my pop had left me. The Los Angeles bank had said that if I could come to them with twenty-five thousand free and clear they'd talk about financing the rest of the layout. Nine thousand short. Ninety weeks of being a serf. Call it a hundred and ten weeks. Two years. Hmmm.

"A deal," I said.

We shook hands solemnly. He pulled a typewritten list out of his pocket and handed it to me.

"Here's the schedule, Joe. Have fun."

WITHIN a month I was beginning to get over the quick flashes of anger that were so extreme as to make me almost sick to my stomach. It had all settled down to a low burn. A constant, dull, red anger, distilled with hate and seasoned with contempt.

If he had been sharp and sarcastic with me at all times, it wouldn't have been so bad. But when there were strangers around, he flashed his wide, friendly grin at me, too, included me in the conversations and acted like we were partners in the enterprise. Behind a closed door the grin would melt in a fraction of a second. He would say, "Damn you, Patton! See that we have adequate ball boys at the next stop, and a judge that isn't blind."

But his game was ripe and wonderful. It was a take-on-all-comers tour, with once in a while a three or four-day layover to take on some other pro for a series. Wandelle always lost the first day's play, barely won during the second, and trompled all over the opposition on the third, so that he would be the loved underdog, coming from behind to win.

It made me sick to my stomach.

But I could afford to be sick. I was paid twice a month. Usually I just endorsed the check for deposit and mailed it to the bank. The balance, steadily growing, was a delight to the tired old Patton eyes.

The practice sessions were the worst. He would stand and say, "Play to my backhand, Patton." And I would have to pop them to his backhand while he laboriously ironed out some real or imagined flaw. Every practice session ended with his snowing me under with those high velocity boomers that had so little bounce I kept whamming the bat rim on the court surface trying to get under them.

Maybe it was spite, but I kept a little of my stuff to myself. I never opened up with everything I had. And maybe, instead of spite, it was just a sop to my pride. I could always tell myself that maybe I could lick him if I let go with everything. But I knew I couldn't. He could cover more court than I could and his timing was better and his ball sense was better and those lean brown arms of his had as much snap as a bull-whip.

The women were the worst problem. Something about the tame Viking brought them around in droves, panting to get their chubby little mitts on him. He played up to them, using knowing little looks and remarks that could be taken two, and sometimes three, ways.

I hazed them away from him the way you drive cattle.

And once the Great Man unbent enough to let me into one of the secrets of his wrinkled little heart.

"Patton," he said, one morning, "I can't keep on with this game forever. Once they start to lick me, I'm through. And then I'm going to find myself a lush little gal who has enough money to gold-plate all the tracks in the Pennsy Railroad. From then on I'm going to be landed gentry. When I was eleven years old, my family was on relief. It made quite an impression on me."

I couldn't resist the dig. "The way that new kid, Buddy Kingsley, is coming

up through the amateur ratings, Ralph, you may have to look for the lush little gal sooner than you think."

He looked at me calmly and almost sneered. "Don't talk rot, Patton! I'll be able to take him for the next four years, anyway."

"I'm glad you're sure," I said.

His laugh sounded as though he really meant it. But his eyes were chips off Lake Superior in February.

That was three days before we hit Atlanta. And at Atlanta I saw the little dish sitting in one of the expensive seats. She didn't look as if she belonged there. I thought at first she was about fourteen. Her rusty hair was tied with a faded blue ribbon and she wore a cotton dress that looked as faded as the ribbon.

I noticed her when I glanced over and saw all the heads moving back and forth as they followed the ball. Hers didn't. She didn't take her eyes off the Wandelle.

To be honest, I've got to admit that he is good to look at. He never makes an awkward move on the court. He's as smooth as oiled glass.

I forgot about the little redhead until afterward. I was snapping the trick frames onto Wandelle's bats when she came over to me, moving almost shyly.

"Hey, you're Joe Patton, aren't you?"

I straightened up and looked her over. Fourteen was a bad guess, close up. Twenty would be about right. She was about six inches shorter than my five-eight, and her gray eyes were about one and a half times too big for her face, and her nose tilted up and she filled out that cotton dress in the way the *Vogue* girls should, but don't. A big alarm bell went off somewhere inside my head and cold feet walked up my spine and something whispered in my ear, "Joe, lad! Here's that girl! Remember her? At twelve you were riding white horses and rescuing her from towers."

"Hey, that's right," I said.

"Seeded number nine in 'forty-one, weren't you?"

"In my youth. Uh-huh. You must follow the game."

"Sure do. I'm Mitch January."

"That's a cold name for a redhead."

"And that's an old gag, Joe. Hey, I want to meet the man."

"And that's an old gag too. So does everybody."

"But you could fix, Joe. Huh?" She gave me wistful look number 18-B.

"I'll make a stab at it, Mitch. Come along with me and we'll see."

I had her stay down in the lobby of the hotel and I went up to the room. Wandelle was in the shower. When he came out I said, "A little old gal is downstairs. She wants to meet you, Ralph."

He glared. "Your job is to keep them away, not bring them around."

"She softened me up."

"Nice looking?"

I wanted to say that she was the most beautiful girl in the world. Because, of course, she was. Beyond a doubt. But I said, "Pretty good."

"The hell with it," he said.

I thought of going down and confessing failure. That wouldn't be fun. "She might give you a bad press here, Ralph. I told her that I'd fix it."

He buttoned his shirt. "I sure wish you knew your job, Patton. Okay. Bring her on up."

When I opened the door and held it aside so she could go in, Ralph bounded up from the couch, came over to the door wearing his famous grin and took her hand in both of his.

"Awfully glad to meet you, Miss January," he said in that rich baritone.

I saw by the rapt look on her face that she had taken a full broadside amidships and had been sunk with all hands.

"You were—you were wonderful!" she said, almost in a whisper.

He turned and gave me that grin. "A

lot of the credit goes to good old Joe," he said. "We work on my game every chance we get."

I echoed with a sick smile.

She didn't know what to say next. She shifted from one foot to the other and he gently steered her toward the door, saying jovially, "It's been great meeting you, Mitch. Just great! Hope I'll run into you again."

Mesmerized, she drifted out the door. I counted slowly to twenty and followed her. Wandelle gave me a knowing look. "Take good care of your shabby little friend," he said.

She was drifting through the lobby when I caught up with her. Her gray eyes were far away and she looked as though she were listening to soft music.

"Gosh!" she said.

"Sit down and recover," I said. I steered her over to a chair in the lobby.

"Gosh!" she said.

"This is where I came in," I said, sitting beside her.

She came out of the fog, put her hand on my arm and said, with a grin, "Hey, I must sound stupid. Sorry, Joe."

I took one of her cigarettes and she beat me to the light.

"Thanks, Joe," she said.

"It was nothing, really," I said. I meant it. It was less than nothing.

Minutes later I watched her walk out the lobby door and out of my life. I stood there like a fool. Then I suddenly realized that I didn't have her address. I ran out but she was gone in the crowd.

The phone book listed no Januarys. Not a one.

Nor did the city directory. Joe Patton, the practicing genius. Love walks in and love walks out and he doesn't do anything but shift nervously from foot to foot.

But Ralph found the address for me. He came roaring into my bedroom the next morning and shoved the paper in my face. "Why the hell didn't you tell me?"

When I could focus my eyes, I saw that the paper was open to the society page. On the page was a picture of a very trim little aircraft. Walking away from the aircraft and toward the camera was the little red-headed light o' my life.

Underneath it said, "Miss Mitchell January, Texas oil heiress, as she arrived yesterday in her plane. Miss January stated that she was in Atlanta to see the tennis matches."

I couldn't held the grin back. "Hell, Ralph," I said. "You called her shabby."

He glared down at me. "You could have told me."

"I didn't know, myself," I said blandly. "So how could I tell you?"

To me it was wonderful that he hadn't known when he met her. With the big dollar sign hanging over her head, he would have really swung all guns into action.

"Okay," he said in a grumbling tone. "But I'm telling you right now, Joe, that she is what I want."

That worried me. But not for long. I was too busy to be worried. Until the long wire arrived from Hal Gorder.

SCHEDULE CHANGED STOP AFTER TAMPA FLY TO SAN ANTONIO ARRIVING APRIL ELEVENTH AND TAKE FEEDER LINE TO KERRVILLE WIRING TIME OF ARRIVAL AHEAD TO MARTIN JANUARY, KERRVILLE STOP ONE WEEK OF EXHIBITIONS AND LESSONS AT JANUARY ESTATE IN HILL COUNTRY FOR FAT FEE.

After the wire was delivered in Daytona, I never saw the Wandelle so gay. He was almost friendly to me while we were alone. He began to sing in the shower, and once he almost took pity on the opposition in Tampa, feeding the guy a few easy lobs.

I was sour and depressed. I knew I was going to see Mitch again, but so was the Wandelle. And his was the snow job. To her, I was furniture.

Ten minutes before the little five-passenger job left San Antonio for Kerrville, I sent the wire ahead to Martin January.

Special Delivery 2

KERRVILLE turned out to be right up in the Texas hill country, where already there was a little touch of the green of spring. We landed on a lumpy field three miles outside town and a dust-caked station wagon came bounding over toward the plane.

Mitch was driving the station wagon.

She looked through me, marched up to Ralph and said, "Remember me?"

"Of course. Of course, Mitch," he said warmly. I started to grab the luggage to heave it into the back end of the station wagon when Ralph held up his hand and said, "Hold it, Joe." He turned to Mitch and his voice was very serious. "Mitch, it was kind of you to arrange all this for me. But I won't do it. Not for pay. If you'll let me be your house guest for a week, me and Joe Patton, that will be adequate payment. But I won't do it for money."

I lifted my sagging chin back into position. That was a new angle. I realized that Ralph had lost none of his deep affection for cash. He was merely playing for higher stakes. Oil stakes.

"Anything you say, Ralph," she said warmly.

I sat in the back end and bounced around moodily with the luggage while she drove and Ralph sat beside her, making like Prince Charming.

We seemed to be going a few hundred miles. Maybe not quite that far. I heard Ralph ask how far it was to their place.

She laughed. It was a good laugh. Warm and true. "We're on our land now."

"Oil land?" Ralph asked.

"Ranch land. Dad's got a lot of stock through here. And Angora goats over the other side of those hills. The oil land is in the other end of the state. But he likes it here. It's easier for him to get down to Houston to the directors' meetings."

I wanted to tell her that I was in love with her, and would have been if she had been a dime-store clerk.

The house was the approximate size of Grand Central Terminal, with two Pennsy stations as wings. And it was built of native stone. It surrounded gardens and swimming pools and tennis courts and garages, and there seemed to be a maze of little patios with fountains. The high-ceilinged rooms were full of that dark oak Spanish furniture. Antique.

And the place was loaded with house guests. Big weather-beaten men with their ice-cream hats and awkward out-of-the-

saddle walk, and a whole mess of drab little Texas matrons dressed in expensive clothes that couldn't keep them from looking sun-beaten. Their voices were uniformly soft and drawling.

I liked Martin January on sight. Take Santa Claus, yank out all his whiskers, trim thirty pounds off him, sun-blacken him to a saddle color and dress him in levis and you have your man. It was obvious that he worshipped Mitch and that they were very close.

No Mrs. January put in an appearance and I made the assumption, later proven correct, that she had died. I found out later that she had died in 'forty-three, two months after they got the news of the death of their only son.

The Wandelle went over like vodka behind the iron curtain. He was charming and courtly with the ladies, frank and open with the men, and coated thickly with a modesty that was as phoney as long woolies on Gypsy Rose Lee.

I loathed him quietly, suspecting that if I said one teeny little word agin' the Man, I'd be mobbed and horsewhipped.

That evening a top-flight band arrived from San Antonio and there was dancing under the Texas stars. I was in no mood to dance. Along about eleven I strolled out a porch and saw the glow of a cigarette. I excused myself and turned to go, but Martin January said, "Mr. Patton? Stick around, son. Just me alone out here."

He was in a leather chair. I sat on the railing. The music was a faint background.

He had the knack of comfortable silence. After a long time, he rubbed out his cigarette, saying, "Mitch is pretty impressed with Mr. Wandelle."

"I guess so," I said.

He sighed. "Now I don't mean to hurt your feelings, Mr. Patton, but patting a little ball around with a paddle seems to be a funny profession for a grown man."

I laughed. "It all depends on how you say it, Mr. January. Every occupation is funny. How about going around and digging holes in the ground so that black stuff squirts up out of the holes?"

"Can I call you Joe? Good. Maybe you got a point there, Joe. Does this Ralph Wandelle ever mean to do anything else?"

"I think tennis is all he knows. But he knows it as well, or better, than anyone in the country."

It was a terrific chance to put the blocks to the Wandelle. Martin January was digging for information. I could see that he was worried about his daughter. One little slur dropped into the conversation, and Ralph's plans would be amputated painlessly. But somehow I couldn't do it—not while I was taking the guy's money.

"Pretty good sort?" he asked.

"I just work for him, Mr. January. The way your ranch hands work for you. I wouldn't ask them what kind of a guy you are."

He took it all right. "Guess I'm just a nosey old man, Joe. But he'll be around here for a week. Guess I can find out in a week." He stood up. "If he's one-quarter good enough for my Mitch, that'll suit me."

"You think she's really serious?" I asked.

"She hasn't said anything, Joe. But she's walked around looking like a clubbed steer ever since she took that trip to Atlanta."

He went in. I finished my cigarette and then strolled down across the grounds. That was a bad idea. I was walking on the stones and I didn't make much noise. I ran across them and they didn't see me. His Roman-coin profile was silhouetted against the distant lights. She was a small warm bundle in his arms. I went back up to my room, feeling sick at heart. I went to bed and wanted to stuff a corner of the pillow in my mouth and bawl

like a baby. I had to keep telling myself that I was a big boy now.

At breakfast Ralph had the sleepy look of a big contented cat. Mitch glowed as though there were candles behind her eyes. Breakfast turned into a sodden lump in my middle and I went down to look at the courts. Some men were hammering and sawing, putting up a little wooden grandstand alongside the best court.

One of them spat, looked me over and said, "You fellas all ready to play patty-cake today?"

I was in no mood to be politic. I moved up to him, caught his eye and said, "If it's okay with you, mister."

He looked for a minute as though he might flare up, and I mentally practiced my Sunday punch. But he sissied off, mumbled, "I don't know much about the game."

I walked to the court and began to measure the markings. It was a cement court, and I knew that would annoy Ralph, as well as wearing the fuzz off the tennis balls as fast as they could be put in play. The net was taut and right and the backstops were far enough back and high enough to be useful.

THE competish arrived right after lunch, two nice-looking boys and a lanky gal from San Antonio, all hopped up about displaying their amateur talents in an exhibition against the Man. I knew that each of them was thinking how wonderful it would be to really give the Big Time a drubbing.

In the blazing hot sun of two-thirty in the afternoon everybody drifted down to the court. I ponged Ralph's bats against the heel of my hand and they sang pretty. I lifted the lids off two new cans of balls and gave the two little Mexican ball-boys final instructions. They looked bright enough, but I had visions of them getting in the way of one of Ralph's forehand drives and riding over the net clutching the ball.

Ralph, in white shorts and T shirt, looked crisp and cool. The first kid was named Tony Relando and he was as nervous as a horse on Derby day.

Ralph warmed up lazily and I glanced at the crowd. They were interested. Mitch was up on the tall chair to call them, and we decided to get along without the rest of the officials.

She was so pretty up on that chair that I wanted to climb up and pull her off into my arms. But that would have created a scene more confusing than amusing.

Ralph won the serve, lazily tossed up one of the balls, went up on his toes and leaned into a screaming service ace. Tony Relando frowned as he changed courts. He managed to get a bat on the second serve, but he plooped up a floater that Ralph killed at the net. The third serve was a net, the second one hummed like a big bee and Relando waved at it as it went by. For forty-love, Ralph sucked him in with a drop-shot and then angled him. Game was on a service ace.

Without apparent effort, Ralph took game after game. Relando was pale and his knuckles were white on the bat handle. Only once did he have a fair shake at a point. But Ralph, almost passed, moved back and slammed a backhand down the foul line with enough cut on it so that Relando, coming in for a kill, drove it into the net.

Mitch called the score in a slightly shaky voice, and I could tell by her voice that she was embarrassed for Relando. So was I. It was his own backyard and Ralph could have made Tony look a lot better without making himself look any worse.

At the six-love set, they changed courts and Ralph polished him off again.

The other boy, Bill Drake, came out. Ralph volleyed with him for a few minutes, and then let him take the serve.

Drake was painfully weak in the backhand department, but he could cover the court fast enough to move around a lot of them that other people would have had to take on the backhand. And he had a tremendous whistling service with a nasty corkscrew tail on it.

When it hit thirty-love in Drake's favor on his serve, I saw Ralph begin to move a little faster and a little better. He fought it to deuce and took the game. From then on, he crosscourted every shot to that feeble backhand, and Drake didn't get a smell of the games. He took the short end of the two love sets.

They took a break, and then played doubles. Ralph and the girl against Relando and Drake.

It was Ralph's chance to be Prince Charming again. He let her take every one that came her way, and put all his lean whip into the ones that hit in his department.

For the first time, the crowd began to enjoy it. Ralph and the girl took the first doubles set seven-five and the second one six-three.

None of the visitors looked too happy, as they had seen their little dreams of triumph go smash against the steel-ribbed game of a canny professional. But their friends gathered 'round and told them they'd done swell and they began to look a little happier, remembering that they'd be able to say, "Ralph Wandelle? Oh yes, I played in a private match against him last spring at the January place near Kerrville."

In the evening the big silver screen was set up outdoors and we watched one of the better Hollywood attempts as projected by Martin January's private equipment. The evening was soured for me when I saw, down front, Mitch sitting with her pretty head far too close to the Wandelle's curly locks.

Maybe the fates were trying to teach me how to be a good loser. I was losing all the way around. Ralph was the lion of the week, and I was part of the yes-sir department.

When I got up the next morning, Ralph and Mitch were already down on the court. He was teaching her how to get her back into a ground stroke and put that overdrive on the ball, the stuff that kills the bounce.

He had his arm around her to show her properly. Her teeth flashed whitely as she looked up into his tanned and smiling face.

Maybe he was getting pretty confident of her. I wouldn't know. Anyway, when he glanced up and saw me he said, "Come on down here, Patton. Grab a bat and feed her some soft ones until she gets this down right."

"Good morning, Joe," Mitch said.

"Hi, Mitch. Let's make it after breakfast, Ralph," I said.

"We'll make it right now," he snapped.

I shrugged, picked up the bat, slipped it out of the brace, and walked onto the court. Mitch gave me an odd look.

She whispered something to Ralph.

He said firmly, "Darling, he works for me. Not I for him."

I felt secret glee. Maybe the lid was off and she'd get a look at the man inside. But seconds later she was laughing with him, the fond tone back in her voice.

I patted her the soft ones, and chased them when she drove them over my head. They didn't even know I was there. I was just a machine to return the ball. The Wandelle was making an ass of himself in general. Maybe it was the sun. Maybe it was my empty stomach. Maybe it was being in love with a gal who had no eyes for me. Anyway, some gremlin whispered in my ear and I leaned on one. It made a lovely little thump as it arrowed into Ralph's middle.

His face was white with anger. He walked to the net and said with dangerous calmness, "What was that for, Patton?"

I smiled blandly. "Must have got away from me."

"Apologize!" he ordered. "At once!"

I glanced beyond him and saw Mitch standing there with a funny look on her face. I felt oddly dizzy. Suddenly that big, blonde, good-looking guy was more than I could stomach. And being a slave was a tiresome thing.

"Oh, go comb your locks," I said. "I'm sick of your pretty face."

"You're fired!" he said flatly.

"You can't fire me. I quit ten seconds before you said that. Get some other boy to buff up your ego."

"If I have anything to say about it, Patton," he said, "there'll never be another job for you in professional tennis."

"If all the people who hate you line up behind me," I said, grinning, "they'll make me their chief of staff."

THAT touched the quick. He came over the net with a very smooth leap and a great big fist appeared up out of the concrete and tore the top of my head off. Somehow I got up on my hands and knees and I looked through a red mist to see if I could find one of his ankles. If I could find one, I was going to splinter the bone in my teeth and growl.

Somebody helped me up and it turned out to be Mitch.

"Leave him alone," Ralph said sullenly. "Let him pack and get out of here."

"You're not to give me orders," Mitch said, and I heard a trace of her dad in that tone of voice. "He is a guest here the same as you are, Ralph. And he'll stay until he's ready to go."

Ralph shrugged. "It's nothing to me. But if he gets in my way, I'll beat his brains out."

It seemed undignified to be partially supported by such a frail little gal, so I got my weight over onto my feet instead of hers. She looked up at me and I could see she was close to tears.

"Why don't you settle your differences like—like gentlemen?" she said. "Why don't you have it out on the court here this afternoon?"

A slow, delighted grin crept over the Wandelle's face. "A pleasure," he said.

She began to get excited. "It'll be fun. I'll let everybody know that it's sort of a grudge match. And Joe will be able to give you more competition than those kids did yesterday."

"A little more—maybe," he said.

"Hold it a minute!" I said. "How about consulting me?"

"Afraid, Patton?" Ralph said, teetering back and forth on toes and heels.

"No. But I want one thing understood. If you win, it has nothing to do with who's the best man. It just proves who's the best tennis player."

"That's good enough for me," he said.

I went back to my room and held cold cloths on the lump on my jaw until it felt better. It hurt while I chewed my breakfast bacon. After breakfast I looked up Mitch. For a wonder, she was alone.

"Mitch, I want to apologize for the trouble this morning."

"Well, you did egg him on, you know," she said severely.

"Sure, but I finally got tired of being ordered around."

"He's just a quick-tempered man," she said softly.

"You mean a quick-tempered louse, don't you?"

At least she had the thoughtfulness to hit me on the other side of the face. If you cut out the mark her hand made, you'd have half a nice red glove. My ears rang for twenty minutes. I went up to bed. I was going to need every bit of my strength.

I added up my assets as I looked at the ceiling. One—I had never uncorked all my stuff, and maybe I could surprise him. Two—the cement court would put a bounce on even his very flattest drives.

Three—he had played six sets the day before.

On the other side of the ledger: One—he could play more tennis than I could. Two—I hadn't been in training since the war. Three—at twenty-eight, I was two and a half years older than he. My legs were that much older In tennis that means a great deal. Four—it was going to be so miserably hot out there in the sun that I'd wear down fast. My only chance would be to snag the first three sets. I knew that if it ever went to the fourth, I had no chance at all.

When I went down for my light lunch, I found I was the center of interest. But not exactly friendly interest. Their hero, the Man, was going to battle the crude boor, Joe Patton. I could tell from the speculative glances that they were not going to wish me well. To my surprise, Mitch looked as friendly as anyone.

Grass Greenhorn 3

I HAD given myself every break. A double layer of wool socks to kill the punishing impact of the concrete. A bat with a handle that would eat up the sweat without getting oily. A loose mesh shirt and a handkerchief that I could knot around my forehead if the perspiration started to sting my eyes.

There was a babble of conversation under the hot sun and when I walked out and faced Ralph, he looked twice life-size. That long arm of his looked strong enough to drive the ball right down my throat.

My little redhead was on the tall chair, a green sunshade shadowing those mammoth gray eyes.

Since he had more stuff, I had to be cagey. Surprise and strategy had to be my weapon. I had to plan on his showing off a little. I knew that if he had any weakness, it was overconfidence.

He tossed up a ball and flipped it over to me, almost contemptuously I stroked it off to his backhand and when he angled it by me, I made no attempt for it. I wanted to save the Patton energy for the clutch. Suddenly, with my little gal looking on—even though she didn't know she was mine—I wanted to beat the Wandelle more than I had ever wanted anything in my life. Maybe even more than I wanted my hundred and fifty thousand dollar layout on the West Coast.

He took service and I got back to wait for it. I was at that tensed-up point where everything seemed to be going on in slow motion, and though I had my whole attention focused on the Man, I could hear and sense everything going on for a hundred yards around.

To take any set, I had to break his service. That I knew. The ball looped lazily up and his knee with it, the strong brown fingers wrapped on the handle, and the gut mesh of the racket whistled through the air, the ball a white streak that lanced toward me. I made a lazy stop shot, a shade too high, and as he came up fast, I moved over just in time to lunge with my backhand at his crosscourt angle and slam it straight back, inches out of his reach as he crossed over.

On his second service I dropped back and stroked it hard, driving him back. We traded some long boomers and then I left the overspin off one and it bounded higher than he expected. I got to net in time to smash it down so that it bounded over his jump.

I wasn't going to be able to play his game. So I had to play my own. I dropped a short one over, thinking that this time he would try to pass me on the right as I moved over for the crosscourt. I feinted, came back and got my back into it and slammed it at his head with all the sting I could manage. It hit the rim of his bat and went straight up into the air.

He aced me on the next service, and on

the next we got the big guns booming and I fed him a cut he didn't expect, moved in front of his angle shot, cut it to his feet and killed his lob with one that fell dead before he could get to it.

To my astonishment he put two into the net to give me game and service.

I felt good. My legs felt like steel springs and the court had that small look about it. The time to worry is when the court begins to look like a football field and it is a heartbreaking run from one side of it to the other.

He got my first service back smartly and we smelled out each other's backhands, with Mitch calling his placement outside. I put a reverse twist on the second serve, but he saw it coming, and I had to move over fast. I was off balance and my shot looked outside to me, but it was called fair.

I made the game good for a two-love lead. I realized that I was playing way over my head, playing with the fury that was born of the scrap we had had. And the little redhead perched up there had something to do with it.

His face was set in hard lines and his lips were tight and thin. But he got too eager and tried to kill me off and I broke his service the second time, broke it after it was deuced up twice and it was three-love.

Three—love, then three—one. Four—one. Four—two. Five—two. Five—three. Six—three.

"First set to Mr. Patton," Mitch called and there was a ripple of applause, not much, but some.

We traded sides and I knew that it wasn't going to be much fun. I knew him well enough to know what was going on in his mind. I knew that he had realized that, out of anger, I was playing well over my head—maybe well enough to take him if he tried to slam through for a win. And I knew he didn't want to be taken. I knew that his terrific pride wouldn't permit anything like that to ever happen.

It was only logical that he should tighten his game and play it safe, play to wear me down, play for the long volley rather than the quick kill.

He knew that I wasn't in the shape he was in. He knew that he could outlast me. And playing the match for three out of five under that hot sun, he had plenty of time in which to do it.

He stayed way back on the left side, way out in the oat pasture, and angled me, left and right, left and right.

In the second set, I broke his service and then he broke mine. I broke his again and clung to my own. I began to hear a funny slapping noise and wanted to grin when I realized that it was the constant slap of my feet against that hard, hot concrete.

Slowly I began to drift into a dream world. It was as though the ball were on a rubber band. I'd whale it away from me, and back it would come. The very games seemed to become interminable. Many times he did precisely what he wanted to do—get the ball so nearly out of my reach that my return went right to him as though he were a magnet, so that he could angle it over to the other side, just inside my reach.

I couldn't hear the crowd noises any more. I couldn't feel the sun. I was just running endlessly in a white, hot inferno, in a hell of my own choosing with a red-headed goddess looking down on my agonies.

A cool voice broke into my desolation saying, "Second set to Mr. Patton, seven games to five."

I stood, flat-footed, heaving like a broke-horse and then plodded on numb legs around the net to take my position for the serve.

The court was as big as all outdoors. I felt as though I were about eight inches tall, carrying a racket made out of the purest lead, wearing two concrete shoes

and displaying a red-hot anvil strapped to my left side under my heart.

STUPID with exhaustion, I was still proud that I had at least given him a battle. Now, out of his greater reserve, he would start moving in for the kill and there was going to be blessed little I could do about it.

The tendons of my arm were raw nerves, rubbed with salt. Suddenly, it began to dawn on me that he wasn't moving in for the kill. He was still hanging back, shooting across my bows and when I blinked the haze out of my eyes, I could see a small cruel smile on his lips.

Then I knew what he was doing. It was his way of getting even. He was going to give me my chance of resigning the match or collapsing on the court. I wondered why I hadn't realized before that it was typical of the Wandelle, typical of his thinking and of his entire ruthless philosophy.

Between points I glanced up at Mitch and her face swam in a blinding haze. Doggedly I decided that the only thing I could do was to get the ball back over the net. It required all of my concentration to keep in mind the location of the court limits so that I could let the bad ones go by. And there were a few bad ones.

It was then that I began to stumble. And the blackness came. It was out there where the people had been. A ring of blackness that was like velvet midnight. It was creeping closer and closer. When it got to the limits of the court, it would pause and then swoop in on me and I could sink down into it.

Without conscious volition I was swinging at the ball, and it amazed me to hear the clean sound of the hit, to see the ball streak away from my racket and duck as it got over the net.

It was my serve. I stood and I knew I was swaying, that my chin was dropping down toward my chest. I lifted my head, squinted at Mitch and croaked, "Score?"

"Love-all. Third set. Mr. Wandelle leads, five games to four. You have the first two sets." Her voice sounded far away and thin.

I shook my head and it felt thick, as though I were drunk. My serve. That meant that I could win my serve and the third set would be five-all.

It seemed like a good thing to do.

I leaned on the serve and his return was outside. I leaned on another for an ace. At least pounding them over gave me a little rest.

He returned the third serve to the far side and I didn't even bother to go after it. It was tennis played in a nightmare, tennis played in waist-deep water, tennis in delirium.

I was moving in a dream. I started to serve again. "My serve!" he called sharply. I asked the score again. Five-all.

Maybe he lost patience. Maybe he thought it would look bad if I dropped dead. He began to move. He began to cover his side crisply and faster than he had for the first game of the first set.

One of his serves bounced up and hit me in the face. It stung and seemed to wake me up. Out of nowhere Mitch's voice came, and, unbelievably it said, "Come on! Please, Joe."

"If you don't mind!" Ralph said to her with icy politeness.

She—Mitch—had said that to me! To beat-up old Joe Patton!

She wanted me to win!

After you've spent the best dream years of your life killing dragons for the girl, what's a tennis game or two?

It was as though a chill wind came down out of the north and cooled me off, gave me a chance to drink deeply of it and find strength.

Dimly I realized that he had me forty-love on the game which would make it six-five for him. The springs came back into

my legs. I crouched, walked into the ball and belted it through him. I cut the next one, ran to the net and killed the next and somebody dimly announced that it was my ad and then the balls were bounding over to me and I was out in front, six-five.

One lousy little game between me and the big win. I stood, breathing hard. I wanted to tell Mitch that when I was twelve years old we were Christians thrown to the lions and I had saved her from them. I didn't think she'd understand.

Across the net, not smiling any more, was insult and contempt and arrogance. I pulled him off balance with a soft serve, raced to what seemed to be a good spot and drove a stinging backhand just inside the line. It was too hot for him to handle.

He was playing a shade close, waiting for another soft one. I grunted as I smashed the serve. It bounced into the wrong place for him and he gave me one I could kill. His face was the color of the concrete and I laughed at him, saw the red tide creep up out of his faultless open collar.

"Try this one for size," I yelled, and smashed another one with everything I had. He slammed it back and I went deep, stroked it. When it came back it was a heavy ball—like lead. It nearly spun the bat out of my hand when I cut it. He brought it back heavy again, and I gave him a luck shot, a tape shot that crawled over and trickled down his side of the net.

I gave him another old-lady serve, catching him off balance. The strength that I had found from Mitch's words was fading fast.

His lob seemed to float in the air and I was running and running without getting any closer to it. I got around it and smashed it right to him. In his eagerness to cross me up, he was just outside the tape.

"Match point," Mitch said.

I was dead again and the darkness was closing in. Just one more. But the serve was feeble, a sitter. This was it. If he broke through, I was done. And I knew it. I had scraped the bottom of the barrel.

It flicked the corner and I stumbled to one knee as I got the racket around it, pasted it high enough to give myself a chance to move back into position. He was grinning again. I caught a quick glimpse of his face. It came across like a streak of light. Once again I made a desperate save—right into a perfect angle shot for him. I knew when I started running that I wasn't going to get to it. I made a running dive, and seemed to float through the air. I got a feeble backhand on it just before I crashed into the concrete and rolled, leaving patches of skin. My shot was a plooper. He moved in on

it. My racket was ten feet from my hand.

The ball hit dead on top of the tape, balanced for a moment, and dropped down his side. He made a desperate scoop at it, but it was too close to the net. In the dead silence Mitch said, "Game, set and match to Mr. Patton."

Just as I climbed up on the dead stalks that I was laughingly considering my legs, Wandelle, the Great, smashed his racket against the concrete, splintering the rim. He threw the shattered racket at my head. It was a shade high. I couldn't have ducked.

I heard the clatter as it hit the ground far behind me.

Then the crowd was roaring.

Purple, and with fists clenched, the Great Man strode away from the crowd toward the house. The darkness closed in and with no memory of falling I felt the warm concrete against my cheek.

I HAD a dim memory of walking up to the house and falling into my bed—with assistance all the way. I knew it was much darker.

The room door opened. Wandelle stood there.

"Hello, hero," he said bitterly.

"I didn't know you were such a good loser, Wandelle," I said.

"There's one little thing I have to do before I leave here," he said. He came up to me just as I swung my legs over the edge of the bed. I ached in every muscle. He grabbed my shirt, pulled me up off the bed and popped me in the mouth. I bounced on the bed and fell over the other side. I got up just as he came around the end of the bed. The right whistled over my shoulder as I stepped inside of it. My fist bounced off his pretty jaw, and the feeling was good. But I didn't hit him hard enough. Beyond him, just as he began to take my face apart, I saw Mitch slip in and pull off one small moccasin, grasp it by the toe and move in on us.

When she got close enough, the lights went out again. As I fell down the long black tunnel, I was thinking, "This is happening too often, kid. You're going to end up punchy!"

The room lights were on and I was back on the bed and Martin January was looking down at me. I was wearing somebody else's face. They should have taken better care of it. It felt lumpy.

"Where'd he go?" I asked in a clear, weak contralto.

"The boys took him and his stuff down to Kerrville and dumped him, son."

"Good," I said with a heavy sigh.

His eyes twinkled. "Son, I take back what I said about patting that little tennis ball back and forth over a net. Learned something today. Never too old to learn."

"What was that?"

"Learned that it don't matter a damn what a man does with himself. That's his business. The important part is how he does it. You wore me out just watching you."

"Mmmm," I said.

"You did a little talking on the way up from the tennis match, Joe," he said, his tone suddenly serious. "And you're out of a job Want me to stake you to that tennis outfit you were babbling about? From watching you out there this afternoon, I think you're a good risk. Better say yes quick."

I tried to shake my head in an eager yes, but my head hurt. I felt gingerly for the lump on my head and muttered, "Ow! Your daughter packs a mean moccasin."

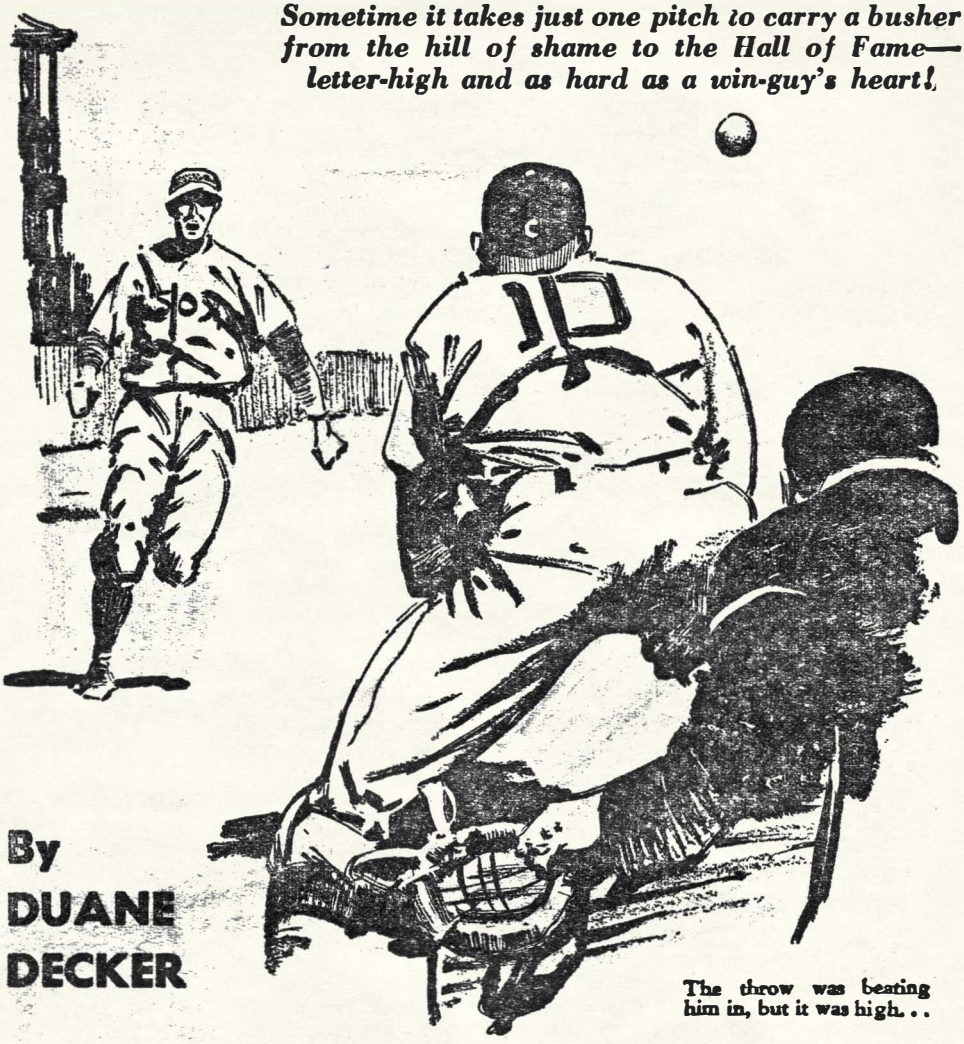
His eyes widened and he said, "Hell, son. She didn't hit you. She laid him out so cold that they had to slide him into the station wagon like a side of beef"

"Where—where is she?" I gasped.

He grinned. "Standing on the other side of the bed, son. And from the way she's looking at that godawful face of yours, I better move along for a spell."

I didn't even hear him leave the room.

Sometime it takes just one pitch to carry a busher from the hill of shame to the Hall of Fame—letter-high and as hard as a win-guy's heart!



The throw was beating him in, but it was high. . .

By DUANE DECKER

LAST CHANCE CHUCKER

MR. BURT KELLY, the fluorescent-faced road secretary of the Blue Sox, was waiting inside the almost deserted dressing room at the stadium when Eddie Lasky arrived, a few hours before the afternoon game with the Clippers. Eddie didn't have any illusions concerning the matter at hand. It seemed to hang in the air, invisible, yet as sharply present as the threat of thunder after a muggy summer day.

"By the way, Eddie," Mr. Burt Kelly said, "I'll have your ticket to Albany ready, right after today's game."

"Thanks," Eddie said. "Upper berth?"

"Upper. Yes, kid."

It came to Eddie with the unpleasant quickness of a cramp that the Blue Sox seemed to observe a bluntly significant form of travel etiquette: on your way up to them, you rode lower, on your way down you rode upper.

He watched Mr. Burt Kelly's hastily retreating back. Twenty-five, he was thinking, was awfully young to be washed up in the majors.

From where he stood in the clubhouse doorway, there was no one in sight except Buster, the batboy, and a sweeper, which was fine. He'd figured on that, coming in this early. Because he was in no mood for an audience, not when he cleaned out his locker for the last time.

He hurried to it, overnight bag in hand, and glanced with the never-diminishing fondness at his name, painted on the front of the locker. Tomorrow his name would be scraped off and a new one painted in its place: Fitzgerald. Up in Albany, Fitzgerald would be scraped off and Lasky painted on. A fair exchange indeed, for this Fitzgerald.

He began to yank stuff out of his locker, shoving it haphazardly into the bag, until he spied the clippings. Then he paused.

He looked at the clippings the way you look at a glass of beer you've let stand overnight in a warm room. The clippings were from last year and the top one showed Eddie posing before the start of the All-Star game in St. Louis. Two other fellows in uniform stood beside him, their arms slung carelessly over his shoulders. The fellow on his left was named Bob Feller, the clipping said, and the one on his right, Ted Williams.

"Hello bigshot," he said to his picture. "Don't look so puffed up, friend. I knew you before and now I know you after."

His picture seemed to take the ribbing okay. He folded the clippings, started to stuff them into the bag, then suddenly changed signals and put them back inside the locker. Maybe, he thought, this Fitz from Albany will get a boot out of them. Let him see he rates better than the batboy's locker, anyway.

He finished cleaning out the locker and began to undress. He climbed into his uniform slowly, neatly and with dispatch. Because it was the last time he'd wear this uniform and he wanted to do right by it, even on the bench. The whole league would certainly have to admit that even if he hadn't broken into a starting lineup all year, he was just about the best-dressed ballplayer in the majors.

Just then, he saw Buster stick his head out from behind a door and almost gallop toward him. Eddie turned his head quickly.

He stuck a piece of gum in his mouth and ground it furiously between his teeth. Then he turned around, trusting he now looked very jaunty, like a triple off the scoreboard.

He moved toward the door, but Buster intercepted him.

"Did you know Jug was looking for you, Eddie?" Buster asked.

"No, I didn't," Eddie said. "Well thanks, Buster. Thanks a lot."

He found himself staring at Buster. Buster had freckles across the bridge of his nose and it came to Eddie suddenly that he wouldn't give you a nickel for a batboy who didn't have freckles across the bridge of his nose. Maybe that batboy up in Albany had them too and if so, then everything would be fundamentally as sound as Jackie Robinson's legs.

"Jug's in his office now," Buster added. Buster looked worried. Lately Buster had a way of acting like some kind of a mother hen. He was going on fifteen.

"That's fine, Buster," Eddie said. "Then I—I'll go see Jug now."

He did a snappy right-about-face and strode, purposefully as a platoon of marines, toward the office of Mr. Jug Slavin,

manager of the Blue Sox. There, he knocked uncertainly on the door, heard the voice boom from inside.

"Come in, come in!"

He opened the door and walked in. And as he did, he thought of the last time he'd walked into this same room. That had been not so very long ago but, thinking back, it seemed to him just then that years had elapsed.

TWO months ago, it had been. Opening day of the baseball season. A bright, warm and wonderful day—rich with promise and the good smell of roasted peanuts, boiled frankfurters and orange pop fizzing in paper cups.

It was destined to be a big year for a lot of people if you took stock in the crystal-ball-gazing of the sports experts. They predicted what Big DiMag and Williams would hit; how many balls Mize and Kiner would propel out of the parks; how many wins Feller, Newhouser and Blackwell would rack up.

And down among the slightly less spectacular items, they claimed that Eddie Lasky, the pint-sized speed merchant, would spark the Blue Sox to a pennant, hitting his reliable .320, collecting his bonded 200 hits, proving once more that he was the best second-spot hitter as well as the best shortstop in the business, bar none.

"Of course," one of these sports experts wrote, "Lasky has looked a trifle slow afoot in the Grapefruit League this spring. But once his winter stiffness is unlimbered, he'll again be the toughest man in the league to nail at first on a bunt or a three-hop infield grounder, as well as the toughest shortstop in the league to sneak a ground ball past. No, none of us is losing much sleep over Lasky's slow start."

None of us, Eddie thought, except Lasky. But Lasky was losing quite a lot of sleep over it—had been for some time. And the letter in that morning's mail pretty definitely settled things, as definitely as a double-play grounder in the middle of a ninth-inning rally. It said:

> Dear Mr. Lasky: After examining your X-rays, we here at the clinic believe your condition cannot be basically corrected. The operation performed on you last winter was eminently competent. Your general health and strength will not be impaired. But it is beyond the realm of possibility to expect that you will ever regain the exceptional speed which contributed so greatly to your success as a major league ballplayer. Furthermore—

The word "furthermore" struck Eddie as being such a very dreary word that he did not bother to continue reading. That was the whole story there. They'd given him the pitch, belt-high, across the plate. It was high time he did the same for Jug.

He went to Jug and showed him the letter. Jug read it twice and then, bewildered, said, "What's it mean, kid? This hits me like a bucket of sand. What operation is this?"

"It's Operation Lasky," Eddie said. "I kind of thought it wouldn't really amount to much. You see, Mr. Slavin, this dog of mine, he was a very old bird dog and kind of half-blind. He didn't see the car coming at him and—"

"Listen," Jug said, "I want to know what happened to you."

"I'm getting to it," Eddie said. "So the dog—well, he didn't see the car. I jumped into the street to sort of pull him back to the curb, just like anybody would do to an old, half-blind bird dog. You know how it is, Mr. Slavin."

"The hell I do!" Jug yelled. "I wouldn't be jumping in front of cars to pull back an old, half-blind reindeer."

"Well, I pulled Rabbit back," Eddie said. "But, guess I zigged when I should have zagged because the car nicked me a little. When they operated, though, I seemed to mend fine and I felt normal and

just about forgot the whole darned thing."

"Until you showed up at spring training?"

"Yes. And found I waved at ground balls I used to be waiting for. And could only beat out a bunt if I laid it on a dime. I was stiff and it wasn't just winter stiffness. Coming north I stopped in at that clinic. They checked me down to the armpits and, well, that letter's the check."

Jug looked at his feet. "They don't miss, I guess."

"No," Eddie said. "They don't miss." He had more than a rough idea of what was in Jug's mind now. Without that speed, he'd give the Sox a loose defense, not a tight one, down the middle. Without that speed, he'd bat nearer .220 than .320. And to make it worse, the Sox had another shortstop around this year—a big, strong kid named Patsy Bates.

Patsy Bates was an eager boy with octopus arms. He'd just popped up from the vast Sox farm system and he seemed to remind the sports experts of Marty Marion. There were still flaws in him—straightening up on a double-play grounder he took below the knees, for one thing. But not too many flaws, and none worse than a small cold in the head. Not that he'd have swallowed his gum over Patsy Bates, with the old speed. But without it he felt like being caught by a line drive with his glove off.

Jug cleared his throat and said, "Now look, son, I won't throw you any curves. The fact is, I got a large family that likes to eat seconds, and a one-year contract."

Eddie nodded.

"To win a pennant," Jug said, "I got to have speed down the middle. That's been the dope since McGraw was in short pants. Take this boy, Patsy Bates—"

"A good boy, Bates," Eddie said, in a quick, hollow blurt. "I like how he goes to his right on a ground ball."

"Yeah. He's the spread-eagle type. But don't get the impression I'm saying you're out of a job. I can use you. To be on tap for infield insurance. You can fill in at short, second, third—if somebody gets hurt."

If somebody gets hurt. Eddie supposed some guys would call it a kind—even a good—deal. A sort of pension, for services rendered. But being a bench-warmer wasn't, and never would be, a good deal to him. Not after a World Series under his belt, two straight All-Star games, a fairly regular job of autographing scoreboards for the Governor, and stuff like that.

He had another choice, of course. He could quit baseball and sell insurance or automobiles or possibly hay, grain and feed. But, he knew he'd stick to baseball if he could only hang on by helping to powder the foul lines.

And when he faced it, he looked Jug in the eye and said, "Okay, Mr. Slavin, you're on. You've got a new utility infielder. It sounds like good dope."

IT WASN'T good dope, though. Not a minute of it. Sitting on the bench was tough to take, when you'd been out there in the thick of it, day after day. And the rest of the team—well, there was an unconscious difference in their way with him.

There were other differences. Eddie learned how to get out on the field early, to do his practicing before the regulars took over. He shagged flies in the outfield, to keep busy. And finally, to hit the real low of the thing, Jug Slavin said to him one day, "How about trying some batting-practice pitching, kid? You always could hit a dime at ninety feet with that arm."

It was one way to earn your salary, Eddie figured. And he did have notoriously accurate control. Now, from the mound, he found that he could throw the batting-practice stuff to the exact spot the regulars wanted it. The team was pleased with him. Pretty soon they were all ask-

ing for him if he didn't show up to pitch batting practice.

Then, bored with tossing in simple, fat pitches, he worked on a curve. That, in turn, gave him an idea. With his natural control, why couldn't he turn into a real pitcher? Bucky Walters of the Reds had done it, just to name one. And he'd turned into a star after he'd been all washed up as a third baseman. It could be done.

He took stock of himself. He had natural control, which was money in the bank. And a good fast ball. He had big league poise and savvy and didn't rattle easily. That was a lot. Now he could already break off a fair curve. What he needed was a larger assortment of stuff and—practice.

He acquired both, fast. He made a pest of himself with the whole Sox pitching staff in the days that followed, studying them like a kid, asking questions eagerly, making them watch him and criticize him. He was tireless—he went to the ballpark even earlier now, with no one except Buster the batboy, who'd catch him when no one was around. He had both a side-arm and overhand curve now, a sinker, a change-up, a slider. He could really break them off sharply, too.

He talked to Jug Slavin, confident of being ready to show himself. Jug listened and frowned and didn't say the things Eddie had expected. "Nix, kid," Jug growled. "I got a pennant to win. I can't afford to run baseball schools on the side. I need a utility infielder with his mind on his own job, not on Bob Feller's. Drop the pitching."

Eddie felt his neck start to swell. He had a right to be what he wanted to be, a right to stage a comeback. He told Jug so, trying to keep his voice low and steady.

"So," Jug said, coldly now. "You got rights, have you? Be a pitcher then. That means I immediately get a utility replacement for you. As a utility man, you got some security. As a pitcher, you may be in Bridgeport next week."

"I'm not looking for security," Eddie said, heatedly. "I'm looking for a chance to get off that bench."

"Well, you're off it now. You're out in the bullpen. And you'll stand or fall on your pitching alone."

From there on, Eddie knew, he was hanging by a thread. It was all right, though. He felt like a man again. He had a fighting chance to break into that line-up.

And he did, a half dozen times in the next month. But it was all pretty meaningless—Jug flagged him in only after the Sox had hopelessly lost a ball game. He made fair showings but they impressed no one. There was no pressure. You couldn't tell a thing about a ballplayer until you saw him operate under pressure.

Finally, though, he got some pressure. Jug waved him in from the bullpen one day with the Sox behind, 6-2, in the eighth inning. And in the ninth, the Sox came up with four big runs. He walked out to the mound to pitch that tenth—his game to win or lose.

He was pitching against the Indians. He held them scoreless in the tenth and the eleventh. He felt good. But in the twelfth the roof caved in on him. A curve slipped out of his hand that hung, instead of breaking sharply. He'd tightened up, over-eager to prove himself. Flash Gordon, the batter, caught it where it hung. It went screaming into the left field bleachers for the run that won.

He sat in the dressing room holding his head and feeling sick. Then Jug walked over and the world really crashed.

Jug was blunt. He said the Sox number one pitcher, Bix Hanson, had pulled a muscle in his pitching arm. Bix would be out for weeks at least and he had to get a starting pitcher to replace him. This game he'd blown today showed that Lasky was no starting pitcher.

"That's why," Jug finished, "I'm bringing up this Fitzgerald from Albany. He's a starter with a great record there. But somebody's got to go to make room. And like I told you, kid, when you got this pitching bug—"

So that's how it was. Definite and final. And as he walked into Jug's office before this opening game of the Clipper series, Eddie knew there wasn't a prayer that there'd been any change of plans

There hadn't been.

"BUSTER said you wanted me, Mr. Slavin," he said. "I shove off for Albany right after the game."

"Yeah, I know," Jug said. "But there's something pretty important, meanwhile, that you can do for me and the Sox. In this game today. It's no order. It's a request. Because this is no hero's job."

"I'm out of practice on the hero stuff," Eddie said.

"Well, this game means first place," Jug said, "and I'm pulling out all the stops to win it. Wanta throw 'em off balance with a little trick, and you figure in the trick. I'll pitch Lefty Kress, but not let the Clippers know Lefty is my boy. I'll have him warm up out in the bullpen and have you warm up in front of the dugout. Get it?"

Eddie got it. The same trick Durocher used to pull in crucial games against the Cards. Now his job was playing dummy. He had found out how low you could sink.

"Then," Jug said, "when the Clippers think you're my pitcher, they throw their left-handed hitting strength into their starting line-up. I let you pitch to just one batter, which makes it legal. Then I yank you and Lefty Kress appears from the bullpen, all warmed up. That leaves the Clippers at a disadvantage offensively and makes them yank out all their left-handed hitters that got right-handed replacements. You—"

"Sure," Eddie said. "I'll play dummy for you."

Those Clippers and the crowd didn't seem to believe their eyes when they saw Eddie warming up. But they believed it when they saw him stride to the mound while the amplifiers blared his name.

"One batter, kid," Jug said, as Eddie left the bench.

Eddie nodded. Old do-or-die Lasky—he'd hold those mighty Clippers in the palm of his hand. For one batter.

He stood on the mound now, tugging at his cap visor, watching Sternwhite walk to the plate, swinging three bats. He looked Sternwhite over lovingly. When you only had one batter for your whole ball game, you practically had to love the guy.

Then he turned around, glancing at the clipped infield and the big, green blanket of an outfield. He felt the lift that a big league stadium always gave him. He wished he could really have a crack at pitching this key game. He felt relaxed.

His eyes narrowed, following along the double-decked grandstand to where the unroofed bleachers began their wide, blue-and-white-shirted path to the centerfield flagpole. There, the American flag blew toward the railroad tracks beyond—a batter's wind. There's be some homers today if a pitcher let one slip. Well, Lefty Kress could worry about it.

Sternwhite was in the batter's box now. Tweet Tillman was crouched behind the plate. Tweet signaled for a curve and Eddie gave it to him, side-arm. It broke, sharp as a broken bottle. Sternwhite, a dutiful lead-off man, watched it for a called strike.

He could do this all afternoon, he thought. Tweet was calling for the high hard one. Eddie nicked a corner of the plate and Sternwhite, fooled, stopped his swing before breaking his wrists. Strike two.

Sternwhite complained about the ball.

The ump looked at it and tossed it back in the game. Eddie got it from Tweet and rubbed it up a little. Tweet wanted another curve and Eddie blew the overhand one in. Sternwhite went around like a top and Tweet had pegged the ball exultantly down to Madigan at third before Sternwhite turned in disgust and headed toward the Clipper bench.

The crowd roared. That was nice. That was music. Well, he'd had his fun. He turned and saw Jug, right on schedule, bounding out of the dugout. Jug held up his hand at the plate ump, then waved at the bullpen. Eddie kicked a pebble with his foot and waited. He'd had his last big league pitch.

It wasn't until the figure from the bullpen reached Jug that Eddie saw it wasn't Lefty Kress—it was the bullpen catcher. Funny. There was talk between them and then Jug walked over.

"Look, kid," he said, scowling, "my trick's kind of backfired on me. Lefty caught one on the end of his finger out there and it's swelled up like a balloon. He can't pitch."

"Nobody else warmed up?" Eddie said, hopefully.

"Nobody. You think you could last the inning—or even two? Just until I get somebody warmed up."

"I could last quite a while, the way I feel."

Jug shook his head. "Two innings will be plenty." He went back to the dugout. Eddie went back to the mound.

Harrick was up there now. If he was going to prove anything, Eddie thought, he couldn't afford to make a single mistake in these two precious innings. And nobody had to tell him there were an awful lot of mistakes you could make in two innings when you threw them in against these Clippers.

He gave Harrick a look at the curve ball. He crouched a little after it left his hand, sighting the break. Sweet. Harrick swung from the heels and missed by a foot.

The count ran to two-and-two. Then Eddie pulled the string on one. Harrick was looking for a fast ball. He checked his swing, but not enough, and popped a high one to short. That brought up Muscle Man Keeler and it also brought Tweet Tillman out to the mound, mask in hand.

"You feel nice, kid," Tweet said. "Just don't try to blow that fast one past this Keeler."

"You call 'em, Tweet. I'll pitch 'em that way."

"How to go, boy," Tweet said. "How to go."

Tweet called them fine on Keeler. He flied to short right and Eddie strolled into the dugout still feeling he could do this all afternoon.

Jug bustled over, looking unhappy. "We sure were lucky that inning," he said, gloomily. "I got Munson and Steele warming up out there. Try to hang on for one more inning."

Eddie hung on. In the top of the second, Big DeLucca flied to center. McQuade grounded to first. Rawlinson whiffed. Six Clippers up and six down. Let Feller top it.

When Eddie reached the dugout this time, Jug came over again. "We're in like Flyn, kid," he said. "Munson and Steele are ready. But, I'll wait until you whobble a little before I yank you. Probably this inning—three is your limit."

Shaw was pitching for the Clippers and having a good day. The Sox put men on but could not move them. No score. In the top of the third, Eddie walked Palazzo, and immediately Jug stood up, in the dugout.

To make it worse, after Eddie got the next two, Sternwhite was given life on a grounder that squirted through Madigan's legs. Men were on first and third—the first hole. Out in that bullpen, Eddie saw baseballs flying back and forth.

He blew the first one past Harrick. Then Harrick hit a change-up. It was a harmless little grounder right at Eddie's feet and he threw Harrick out, easily.

INSIDE the dugout, Jug was scratching his head. He said, doubtfully: "I shouldn't do it, but I'll give you a crack at this fourth inning. If your luck can hold."

"I don't know about my luck holding," Eddie said, "but I think my curve ball will."

He held them in the fourth. This time, Jug didn't say a word when he came into the dugout. Jug just sat there looking sour, as though he had inside dope that an atom bomb was scheduled to be dropped on the Stadium but he wasn't sure which inning.

Eddie held them in the fifth, too. But Shaw was as tough and the Sox hadn't come up with a single run yet. In the sixth, Muscle Man Keeler outguessed Eddie on a slow pitch and rifled it to right. It had home run written on it, but there was a cross-wind now. That saved Eddie. The Sox rightfielder practically straddled the bleacher wall, but he got it.

Back on the bench, Jug said, "Lucky? Kid, if you were shooting craps today, you couldn't roll a thing but sevens. You think you can stagger through one more inning?"

"Let me try," Eddie said, with an edge to his voice. "Unless you think maybe the boys on the scoreboard are running out of zeros to hang up out there?"

Nobody on the bench was saying anything. Even the crowd was quiet. They all seemed to figure this was a big fluke, probably. Well, Eddie thought, it will be good to get to Albany where he could probably strike up a conversation with somebody.

He pulled through the seventh after a bad start, walking the first man. Still the Sox couldn't nick Shaw for a run. He pitched the eighth feeling really sore. Because here he was, standing those Clippers on their heads, and everybody mum about it.

Then, in the last of the eighth, he found out why.

He grabbed a bat off the pile because he was the first man up. As he headed toward the plate, he heard a hoarse voice from a box behind the dugout yell, "Come on, Lasky—win your own no-hitter, kid!"

The word "no-hitter" brought his head back with a snap. He stared around and saw a dozen people bawling the guy out for yelling. Even some of the Sox had jumped out of the dugout to glare at him. And then, suddenly, it dawned on Eddie why nobody was speaking to him, why the park was so silent. They didn't want to put the whammie on a no-hitter.

It was true. Thinking back, he remembered the only Clippers who'd reached base had reached on walks and errors. Not even a measly scratch hit had those mighty Clippers collected. Three outs away from the Hall of Fame!

He stepped into the box and, as if to prove that his new knowledge hadn't unnerved him, he sliced the first pitch from Shaw into left for a blooper single. Madigan was up now, and Madigan would bunt. Everybody in the park knew that.

Madigan bunted. A nice one, down the first base line. Eddie found himself standing on second with the tie-breaking run, and one out. Marshall was up and Marshall ran the count to three and two. Then he hit one, a line drive to center.

Going into third, Eddie saw Jug—who was coaching—hold up his hands, palms flat. Eddie thought *why stop?* Probably because he was a pitcher and pitchers weren't supposed to take chances on the bases. Especially, he supposed, pitchers who happened to be three outs away from a no-hitter.

Well, he knew just how deep that ball

went to center. Deep enough. He could beat that throw from Big DeLucca. He rounded third, past the startled face of Jug Slavin, and dug his cleats in, heading for the plate.

Halfway there, he saw it was going to be a toss-up. The throw was beating him in, but it was high—he could tell that by the catcher's eyes. He put his face down and jumped, head first. Not very bright stuff, maybe, for a Hall of Fame candidate; but when you needed a run, you needed a run. You didn't wait to have it handed to you on a platter; you couldn't wait.

He had a quick look at the catcher's spikes as he went up for that throw. Then, he didn't really feel the spikes much when they came down. Just a sharp, quick stab across the back of his hand—his pitching hand.

He knew from the crowd's happy scream that he'd made it. Then, right after, all he saw was a bunch of legs with blue-and-white stockings. Johnny Madigan and Jug Slavin and Tweet Tillman were crouched beside him. Tweet said, "How you feeling, kid?"

"Just fine," Eddie said. "Why shouldn't I? It's the first time this year I been able to dirty up my uniform somewhere besides just in the seat of the pants."

In the dressing room, the doc said the hand would be okay in a week. Eddie took a quick shower. So he'd been a dope. If he had come close to pitching himself away from Albany, he'd certainly slid his way right back into the burg.

He dressed fast and when he heard the final happy roar that says the game is over and the home team's won, he ducked into Jug's office and waited until Jug walked in.

"Well kid," Jug said, "we're in first place." He glanced at Eddie's overnight bag.

"Going somewhere?"

"Albany," Eddie said.

"Oh—that!" Jug said. "Listen, you know who came in from the bullpen to relieve you? Lefty Kress."

Eddie felt his jaw drop. "But Lefty's finger—"

"Nothing ever happened to Lefty's finger. You're so dumb I'll give you a blueprint. I wasn't pulling a psychological trick on the Clippers, I was pulling it on you."

"But—"

"You'd looked good in relief roles. I thought maybe you were the man to fill in for Bix. But I figured I'd find out better if I gave you the test without you being as tightened up as you would have been if you'd known you were my starting pitcher."

"But now this doctor says—"

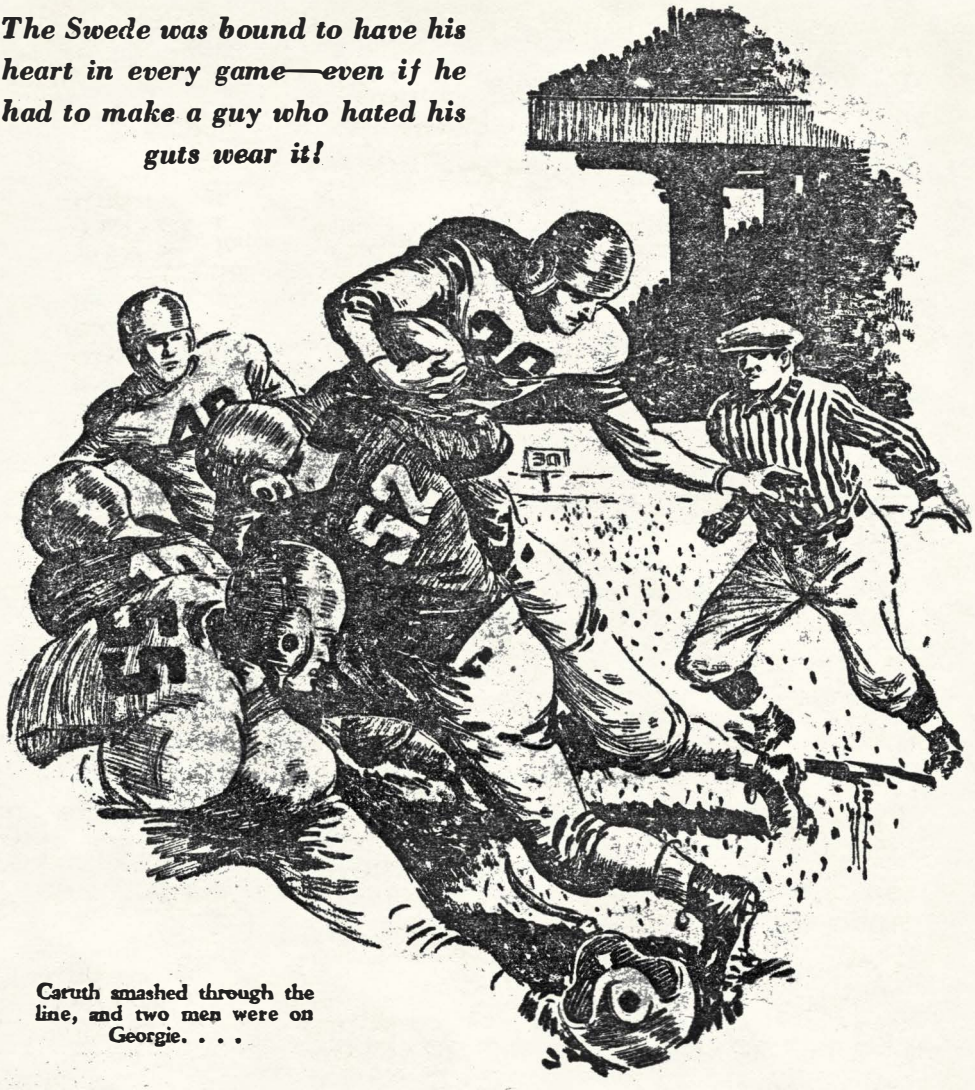
"A week. All right, we'll stagger through one week but after that, we count on you. You shouldn't have disregarded my stop sign. You should never have taken a head-first dive. Pitchers just don't do those things. And you kicked the Hall of Fame right out the window when you did it."

"We needed the run. We're in first place. Right?"

"Right. And that's why I couldn't send you to Albany anyway. Because, kid, you didn't just prove you were a starting pitcher. You proved the team meant more to you than the Hall of Fame. In my opinion, you're a dope—but I'd like nine dopes like that playing on my side. Now, go unpack that bag."

Eddie went. He started shoving stuff into the locker and his hand felt the clippings he'd left there for Fitzgerald of Albany. He took them out and looked at them the way you look at a freshly-drawn glass of beer. He'd better hold onto those clippings, he thought. Because there'd probably be plenty of new ones to add to them—and beginning with tomorrow morning's papers.

The Swede was bound to have his heart in every game—even if he had to make a guy who hated his guts wear it!



Caruth smashed through the line, and two men were on Georgie. . . .

GEORGIE GALE sat on the bench with the other reserves of the Brooke College team and watched with admiring eyes. His big hands hung slackly between his knees, his elbows rested on the heavy muscles of his thighs, his feet were spread and planted on the sod. His blond head was bare and his young face serene. Brooke College was handling the big team from Vale in good shape.

Of course Vale was ahead, 13-0. But Swede had blocked the second conversion; it was the fourth quarter and Vale was getting nowhere using the second string. That was very good for Brooke against Vale. Nobody expected Brooke to beat Vale or any other big team.

The Swede was the answer to Brooke's fine showing, Georgie thought with enthusiasm. There was no better left tackle anywhere. He was working with Lon Dow, the left end, on lead-and-post blocking, allowing Honey Slobony to take off on short gains outside end and in the tackle slot. Like a monument the Swede pivoted

SLAP THAT TACKLE DOWN

By WILLIAM R. COX

the plays about him, handling the Vale linesmen with ease and nonchalance.

Van Starr walked up and down in front of the bench. He was young too—all the Brooke football set-up accented youth—and this was his first job as head coach and he was very anxious. He had a wife and a new baby and the job meant security to him. He knew little Brooke was not supposed to beat Ivy League giants, but he worried with each defeat. It was not his fault that the ancient college in Jersey had never bothered to keep up with its old rivals afield in the matter of manpower, but the lickings rankled in his mind. Vale, Kings, Yarmouth, Hornell—Brooke played them all, and Masters University too. It was tradition at Brooke to play them all, and accept the whippings with grace and a shrug.

On the field Swede Hansen growled to his teammates, "We can score on this outfit. They're no better than we are, just bigger." Swede was a raw-boned individual with hands like meat cleavers. His bony jaw was unlovely but as rugged as a plowshare. His gray eyes were like gimlets. He was older than the others, and captain this year.

Matt Crane barked a signal. Brooke wheeled into the single wing. Slobony, a stocky, fast man, took a hand-off from Matt and reversed into the left tackle slot. Swede made his step and swung to hit the end. Lon Dow was to team up on the play, but Lon never made it. The Vale men came in.

The guard hit him low. A big back came hurtling from the secondary. Slobony ducked and scuttled outside, the cut-back. The Vales paid little attention to Slobony. They were murdering Hansen.

They laid it to him. He fought back, silent, then cursing as he realized that they were giving him the works. A shoe caught him in the mouth and broke a tooth. He heaved one man away, twisted the ankle of another. Someone jumped on his ankle. There was a protesting, plainly audible crackle of bone.

He slugged the last man away, bringing blood to a Vale countenance. He rolled over and sat up, staring at the ankle, which was already assuming the proportions of a bubble gum aspiration by a champion blower.

There went his pro contract. There went his chance to finish the season in a blaze of glory, against Hilton and Masters. He sat and swore, steadily and violently. A contrite Vale man said, "Hey, that's too damned bad. . . Nobody meant to do that to you, Hansen. . ."

"The hell with all of you," Swede snarled.

Van Starr came out, pale and angry and worried. Two men hoisted Swede—he could only touch one foot to the ground. He hopped off, a giant among pygmies, the Brooke bulwark, a fighting man gone in battle. It was a funeral procession—the coach, the trainer, the injured big man and his bearers.

Georgie Gale got up and reached for a headguard. The Swede stared at him and grated, "Anybody behind me but you, Feet, and it wouldn't be so bad." He sneered and added, "But anyway, it'll

make me look good, the way you play it out there."

Georgie went onto the field. The Swede was always tough. He was a lone wolf, he was mean, and he was great. Georgie knew all about the Swede. They had come from the same home town in Pennsylvania.

Slobony had run the ball past midfield while the Vales were slaughtering the Swede. Georgie went into the huddle and got the signal. He pivoted into the line, left, with right guard Gil Malaney shifted over alongside him. He swung and faced a Vale man coming in on the snap-back. He hit the man and drove him on.

He drove him the wrong way. The spinner, with Slobony carrying, was in the outside slot. The Vale man George had hit reached gratefully for Slobony and threw him at the line of scrimmage.

Georgie had muffed a signal again. It was the strangest thing. He could pass his subjects in school, he could memorize *The Ancient Mariner* in one evening. But he would get inside plays mixed up with outside plays. Lon Dow snapped at him. Matt Crane groaned in despair. Slobony looked as though he had been stabbed in the back. Malaney whispered the signals in his ear, over and over.

Georgie went back to work. They tried the right side, but Slobony did not run very well to his own left. Georgie slew a couple of Vales, spreading them all over the landscape, and if Slobony had reversed, there was a hole like Georgie had been atomic.

That was Georgie. Big, strong, and willing—but dumb. They said he was dumb and they used to sing Fats Waller's sing, *Your Feets Too Big,* at him back in high school.

His father had been superintendent of the mine where Swede Hansen's father was a pit man. He had lived on the high side of a hill while Swede lived down in the grimy town. He had played high school football alongside tough terriers who were destined for the mines and eternal darkness, and against these kids, and he had always been the butt.

Well, he could take it. He had learned that years ago. He would hurt inside but he could stand up there and grin at them and take it right on the chin. And nobody, somehow, ever offered to attach him physically, even in high school. They would get mad enough to try it, but they would stare at him, his sad grin, his big, square shoulders, his real contrition when he had blown a signal; they would mutter and curse, but nobody ever socked him. He had a dignity that they could not assail . . . and he was a hell of a big guy.

Vale won the game, 13-0.

SWEDE had a cast on his left foot, a walking iron heel, and a heavy walking stick. Only a small bone had been broken and Swede was grimly hopeful that it would mend. He was out of the Hilton game, and then came Masters U. He wanted to play against Masters.

They sat in Van Starr's office with the door closed. The coach said, "I know how you feel. That pro money means a lot to you. But if you play and you can't move around good, you'll look bad to the pro scouts."

"I know it," said Swede somberly. "It's a funny damn thing, Val. You and me, we're realistic. Football gets us someplace. It's more than a rah-rah game to us. I guess we're pros in our hearts. But you know what?" He took a deep breath. "I'm captain of this team. We been beat to hell by bigger clubs. We whipped everyone in our own class. And we had a chance againstMasters."

The coach nodded. "We had a chance. It would've been the upset of the year."

"It would have made you, it would have made me. And it means something. It seems to mean a hell of a lot. To be cap-

tain and also to want to beat Masters." Van Starr could still grin. He said, "Gets you, don't it? The rah-rah stuff."

"It gets me."

Van said sadly, "It gets me, too. After all these years—the war, marriage, everything. I want Brooke to win a big one."

They sat and stared at one another. Then Swede said, "I don't like that Georgie Gale. I don't like his rich old man. But I'm hobbling out there and teaching that slob to play tackle."

"He can play tackle, said Starr. "He just can't seem to remember assignments. He carries a load of academic subjects. Maybe it's too much for him. He just can't remember."

"I'll engrave them in his hide," snapped Swede, "with this." He brandished the cane. "If he can play part time against Masters, and I can play—I'll make the dumb cluck remember. And if he forgets the signals, he'll at least remember the Swede!"

He got up and stumped to the door. The coach said nothing. He was a young Head Coach but he had commanded men in the war. He looked at the wall after the Swede had left, and his mind went over and over the idea which was germinating.

It was not until after the Hilton game that Georgie began to hate the Swede. In his vast admiration for Hansen there had been no room for hatred before then.

He took the beating Swede handed him in practice. He toted home the signals, all written down, and studied them between other studies. He went every afternoon and received the whacks from Swede's heavy stick and tried hard to become proficient at faking, and at pulling out, and at remembering which way to block on each of the many new plays Starr was giving them in preparation for Masters U.

The feeling about Masters had grown slowly. Masters had beaten Vale by a single point and was generally recognized as one of the best Ivy League teams. Tom Caruth, the scatback, was a leading ground gainer in the East; and the line, headed by Spiotta, Jumper Toole and Sandy McNevin, was tough and fast. Kris File, the end and pass catcher, was also a fine defensive player. Yet the spirit on the squad was high at Brooke—they felt they had one upset in their bones.

Georgie knew all about this. Georgie was not really stupid; he had better scholastic grades than anyone on the team. There was, he thought, a mental block in his make-up which balled him up on certain signals. He strove earnestly to dig this out, to find what made him uncertain on the field. But so far he had failed.

In the Hilton game he did all right during the first half. Swede was on the bench, scowling, leaning his lantern jaw on the handle of his cane, watching no one but Georgie. Brooke started fast against the Hiltons, who were no bigger than Brooke. Slobony went thirty yards, then Matt Crane tossed one to Lon Dow on the Hilton ten.

They came out and tried the tackle, with Hatchet Duval, Brooke fullback, carrying the ball on an in-and-out sweep. Georgie's assignment was to fake outside, then swing back and hurl the Hilton guard inside. The ball went back, Georgie checked for timing, holding the guard, then shoved him. He got his head and shoulder against the Hilton man and pushed.

The Hilton man fought, hacking, but Georgie never lost contact. Hatchet faked into the hole and went around end. He scored.

The Hilton man was pretty sore. He slugged Georgie behind the ear. Georgie just pinned him down, put an elbow into him and used it as leverage to get back on his feet. The man lay still a moment, and after that Georgie did not have any trouble with him. The end and tackle gave him

some trouble and the wingback worked on him, but Georgie did all right.

IN THE second half Hilton took a new lease on life. They kept hammering at Georgie, of course, because he was a replacement for Swede and therefore a weak spot in the Brooke line.

They had two men on him every play. Georgie fought them, grinning a little, staving off their rushes with his big hands. He kept trying to break up the blocking and got his head in there a few times. But the Hiltons were hot, and behind Georgie the backing-up of the reserves Starr was using was not so good.

Hilton sent a huge fullback at the tackle. Georgie was cleanly stopped by two men. The fullback went twenty yards and scored.

Then Brooke had to go to work. Georgie was aware of slight panic. Brooke had been coasting on its one touchdown, saving everything for Masters U. next week. Now they had to fight. Georgie forgot one signal in the excitement.

Slobony was thrown for a loss. There was a time out. Swede was on the field carrying the water bucket, limping, his face black. He got hold of Georgie by the jersey. He hissed, "You miss one like that again and I'll kill you. Understand? I'll beat you to death."

Georgie said, "Take it easy, Swede. Everybody misses one. I'm sorry."

"Don't give me any of that stuff. You're not talking to the coach now. This is a personal matter with me. You pull any more boners and I'm taking it out of your hide!"

The Swede went off, getting a great cheer as he carried the bucket away. Matt Crane was looking at Georgie in peculiar fashion. Hatchet Duval seemed embarrassed.

Georgie said, "I muffed it, guys. Let's try it again."

They lined up. Matt sent Hatchet in behind Georgie. The Hiltons flattened out and Hatchet scored a touchdown on the play.

They scored another one later when Slobony ran thirty yards. Then Starr took Georgie out and put in the kid soph who was third string.

On the bench Swede was glowering. He snapped, "You'll always be a cluck. You were a sissy in high school, and you're a dumb college player. Nobody from up on the hill ever amounted to anything. Now don't argue with me and learn those signals. Dammit, learn them!"

Georgie said nothing, but it was then he began to hate the Swede.

It was the injustice that did it. He had played well against Hilton. He was no All-America, but except for his one lapse of memory he had played well enough. He knew it, and everyone else knew it.

But Swede was not satisfied. The Swede had to make a personal issue of it, to rake up the old mining town animosities. He had to remind Georgie of the heartbreaks of those days when he had been playing with and against the kids from the other side of town.

Furthermore, the Swede had let the other guys in on it. Matt Crane and Hatchet Duval had overheard. They were all aware now that Swede held Georgie in contempt. The Swede was a big hero at Brooke. It made Georgie look very small and weak.

It rankled. Nothing had ever rankled in Georgie like that. He was a very good-natured man. Nobody had ever threatened to chastise him, as though he were a puling kid. Nobody had ever really humiliated Georgie, because Georgie could always laugh off things that might upset other boys. Georgie was kind of slow afoot, he was very big and easy-going and maybe he did not take things seriously, but anyway nobody had ever humilated him before.

A slow anger and a slow hatred devel-

oped. The week previous to the Masters U. game contributed to the fires. Swede was in uniform, disregarding the doctor's orders, limping behind Georgie. He went through every formation, walking behind Georgie, slapping him into position with his hard hand when Georgie made a misstep. His voice became hoarse and throaty, growling at Georgie.

The Swede was tough, all right. The pros would get something when they got him. He knew no fear, brooked no weakness. The way he treated Georgie that week was murder.

Van Starr said nothing. He had troubles of his own. He left the tackle-coaching job to Swede. If he kept his eye on it from afar, no one was aware of it. Van Starr was doing his best to get a win against Masters U.

After Tuesday scrimmage Georgie never spoke to the Swede again. He listened, he took the abuse, he worked hard, but he never spoke. He would nod or shake is head in answer to a direct question and he did not seem to sulk. His face seemed to thin out a little that week and he grew older, perhaps—and he hated the Swede.

The night before they left for Masterstown there was a big students' rally on the ancient campus of Brooke. The old elms were lit to their majestic tops by the roaring bonfire. From the bandstand, memento of the days of brass bands, each player made a short speech as the massed undergraduates cheered and sang and danced.

By chance the players all spoke ahead of Georgie and the Swede, leaving them on the platform, the Swede, as captain to talk last. They stood side by side and it was noticeable that Georgie was taller than Swede.

Georgie said quietly, "I'll be in there. I'm no star, but I'll be in there with the team." He waved his big hand, grinning, and the crowd screamed.

But they gave Swede the ovation of the night. He stood there, the hard-boiled man with the high cheekbones and twisted nose and tough mouth and they cheered him. Georgie stared, hating the Swede.

Then he saw that Swede couldn't talk. He opened his mouth, but no words came. Finally he lifted both hands above his head, clasped them and gave the crowd the prize fighter's salute. Then he got down. He passed so close to Georgie that Georgie could see his eyes and the deep-etched lines beside his mouth.

Georgie went to his room and packed. He was amazed and slightly shocked and very thoughtful. He was almost ready when his door opened and Van Starr came in.

The coach said, "How do you feel, Georgie?"

Georgie knew what the coach meant. He said, "I'm all right."

"Swede didn't break you?"

Georgie said, "Nobody can break you if you won't let them."

"You're thinking about taking a crack at him?"

"You don't hit a cripple," said Georgie.

Starr was silent for a moment. Then he said, "What about those signals? Are you on to them now?"

"Thanks," said Georgie. "I tried your little association-of-ideas trick and laid off some math I was taking and I think I've got it licked."

"You're thorough," mused Starr. "You try hard." He paused, then said quickly, "Swede wants to start the game. I'm against it. The doctor says he shouldn't. What do you think?"

"He should be saved for a spot, if he can play at all. He shouldn't have to run on a kick-off," said Georgie promptly.

Starr nodded. "You've got a lot of sense, Georgie. I wish—"

"You wish I was a better tackle?" Georgie's grin was clear. "So do I. But we do what we can."

He picked up his bag and walked with the coach down to the bus. It was a cold night, but Georgie wasn't chilly. He felt warm. Starr had picked up his spirits and set them high. He did not even care when the Swede growled at him and called him "Feet."

MASTERS had a fine large stadium, but it was far from full of fans for the Brooke College game. Masters was supposed to win by three or four touchdowns. Georgie went onto the field and took his position on the twenty-five yard line close to the sideline, as Brooke had won the toss and elected to receive. He was not at all nervous. The Masters men looked fit and competent, but so had the Vale men and the men of the other big colleges. Brooke footballers were accustomed to playing these teams.

Spiotta kicked off. The ball soared deep to the five and Slobony was on it like a jackrabbit and running up the funnel. Georgie came inside and drove a big Masters man to the ground and held him there, then got up and ran. But they nailed Slobony on the twenty, Kris File and Jumper Toole, end and tackle.

Matt Crane was steady. He called for Hatchet to plunge, to test the Masters line. Georgie kept low, pivoted to block outside.

Toole and File hit him. They came in like wolves. He had never been hit so hard. They were clean, but they were tough. Their clean hands hurt as much as dirty hands. . . .

Georgie fought them. Duval, running low, slid inside for a five yard gain. File and Toole looked very surprised.

Georgie smiled. He bent in the huddle, getting the sign. He wheeled and marched into line, with Brienza over and strengthening the left. Slobony ran, faking, then trying it on his weak side, as the Masters team would not expect him to run left. He cut back inside Georgie. There were two men on the tackle as always, but Georgie was bulling them and Brienza cooperated blithely and Slobony got past the line of scrimmage.

Georgie, who had never left his feet, saw Tom Caruth speeding over. He took off and slapped Tom about ten yards with a cross block. Slobony hit the sideline with Red Geller and Matt running interference and got to the thirty yard line, then to the thirty-five.

Matt gave it to them without excitement. He took it himself inside the tackle and Georgie worked his men out long enough for Matt to slip into the hole and get a hard five.

Matt was crouching, his eyes gleaming, his voice clear. He called the sign and Georgie knew it was gambling, but knelt, careful not to tip off, watching File out of the corner of his eye. Matt took the pass and ran right. Georgie blocked, kept his feet and retreated a step. File tried to hand-fight past, but Georgie harassed him. Down the field Lon Dow was racing.

Matt threw the ball like a catcher slinging to second. It was a heavy one, a long one. Georgie took off to get down there if he could. He saw Lon jump. He saw Lon's hands on the ball. He took out a Masters man who might be a pursuer.

Lon ran over the goal line with the ball. Brooke had scored first in the Masters game!

Georgie lined up to hold the line. Masters men came in a drove, fighting like maniacs. One knocked him aside into the second, who smothered him. A fleet man knifed through the hole.

Matt was a little slow in placing the ball. Slobony hurried the kick. The ball went wide. Brooke only had six points. The Masters men jumped up and down, pounding each other, wild to get the ball and start the fireworks.

Bots Kramer, right tackle, kicked off for Brooke. Caruth took the ball and began running back. Georgie was down

there and a man hit him, but Georgie shugged him off and bottled Caruth on the sideline where Brienza helped him make the tackle. Masters put the ball in play from their own twenty, raving mad at this upstart crew of muggs from Jersey, Yankee Newhall bleating signals like a barker.

They came straight at Georgie. Georgie got very low and Lon came in and they lifted. They spilled Caruth on the scrimmage line.

Again they slanted for the tackle. Lon checked this time, and Georgie took the beating; then Lon went straight in, caught Buster Dunn trying to sneak outside, and spilled him for a loss.

Newhall gave it to Muggsy Magee, a fine fullback, on a straight smash between tackle and guard. Kit Carson, a strong, little guy, was beside Georgie on this one and Kit held. Piney Tracy, Brooke center, backed up the play and Muggsy got two yards for his pains.

Newhall punted viciously downfield. Slobony was nailed chasing the ball. Brooke took over and in three plays got nowhere and punted in return. The teams battled it out this way. The quarter ended, and the second began.

Georgie was bleeding a little from the mouth. There had been no relief for him. Masters had substituted many times, and he scarcely knew when it would be File and Toole or two strange, strong men. It was rough work.

Late in the second quarter Masters really got going with a spread play. It opened the line and Georgie was uncertain on it. They would open it up, check-block on the Brooke linesmen, then on a reverse Tom Caruth would come steaming through the hole. It was a well-timed play, very spectacular and very successful.

Georgie simply could not fathom the play, he realized. He kept trying, but they got him off-balance as they moved over midfield and into Brooke territory. Behind him Matt Crane was doing all the work. The ball went down to the fifteen yard line.

Then Georgie suddenly shifted his defensive position. Caruth came through, two men were on Georgie. He concentrated on File, a rangey end. He lifted File as a bull tosses a matador and slung him. File went into the path of Caruth.

There was a crash. Matt had come up fast. No gain resulted for Masters.

They worked it to the other side. Again they failed.

Back they came again at Georgie. On the Brooke bench was a commotion. Swede Hansen was trying to get into the game, and Van Starr was forcibly restraining him.

Caruth tried to break outside. Georgie was pinned, but he used File as a projectile again. The end tumbled, and Caruth went down.

On fourth down Masters lined up, with seconds to play, in kick formation. Newhall knelt to touch down the ball for a placement. Magee swung his leg.

Georgie flung past Dunn, and leaped into the air. Lon was right behind him.

Newhall snatched back the ball. He shoveled an underhand pass out past Georgie and Lon. Dunn was waiting. Dunn took the ball and ran for the corner of the goal line and sideline.

Matt Crane extended himself about nine feet. One hand grabbed, and his fingers wrapped around the heel of Dunn. Hatchet came diving, and Dunn went down between them. He was one foot short of the goal. The gun cracked and the half was over.

SWEDE was raving. He said, "You slashed in there like a dope and if it hadn't been for Matt he'd have scored."

For the first time in a week Georgie spoke to Swede. "You must be insane. A tackle never checks on a kick play like that." He stared at Swede. The captain's face was twisted with emotion.

Swede said, "You're so damn clumsy I know you'll blow one. Dammit, if Van would let me in there—"

Georgie said, "You're nuts. Understand, Swede?"

"I'll break every bone in your body if you blow one." Swede was raving. He wheeled and limped among them, exhorting them, praising them. He had good words for everyone but Georgie. They were all heroes except the boy from his home town.

Van Starr said quietly in Georgie's ear. "Keep going. You're playing half the line. Keep going, and try to ignore Swede."

Georgie said, "I'm all right." He was not all right, though. He had never known such a tired feeling between halves. Being worked over by Toole and File and the various subs of the Masters squad was tough business.

He thought about the Swede. The tough captain was emotionally deranged, all right. He was giving them the old rah-rah pep talk right now. He was pleading with them and there were tears in his eyes. Georgie kept staring at him. He scarcely recognized the hard-boiled man from the mines. He had thought that he knew Swede, but now he was baffled. Swede came back to him and cursed him, threatened him, but Georgie went back into his shell, refusing to answer.

"I'll have your hide," Swede was saying. "You got to hold 'em."

Georgie went out with the team. Masters was receiving and they seemed very businesslike now, as though they had got together in the dressing room and figured a way to sweep Brooke off the field. Georgie rubbed his large hands together and lined up inside Lon Dow. The kick went down, Caruth started running. Then Caruth gave a hand-off to Newhall, reversing the field. Only Georgie, who had not followed too closely, saw it coming. He yelled and doubled over. Magee threw a block at him. He staved off Magee. Newhall came to the thirty and Georgie, checking, ran him out of bounds.

They were near the Brooke bench and he could hear Swede raving. He lined up. They came. They started right for Georgie.

They had figured he was playing without relief and that he could be no more than human. So they came at him, very clean and sharp and with that cut-and-dried way of taking it for granted that he would wilt.

Georgie spread his thick legs. He bent his shoulders and worked. He used his hands. He had never used his hands like this before. He made them count. He rushed the plays. Behind him Matt kept coming in and then Tracy shifted over a little and came in. The Masters backs piled into the holes and they all came together.

Masters kept sending in subs. As soon as the stars had carried a few times the subs came. Then the stars came back. They were on the Brooke twenty.

Georgie took a reef in an imaginary belt and fought. He was getting numb now. But he kept fighting, remembering the Swede. He kept fighting until Masters lost the ball on downs.

Then File and Toole were back, working him over. Matt tried to give him relief with plays run to the left, but Slobony's weakness to that side only caused them to kick from the thirty.

Again Georgie was fighting. He was getting up slowly now and they renewed their fury, trying his position. Lon Dow had to rest, little Carson went out. Georgie had to fight harder then, with reserves in the line-up. He smashed men to earth, he set up tackles for Matt and Tracy. Once he charged through and got Newhall before he could get loose a pass and Masters lost fifteen yards on that one.

The fourth quarter arrived. Georgie was pretty dazed, and now he didn't think about Swede, or anything else much—he

just fought. He fought all the way backwards down the field. Masters was gaining on each exchange of the ball.

On the five yard line Masters threw a big one at him. Newhall held the ball, let two men get ahead, then gave it to Magee. They all hit into the tackle slot.

Georgie met them. His head was down and he was grabbing, and Lon was back in and fighting them inside. But the strength went inside and Magee was bull-strong, charging. They went right over Georgie and trampled him underfoot, and their cleats struck his head not once but several times.

Magee carried Matt over the goal line. The big team had finally scored a touchdown. The upset of the season was not taking place that afternoon, and thousands of figety Masters rooters sighed in relief. The little team had finally cracked.

GEORGIE did not get up. He did not even remember going off the field. He vaguely heard the Swede hollering, but he woke up on the ground in front of the bench uncomfortably hot under blankets. He threw them off and saw that Masters had converted and the score was 7-6.

Van Starr was kneeling beside him. Swede was limping on the field. Brooke had the ball on their twenty-five. It was first and ten. The game was almost over. Georgie whispered, "I gave out."

Starr said grimly, "You played an All-American game and they slipped you the works. You were too good, Georgie. They took you because they had to, or you'd have wrecked them."

Georgie said, "The Swede'll get killed. He'll never be a pro now." It was funny. He no longer hated the Swede. He saw the big man limp into position. They threw the in-and-out at Masters, and Swede tried to pull out and block. His leg doubled and Slobony was lucky to get three.

Starr said sadly, "I know. I'm putting the kid in for him soon. The game's about over—I had to let him play."

Matt had them in the short punt. On his own twenty-eight, the calm, indomitable quarterback threw a daring pass to Lon. It was good for a first down. The Swede was waving his arms, shouting.

Georgie threw off the blankets. Slobony was going to try the in-and-out sweep again. Swede lined up, half erect.

Matt gave the sign. Georgie got to his feet and found he could move.

Swede threw a tremedous block. Slobony was stopped dead.

Georgie reached for his headgear. He said, "Well, Swede blocked the wrong way. Looks like I better go in."

Van Starr said, "No—you've had enough."

But Georgie was on the field. He would never forget the stricken face of the Swede. He grinned at the captain. He said, "There's all kinds of reasons for blowing one. You just got excited, that's all, pal." He shoved Swede off the field.

They all stood and cheered. Masters fans, and Brooke rooters.

It was second and ten on the forty.

They tried the fast reverse from close up. Georgie slew the Masters guard. Inside came Slobony, rattling along like an express train. He got eleven yards.

Georgie stood up and surveyed the Masters men. He beamed on them and made a little gesture. He laughed and said, "Come on and stop us."

Magee took it, and got ten yards.

Georgie said, "In three plays. We've got you guys sick." Three Masters reserves entered the line. Georgie challenged them, too.

Matt had the backfield bunched close. He took the ball. He wheeled in a magnificent fake. Slobony ran one way, Magee the other. Matt retreated behind Magee.

Georgie was in the flat. He saw Lon and carefully went away from the end. Then he swiveled back. The ball came from Matt's dependable wing, spiraling.

Caruth was the man. He was fast and shifty. Georgie was large and slow. Lon jumped and grabbed the pass.

Georgie ran. He had never run like that before. He ran and he lined up Lon and Caruth and saw where they must meet. He felt his heart pounding—

It was a matter of judgment and angles. Georgie's memory may have been faulty in the past but his mathematics was sound, he told himself. He ran to the point he selected.

Caruth tried to get around him. Caruth tried to outfox him. Georgie stayed on the mathematical certainty. Lon Dow, pacing himself, turned inside. Caruth wheeled.

Georgie hit Caruth. When he hit the Masters star he also managed to entangle him. They went down in a floundering mass and rolled like a giant octopus on the field.

Lon scored.

Georgie sat up and waited for the dizziness to go from his skull. Newhall came over to pick up Caruth and Georgie looked, blinking, at them both.

Caruth said, "Is Starr crazy—or smart?"

Newhall said, "Did he keep you in reserve just for us?"

Caruth said, "Man, you're the most terrific tackle I ever saw!"

Georgie got up. He helped Newhall pick up Caruth. He said, "Gents, I just started to play football today!" He bowed to them and went over and lined up. Slobony missed the conversion, but nobody cared. Complete delirium reigned.

On the bus going home, that night, Starr said, "You snapped Georgie out of it, made him mad. You helped win the game, Swede."

"That's right," said Georgie. "We got another game—maybe we'll get one of the small bowl bids after today. You'll play again."

Starr said, "You gave your best."

"Sure," said Georgie. "You had your heart in it, Swede."

The hard planes of the face of the captain did not alter. His lips barely moved. "You guys can't kid me. I fell apart. But it taught me. . . . Georgie, what can I say?"

Georgie said comfortably, "Just shut up and lemme sleep."

Battles with the umpires are numerous. . . .

BASEBALL'S CLASSIC FEUDS

Some furious behind-the-scenes battles in baseball—told from an inside slant!

BASEBALL being a highly competitive game, with dramatic episodes following one another in rapid fire order from April until October, it would seem that the masterminds operating and directing it would let events on the ball field suffice to provide all the entertainment required for fan consumption.

But such doesn't happen to be the case. Always on hand is a deal of extracurricular performances to stir up additional ballyhoo and keep the fans in a dither, be it in or out of season. And by far not the least in importance in this singular category are the endless feuds that, as far back as memory can go, keep simmering, boiling, and periodically coming to a head.

Always, it seems, have there been feuds. As the years roll on the cast of characters involved may change, but the feuds of baseball's Hatfields and McCoys remain as fixed as the tides.

As a consequence, when on the eve of the major league ball clubs' departing for their Southern training camps a year ago this past spring Branch Rickey and Larry MacPhail cut loose with a few broadsides against each other, it caused only a ripple of excitement among veteran observers. To them feuds have become more or less old stuff. For in our national pastime, it appears, there must ever be somebody afightin' and afeudin'.

In fact, as one harks back to such heroic figures as John McGraw and Ty Cobb and the explosions they touched off a quarter of a century ago, the more recent outbursts of the Rickeys, MacPhails and Durochers pale more or less into insignificance.

McGraw, a great player in the days of the legendary Orioles and subsequently the brilliant manager of the Giants for thirty years, was a dynamic, forceful figure who seemed forever to move in a tempest and turmoil. Some of his feuds became outstanding in baseball's classic hates.

One of his first violent clashes in the National league came when he locked horns with Barney Dreyfuss who, as head of the Pittsburgh Pirates, was one of the game's rugged pioneer club owners. As in the case of most feuds, it started inconspicuously enough.

For some time—this was early in McGraw's career with the Giants shortly after the turn of the century—there had been bad feeling between the Pirates and the New York club which under the dashing leadership of the Little Napoleon

By LES ETTER

already had challenged the earlier supremacy of the Corsairs.

Then, one day at the Polo grounds, matters suddenly came to a surprising head. McGraw, coaching on the third base lines, saw Dreyfuss occupying a box alongside the Pirate dugout. A master at invectives, he turned on a torrent of abuse in the general direction of the Pittsburgh owner.

"Hey Barney," he kept roaring, "how much do you pay these umpires? Why don't you get behind the plate and umpire yourself? You could do even better than these lunkheads. And how about paying up some of those markers you owe the bookmakers?"

Boiling in a rage, Dreyfuss forthwith protested to the National League president, Harry C. Pulliam. Dreyfuss, charging that his dignity as a club owner had been sorely wounded by the disrespectful taunts, demanded Pulliam do something about it. The latter did. He fined McGraw and suspended him for fifteen days.

Then all hell popped loose as for more than a fortnight certain league directors rushed to McGraw's rescue while New York newspapers carried petitions from thousands of fans demanding that the Giant manager be reinstated.

In time the storm blew over, but it left in Dreyfuss a dying hatred for McGraw, fresh salt being added to the wounds every time the Pittsburgh magnate appeared in a ball park only to be greeted by the taunting cries of "Hey, Barney."

From this storm McGraw promptly moved into another when, in the heat of an argument with an umpire, he punched the arbiter in the face. For this he again was fined and suspended by the then league president, John K. Tener, a former governor of Pennsylvania. This row, however, scarcely redounded to the Little Napoleon's credit.

In a scathing statement to a New York sports writer, McGraw charged that the National League was run by the Philadelphia club, that the Phillies had put Tener in power and that as a result no one else could expect to receive justice either from Tener or his umpires.

The blast, coming on the heels of the punching episode, immediately touched off another bombshell, and for once in his turbulent career McGraw showed fear that this time perhaps he had gone a trifle too far. Hauled on the carpet by Tener, McGraw coldly repudiated the statement and while this cleared him with the league it plunged him into a fresh series of feuds with several New York writers who rallied to the defense of their colleague, the late Sid Mercer. In fact Mercer, who long enjoyed a reputation as an accurate reporter of unimpeachable character, refused for years to talk to McGraw, and for a time, in deep disgust, even quit writing baseball to report boxing.

While all this was going on in the National League, the American League was having its own firebrand in Ty Cobb, the glamorous Georgia Peach. Ty, who gave and asked no quarter, seemed scarcely to pass a day without getting into a fresh row. Even so quiet and inoffensive a player as Eddie Collins once told us he had a feud on with Cobb that lasted more than ten years.

"The way he used to tear into us second basemen," said Collins, "was enough to make my blood boil. A throw would beat him down to second base by fifteen feet, but that never prevented him from diving into you, spikes high, and if you didn't duck it was a cut arm or leg. For more than ten years I swore that on every double play ball I handled with Cobb coming into second I would aim to hit him squarely in the head with it.

"But I never hit him once. That devil was so quick that even while sailing in mid-air he'd keep his eye on the ball and just duck his head out of the way in time.

After a while, when I saw I was doing nothing but making trouble for my first baseman, who was trying to catch the throws that missed Cobb, I gave it up."

BUCKY HARRIS, present day manager of the Yankees and a great second baseman in his playing days, likewise revealed that for years he strove to "get even" with Cobb, but without much success.

"One day, though," recounted Bucky, "I did let him have it as he came tearing into me on a steal. With the ball in my bare hand I ducked his spikes and as my fist slipped up his shirt it never stopped until I caught him flush on the chin. It made his teeth rattle and to add insult to injury I helped him to his feet saying, 'Gee, Ty, I'm awful sorry. Never made such a clumsy tag before.'

"He knew I was lying but he was so damn mad he couldn't say a word."

That McGraw and Cobb should eventually meet was almost inevitable and it happened on a spring training tour when the Giants and Tigers had arranged an extensive exhibition barnstorming trip up through Texas and the south. The collision came in the very first game in Dallas.

Like McGraw, the Giants were a rough and ready crew in those days, including such hardy citizens as Arthur Fletcher, Buck Herzog, Benny Kauff and Heinie Zimmerman. They lost no time putting the needle to the great Ty, with McGraw, of course, setting a bristling pace. Fletcher as shortstop and Herzog as second baseman made a "keystone combination" which at that time ranked among the best. They were more than ready to meet the challenge from the "scourge of the American League."

The blow-off came on Cobb's first time at bat when Pitcher Jeff Tesreau hit him with a pitched ball on the shoulder. With eyes blazing, Cobb jogged to first base and then called loudly down to second:

"Hey, you mugs, get ready, I'm coming down on the next pitch."

"Come ahead," replied Fletcher, "we'll be here waiting for you, and don't forget you are not sliding against American Leaguers today."

True to his word Cobb came down, and though the throw to Herzog beat him by yards, Ty tore with gleaming spikes into the Giant second sacker. He all but cut Buck's uniform to ribbons and as the two crashed to the ground Fletcher hurled himself into the melee. After the other players had separated the belligerents the umpires promptly banished Cobb and Herzog from the game. But that by no means closed the issue.

"If you have any guts at all," declared Herzog, himself a fiery fellow though smaller than Cobb, "I'll meet you in your hotel room at ten o'clock tonight. Just you and I. Nobody else. And we'll settle this man to man."

"O. K.," replied Cobb, "I'll be there."

Many versions have been given of that memorable fight. Perhaps as authentic as any was one we got from Herzog himself.

"After the game," Buck recalled, "some of my teammates, notably Kauff and Zimmerman, began to feel apprehensive about me. As Cobb was bigger and I never did have much skill as a boxer they feared I was letting myself in for a bad beating. I still have to laugh when I recall Kauff, who could handle his fists pretty well, hastily trying to show me how to employ a left jab. To add to my difficulties I had a broken finger on my left hand which stuck out straight and made it impossible to present a completely closed fist.

"But Kauff insisted that would be O.K. 'Just stick it in his eyes,' he said.

"Well, at ten I knocked on Cobb's door and was admitted while Kauff and Zimmerman, my seconds, remained locked

out in the hall. But instead of finding only Ty in the room I found about seven or eight Detroit players and newspapermen present. I reminded Cobb that our understanding was that we were to fight this out alone. But he bluntly told me that those present were his friends, that they were going to stay and if I didn't like it I could get the hell out. I said I'd stay.

"There have been many descriptions of that battle but one inaccuracy always got my goat. That was the report that Cobb knocked my teeth out. Cobb did no such thing for the simple reason that before it started I had the good foresight to take my teeth out myself and place them on a bureau.

"Actually there wasn't much of a fight. Much smaller than Ty, I made a few passes at him. Then he rushed at me, caught me on the chin with a blow that knocked me sprawling over a bed and that was that. However, that only ended our individual bout. The real fight of the night just started.

"As the door opened to let me out, in rushed Kauff and Zimmerman with one or two others and the next moment the air was full of flying fists and furniture. Phew, what a battle royal that was! The hotel help came hustling up while the manager was almost frantic as he tried to save something from the wreckage. When the battle finally broke up the place was a mess."

Now, up to this moment, McGraw had taken no hand. But he later heard about it and the next morning he got into it with both feet as he encountered Cobb in the hotel lobby. Working himself into a white lather, the Little Napoleon gave the Georgia Peach a terrific dressing down, calling him everything he could think of, and in such moments McGraw could think of plenty.

"You yellow hound," he roared, "you, the great Cobb, picking on the smallest man on my club. Why don't you pick on somebody your size? There are a dozen your size on my club who'd give anything to have you take a swing at them. Why not swing at me? Go ahead. I dare you to throw one punch at me."

Inasmuch as there was a difference of about fifteen years in their ages, Cobb, shaking with anger, took the only course open to him. Elbowing his way through the crowd he fled the scene, with McGraw's invectives still ringing in his burning ears.

But Cobb wasn't finished yet. Going straight to the Tiger manager, Hughey Jennings, Cobb announced he was through with the trip.

"You can't do this," said Jennings, who had been a lifelong pal of McGraw's and a teammate back in the Oriole days. "No matter what McGraw says or does, you are the big star of this exhibition trip and both clubs are going to lose a lot of money if you walk out."

"I don't care how much it costs. I'm not getting paid to take that sort of abuse from anybody and I'm not taking it. So long, Hughey, see you in Detroit."

McGRAW'S battles with umpires were so numerous as to be almost tractless, some of his very best being with Bill Klem, the Old Arbitrator himself. To his dying day McGraw never forgave Klem for a blunder he insisted cost him the pennant in 1928. In the closing days of a ding-dong race, the Giants and Cubs were playing a vital game at the Polo Grounds when Andy Reese, a Giant, caught in a runup between third and home, was seemingly blocked by Gabby Hartnett, strapping Cub catcher, until Andy was tagged out.

McGraw contended bitterly that Hartnett had been guilty of flagrant interference and that Reese therefore should be permitted to score an all-important run. But Klem refused to allow the claim and the Giants lost the game and the pennant.

Hanging in the Giant offices to this day is a picture which shows Gabby, with arms outstretched, seemingly doing something more than giving the baserunner the right of way.

Dick Bartell, for years known as Rowdy Richard, and Bill Jurges used to battle almost at the very sight of each other. Both ranked among the game's greatest shortstops and each possessed plenty of dash and fire. Almost every time they collided at second base they came up with fists flying.

One of their bouts took a most amazing turn. It happened at the Polo Grounds on a Sunday afternoon with Bartell then with the Giants and Jurges with the Cubs. As the one slid into the other both were already swinging before they had regained their feet. At the same moment the alert Beans Reardon, the umpire, also dove into the action.

Beans not only stopped the fight but the only blow of account actually struck. It was a beaut of a wallop that caught the arbiter squarely between the eyes. Now thoroughly mad himself, Reardon was for throwing both offenders out of the game on the spot when the rival managers, Bill Terry and Hartnett, rushed out on the field.

"Please don't put our shortstops out," they implored. "This is a mighty important game to us and neither one of us has a fit sub for shortstop."

Cooling off a bit, Reardon, whose two eyes were now discoloring fast, turned to his fellow umpire, Charlie Moran.

"What do you say, Charlie, will I let them stay?"

"Don't put it up to me," replied Moran, "You're the one that got smacked."

"Well, all right," said Reardon, "if they shake hands and apologize to me I'll let them remain in the game."

Jurges and Bartell then shook hands at second base to the cheers of 50,000 onlookers, and the game proceeded.

But the queerest part of it all was that years later, when Jurges and Bartell virtually finished out their active careers as teammates with the Giants, the two old gladiators became warm friends.

Perhaps, some day, even Branch Rickey and Larry MacPhail will wind up on the same club. But whatever happens, you can be sure that in baseball there'll always be somebody afightin' and afeudin'.

FIVE ALARM FIVE

By W. H. TEMPLE

A five-star false alarm—they'd won so long without trying that it took a hoop hungry never-guy to teach them how to fight without winning!

They came downcourt in that smooth, hard-driving precision attack. . . .

IN THE locker room between halves Coach Finney blew his top. He was a short, wide guy and he looked incongruous in the midst of a basketball squad that averaged six feet two inches per man. His face beet-red, stalking up and down between the benches, Finney let them have it. This was the year, he reminded them, that they were going to get a crack at the Invitation tourney in New York. They had three games left, they could lose one, maybe two, and still get a bid. But they were not supposed to lose tonight.

"Eight points behind," Finney shouted. "What's the matter with you guys?"

Bud Tyler uncoiled his six feet six and yawned. "Coach," he said solicitously, "take it easy. Sit down. Relax."

"Relax," Finney shouted. "What the blue blazes—"

"We will murder these chumps," Stretch Coffey said lazily. "Have we let you down yet?" He turned over on his stomach and addressed the center, Bud Tyler. "Did you see that blonde in the red dress in the third row?"

"I give up," Finney moaned.

The five men of the varsity stretched out on the floor, undisturbed and magnificently at ease. Together in a group at the other end of the room sat the subs. They were tense and nervous.

The chunky, black-haired six-footer, Tom Brennan, on the end of the sub row, shook his head in disbelief. Here was the varsity on the verge of an upset by a team that had no call to beat them, as placid as a herd of Holsteins.

They were, thought Brennan to himself, quite a bunch of guys. And they would be the same way in Madison Square Garden. A magnificent five-man combine that would take the New York basketball fans by storm. They were the greatest guys in the world. That was the trouble. They kept Tom Brennan glued to that bench. They kept his pants shiny. Every night he went out there and he polished his trunks on the wood. He died a thousand deaths each game, along with Coach Finney, while the varsity loafed. And then they came to life and won in their own sweet time, but Brennan did not get in there.

Bud Tyler stood up slowly. "Leave us go upstairs, gents," he drawled. "Leave us go upstairs and win us a basketball game."

The squad trooped up, the varsity ambled out on the floor and presently play resumed. Brennan sat beside Finey.

"They are driving me insane," said Finney, "but what can you do with guys like that? I try and hate 'em and I can't. I bawl 'em out and they laugh at me. I needle them and they pat me on the shoulder."

The referee spun the ball up between the centers. Bud Tyler unjointed himself and stretched into the stratosphere. The tap went to Stretch Coffey, and the elongated forward had no sooner touched rubber to the hardwood when a bullet pass left his hands. Pinella took the ball at the sideline and Hooks Chasen cut for the hoop straight down the middle.

The pass was high and Chasen went up in the bucket and took the ball. Lazily he arched it forward. It thudded off the rim and dropped through, and the Barnwell varsity had cut their deficit to six points.

"They're rolling," Brennan said. "Here they go."

"They play 'em all close," Finney said. "One of these days I'll die of heart failure. Every game this year we win, but how we win 'em. By three points, by five points if we're lucky. I'll die of heart failure before the season ends. Those goons!"

Tom didn't answer.

Barnwell took their time. They made a foul shot good and were five points in arrears. They flipped the ball around and made another goal finally, and were three points back. The boys had played together for three years.

A shot went outside under the Barnwell basket and Hooks Chasen took the ball out. He flipped it to Tyler, and the center fired a long pass downcourt where Arch Whitney was waiting. He took it on the run, and started on a fast dribble for the corner. A guard came in to meet him, fighting desperately. Whitney swerved and the guard couldn't stop himself. He lunged into Whitney with all the force of a batte ing ram.

They went down with a crash, in a tangle of arms and legs.

"Two shots for us," Finney said on the bench. "Whitney never misses. That'll leave us a point behind. I guess the boys intend to wrap this one up quick. Maybe I can relax."

And maybe, Tom Brennan thought to himself, I can get in this game and play a little basketball. There would not be any great thrill in it. It was not exciting only to get in a game after it was in the bag. But it would be a lot better than staying parked on the bench.

Finney suddenly swore. Out on the floor, Arch Whitney was sitting up, rocking back and forth and pointing to his left ankle. From the bench, Brennan could see the ugly angle the foot was pointing. With the trainer, Finney hurried over to the stricken player.

He was back a moment later. Whitney came with them, leaning on the trainer and hobbling on one foot, and the packed stands were silent.

Whitney hobbled out the side door on the trainer's arm and Finney came back to the bench. "They have fun all year," he said. "They don't figure things like this can happen. I tell 'em and they laugh at me. So now it happens, Whitney is finished for the year. All right, Brennan, take over."

TOM stood up and pulled off his sweat clothes. Finney said savagely, "I don't need to draw you a diagram. This game we have to win. We have a home and home series with State after tonight. If we win tonight, we can break even with State and be a cinch for the Invitation But we can't lose this thing."

Brennan was suddenly not so sure he wanted to leave the bench. He went out on the floor and there was a difference. The old happy-go-lucky attitude was suddenly a thing of the past. The boys looked drawn and worried. This was the kind of thing they had never pictured, an injury to a key man, the break-up of the winning combination.

"Let's get 'em," Brennan growled.

He took the ball from the referee and stepped to the foul line to take the shots for Whitney. The ball went up and in, and they were two points behind. The gallery gave him a cheer. He bounced the ball on the floor. This second shot was important. Make this thing, and they were a point off and a basket would put them out in front.

He arched the ball up and he knew it was too hard. It came down off the backboard and a Tech player grabbed it. Instantly another Tech man set off at a run for the Barnwell basket.

A long looping pass went down the floor and the Tech man was all alone. He racked the shot in, and the Tech team had a four-point lead.

Brennan charged into the play. Barnwell worked down the floor, and then Bud Tyler's pass was deflected into the arms of a Tech man.

They came down in formation and Brennan got tangled up, trying to steal the ball as a man was set to shoot.

"Foul on this man. Two shots." The ref's hand came down on Brennan's shoulders.

"In the soup," Bud Tyler said.

They lined up at the foul circle and the Tech man made both shots good.

That was it right there. The flawless team play of the Barnwell varsity was a thing of the past after that. Stretch Coffey and Bud Tyler went in for long shots. They made a few good but they had lost control of the ball. And a few minutes later the gun went off to end the game, and a stunned crowd sat there unbelievingly in the stands.

Barnwell was beaten by the lowly Tech team. An upset to end all upsets.

The varsity filed downstairs into the locker room. For once coach Finney had

nothing to say, he stood there speechlessly looking at them. There was no horseplay, no towel flipping, no ducking in the gym pool this night. The varsity looked like a different group of players.

"No Invitation," Bud Tyler said. "No trip to New York, boys. Not for us. And this is our last year. We never get there."

The words fell in a dead silence, broken finally by a grim-jawed Tom Brennan.

"What do you mean we won't get there?" he said. "We'll still make it. Show a little fight."

His face got red immediately. Stretch Coffey said mildly enough, "If I were you, bub, I'd button that lip. You got no call to talk."

They were right about that, Brennan figured. They probably weren't going to New York and because of one reason, because he was in the line-up.

The players dressed and left the gym like mourners at a funeral. In the *Campus Daily* the next morning the bad news was a screaming headline.

> Whitney's substitute, inexperienced and unknown Tom Brennan, no doubt gave his best, but he was a far cry from the gifted Whitney. The winning combination has been broken up for the year, and Barnwell seems doomed to miss the bid to the Invitation Tournament in New York.

In his room Tom Brennan read the news, and squirmed as he read it. He fired the paper across the room in a rage. "Do they have to give up before we're licked?" he muttered.

It was no fun to walk around the campus and be pointed out as the lug who was going to ruin the team's chances. Brennan wondered if the news had traveled back to his home town. They had a different opinion of him back there. Back home he had been a high school star, he had been the local pride, a high-scoring guard, and a member of the all-state team two years running. He had played a different brand of ball back there, the team had been built around him. He had gone in for a lot of flashy tactics, fancy dribbling and the like. It wasn't the best basketball in the world, and at Barnwell he had submerged that style of play to try and fit into Coach Finney's theories of ball control.

He went into the locker room that afternoon and he didn't like what he saw—the atmosphere of dejection, the smell of defeat. He dressed and went upstairs and Finney ran them through a workout. It was listless, and finally Brennan blew his top at big Bud Tyler.

"Move off a dime," he shouted. "Get rolling."

Time was in but Tyler ignored it. He came stalking across the floor and put a hamlike hand on Brennan's shoulder.

"Kid," he said, "I always thought you were all right. But let me tell you something. We kidded around a lot, we loafed at times, we acted like we didn't give a damn. But every manjack of us had his heart set on going to New York. Now probably we aren't going and the reason is you. That can't be helped, you're no Arch Whitney. But I'm warning you, button that flap. Open it again and so help me, I slap you silly."

Brennan's hands clenched into fists, then slowly uncurled. He said nothing. Coach Finney broke the silence.

"All right," he said. "Let's get going."

It was a bad workout. Three nights later, Coach Finney gave his pre-game talk to a dispirited squad that slumped in the locker room. Overhead they could hear the thunder of the crowd, but tonight even that was muted.

"We have a home and home series with State," Finney said. "We're not as good as we were, let's admit it to ourselves. But there's been nothing wrong with Brennan's play. He knows the plays and the system. The kid will handle himself all right. We haven't got Arch Whitney. Arch is going to be sitting on the side-

lines, and he would like to go to New York. He'd like to make the trip even on crutches as a spectator. So let's go up and take this thing. Let's win it for Arch."

"Let's go," Brennan shouted. "Let's take these guys."

No one else had said anything. Brennan's face reddened. "Old rah-rah boy," said Bud Tyler. "We got a cheerleader on the team. You want a megaphone, Brennan?"

"After this season is over," Brennan said, "I will meet you anywhere and anytime, and cut you down to size."

"A pleasure," Tyler said. "He sits on the bench, he's a sub and he's a quiet guy, he seems all right. Now he gets on the varsity not because he's good, and he becomes a pop-off. Just because he's going to get a letter. He'll wear it around in the sticks back home and tell the girls what a big shot he was at Barnwell."

"Cut that kind of talk and get upstairs," Finney said.

THEY trooped up and went out on the floor and they were a contrast with the red and white clad State squad. State had a seventeen and four record for the year, they were a squad small in size but not in numbers. State had three teams of equal ability and they went in for speed and a wildman attack.

The ball went skyward between the centers and Tyler flipped it to Stretch Coffey. The forward dribbled three steps, and passed it back to Tyler.

Brennan shot down the sideline, wheeled for the expected pass, and took it right between the eyes. It came at him like a bullet, fired with all the giant center's strength. It was like an explosion in his face, and everything went black for a moment, nausea clawed at his stomach. The ball went bounding off across the floor and an alert State man recovered it, passed downcourt and State scored.

"The big shot," Tyler said. "Where were you then, loud mouth?"

State scored again a moment later. They racked up four straight goals for an eight-point lead, but the Barnwell team was not that bad. They began to show some of their old spark, they started cutting down that lead but they didn't catch up. At the half they were four points off the pace. In the locker room Coach Finney pretended to be very pleased.

"We gave them an eight-point lead with a bad start," he said. "Now we're only four points off. We will go right through them this second half." He came over and slapped Brennan on the shoulder. "You played a fine defensive game up there, Tom," he said.

It was nice, Brennan thought, but the coach was trying to talk himself and the squad into optimism.

They went out on the floor again and Brennan felt that tension creeping over him like an army of ants. Every pass, every play might mean that New York trip. Coach Finney had stressed caution all along, and Brennan played it that way, making sure he didn't commit a foul, staying in backcourt most of the time to make sure no State man got behind him and in the clear. He had scored four points the first half.

They made a fight of it. They stayed no worse than four points off the pace, and midway through the half they had cut it down to one basket. Then Bud Tyler fouled his man and State crept three points out in front.

It was still close, still anyone's ball game. The boys were giving it the old college try tonight, Brennan thought. If only Whitney had been in there now.

State called a time out, and the Barnwell team sprawled on the hardwood.

"We're close," Brennan said. "We can still wrap this up. Let's get into high gear. Let's—"

"The bleacher seats are spouting

again," said Tyler. "The truth is that they're about four points better than we are. We go back now and they send in a fresh five men."

State came back fast. They might have played it safe at that point but they went on a rampaging offensive. They made three quick baskets and that was it. Then they slowed down and Barnwell came close again. They got within four points, and then State added two more baskets that weren't necessary. The gun went off and Barnwell had taken its second licking in a row.

Down in the locker room Bud Tyler kissed his fingers at the ceiling. "Goodbye New York," he said. He kicked over a locker bench suddenly. In another corner of the room Stretch Coffey was methodically tearing his uniform into shreds. Nobody dared say anything, the atmosphere was too electric.

Finney gave them the next day off. It was Wednesday, they had their final game of the season on Saturday night, against State again and on the State court.

The *Campus Daily* the following morning came out with a last ditch bit of hopeful news.

> The powers in charge of the Invitation Tourney in New York have held out a last hopeful note. They had been anxious to have Barnwell in the tourney, and in a phone call late yesterday from New York to Finney promised us a bid if the team can get by State in Saturday's finale. The other seven teams for the tournament have been chosen, and the committee will wait for Saturday's game before deciding on the eighth club.

It was a straw to grasp at, Brennan thought. That day on the campus he ran into Arch Whitney, hobbling along on his crutches. Brennan stopped and spoke to him.

"Too bad it happened," he said. "If I weren't lousing it up in your place, it would be a breeze."

Arch stared at him. "Thought you were a cocky pop-off," he said.

"I have been popping off," Brennan said. "I could be wrong but it seemed to me they shouldn't have given up so quick. Even if a chump like me did have to step in."

"You weren't bad the other night," Arch said. "You played a sound game. A little cautious, I'd say, a little on the conservative side. But you didn't make mistakes, there was nothing anyone could ride you for. And I saw that pass Tyler let you have between the eyes. I figured he did it because you were a heel." He stared somberly at Brennan. "Listen, kid," he said, "let your feelings be your guide. You want to pop off, go ahead and let it go. I got a notion it isn't so dumb."

It didn't make too much sense, Tom Brennan thought, but he had been bottling himself in ever since he'd been put on the varsity. And it was not an easy thing to do. He wanted to get out there and yell and fight and scrap for every point but they had held him down.

TWO days later they left by bus for the three-hour trip to the State campus. They had lunch and the afternoon to rest and Brennan kept his mouth shut. But he didn't like it, these guys had given up. Even the knowledge that a win tonight would get them to the tourney hadn't roused them.

It was a silent group that congregated in the locker room that night. They filed up the stairs and it was a hostile crowd watching them tonight, an excited home crowd. A knot of die-hard Barnwell fans had come along but they were almost lost in that assemblage. Arch Whitney was visible up in the stands waving a crutch.

The teams went out on the floor. From the start it was a massacre. It was one of those nights when everything worked for State, when nothing worked for Barnwell. State couldn't miss that basket with long shots from the center of the floor, and

angled shots from the side. And for Barnwell, the ball was as slippery as a greased pig.

Tyler called a time out finally. They were twelve points back with the first half well along.

"This is murder," Tyler growled. "A hell of a way to finish up basketball at Barnwell our last year. Getting kicked around like a grammar school team."

Tom Brennan had been seething. He looked up the stands suddenly because if he hadn't he would have said something. And he saw Arch Whitney suddenly lift that one crutch and gesture toward him. Fight, that gesture seemed to say, and Brennan exploded.

"Then get the lead out of your tail," he roared.

They stopped in surprise and stared at him. His voice had carried across the floor. Tom Brennan didn't care.

"The crybaby champs," he barked at them. "One man is hurt so you quit. You give up and turn lily-livered. Well, not me. I go down fighting."

"Why, you—" Tyler began, but time was in again.

They lined up and it was a Barnwell ball outside under the State hoop. The ball came in and criss-crossed the court. They worked it down the floor and then Tom Brennan got the ball at the side.

He faked a pass across to Coffey and started on a dribble. His man came up to guard him and he did something he hadn't done since his flash high school days. He dribbled the ball behind his back, picked it up again and left his man behind him.

Tyler had shaken loose under the basket. He should have passed to him but rage was deep in him. He feinted instead, then went up on his toes and fired the ball. It went high toward the rafters and then kissed through the hoop without touching the rim. Arch Whitney waved that crutch.

State outside. They passed in and racing downcourt, Brennan passed Tyler and slapped his rump sharply.

"Get off that dime," he said, and dove into the play. The ball was deflected off his palm and Tyler caught it. The center fired to Coffey and the forward popped it in off the backboard.

Four plays later, after one more basket for Barnwell, the half ended. The score stood at 30-24, for State.

They filed down into the locker room. Tyler was a grim and sinister-looking giant. He started slowly across toward Brennan and the guard awaited him.

A voice broke the silence. "Lay one finger on the kid," Arch Whitney said, "and so help me I split your skull with this crutch."

Tyler turned and looked at the injured regular, braced on one crutch, the other raised over his head.

"So the kid is a pop-off, is he?" Whitney went on. "Well, maybe so, and maybe what this outfit has needed has been a guy to tell us off. We've all been drunk all year reading our press notices. And this kid has the fight to tell us off. He's the only man here who didn't lie down and curl up his toes when I got hurt."

Tyler said, "He's a smart sub. You know he can't play your brand of ball—"

"The kid is a little clumsy out there," Whitney said evenly, "a little inexperienced. He makes mistakes. But I've watched him and I'll tell you something. Two years from now when Brennan's a senior he'll be so good that no one will remember when the rest of us played for Barnwell. That's how good that kid is going to be. And so help me you're going to play decent ball with him this second half."

Arch Whitney included them all in a glare, then he turned and hobbled across the room. They heard his crutch thumping slowly up the stairs.

There was silence in the locker room.

Big Tyler scratched his head, scowled down at the floor. "New York," he muttered to himself. "Six points behind. Three measly lousy baskets is what we're behind."

He stretched out on the bench suddenly. He lay back like a man taking a Sunday afternoon nap. Coach Finney said, "We've still got a fighting chance." Finney began prowling up and down between the benches, his hands clenched, his face red.

"Get up there and—"

Bud Tyler flapped a hand lazily. "Save it, coach," he said. "You'll live longer. Relax. Go read a book or something. This thing is in the bag. And you, Brennan, you with the big mouth. Use your ears for a minute. When one of us is in the clear this second half, don't shoot that ball. Pass it whenever there's a man open who's closer to the basket than you are. Otherwise I tear you in two right on the court. You got me?"

"Got you," Brennan said, and grinned at him.

Stretch Coffey got up off the bench. "Leave us go upstairs and entertain the cash customers," he said.

"Back to the office, boys," Bud Tyler intoned lazily.

They filed upstairs and went out on that court. State men came rushing out, but the Barnwell five, except for Brennan, ambled like men strolling through the park on a summer day.

But the miracle occurred when the whistle blew. Bud Tyler went right up to the rafters to take the ball, to cradle it on his finger tips and then send it backwards to the left guard. The ball went across to Brennan and he fired to a forward. It went from him to Coffey and Stretch flipped over to Bud Tyler in the bucket. He stood there flatfooted and held the ball high over his head, then arched it up and into the hoop.

State came back with the ball. A long shot from midcourt missed and Barnwell went into action once again. They came downcourt in that smooth, hard-driving precision attack. Tom Brennan admired them as he went through the motions. They made it look easy and he was not up to that smoothness of play.

He thought that maybe some day he would be.

A pass slapped into his hands and he was looking for a man to pass to when Tyler spoke.

"Let it ride."

The ball went up and the hiss of the netting was like beautiful music to his ears.

They were two points away. Stretch Coffey remedied that two plays later. State fought back and on a free throw went one ahead. It was their last time. A Tyler basket put Barnwell out in front and that was it.

When the final gun went off, their lead was eleven points. They went down to the locker and Arch Whitney was there, dancing on one foot, swinging his crutch over his head.

"New York," Tyler said. He was stretched out horizontally again, a bottle of soda in one fist. "The big town," he said. "We will really show those city slickers something, we will really bug out their eyes."

Tom Brennan spoke without thinking. "Oh yeah," he said. "Get feeling smart and we'll be knocked out of the tourney in the first round. Get cocky and—" He stopped suddenly, his face red with embarrassment.

"I'm sorry, gang," he said, but Tyler just waved the bottle towards him and grinned.

"Go ahead," he said, "keep talking. Keep giving us that needle and we'll walk off with that tourney."

Tom Brennan drew a long breath and figured he'd managed to make the team at last.

SIXTY MINUTE LIGHTNING

By BOB REED

Kinsella gathered the ball in, bringing it back to the twenty-three. . . .

"You've got arms and legs and a football, haven't you? If those ten guys you're playing with want you to eat dirt—get in there and make sure it's paydirt!"

SHAD COOPER said, "It's been one long while since a Barton team went to the Coast. Imagine what a pickup a Rose Bowl team would be to Pop."

"He needs it," Tuffy Cantella said. The big end stretched out on Shad's bed in Bagley Hall. "Pop needs a lift like we need another good halfback. If we had the

halfback, Pop would get the needed lift." Happy Terris said, "Unless this is a very unusual season, Pop gets a lift, but the wrong kind. He'll be out of here, lookin' for a job."

Shad pulled himself out of the easy chair and walked to the window. He was a big man. He leaned on the sill and looked out upon the campus of Barton Tech. Barton was high up in the hills, and as far as the eye could see, in every direction, the rugged country rolled out to meet the sky.

He thought about Pop Conroy. The fierce little old man had been coaching Barton teams for more than twenty years. He had enjoyed a moderate success, considering the material at hand, but now a band of unthinking alumni were after his scalp. They wanted big results. They had persuaded the Ahtletic Director to book a staggering schedule for the next few years, and tiny Barton simply didn't have the manpower to meet it. When you have a registration of only twelve hundred students, you don't go looking for the top competition.

But they'd been looking at the tough ones this year, Shad thought. State, Eastern, Dartmouth, Navy, and a couple of the other big outfits. They'd been sneaked into the big schedules as breathers between tough games. They had been fine breathers. They had won every game of the season, and had only two more to go.

It was an unusual club. It was fine and tough and able, and Pop had worked them outrageously until they were as slick as a bucket of lard. They had walked in there with the big guys and had pasted them unmercifully. But the team had one great weakness. In each position, they were just about one and a half deep. There were just about eighteen top-notch ball players on the squad.

And one of the eighteen was Hobey Clark. Rather, he had been one of the eighteen. Pop Conroy claimed he was the greatest halfback he had ever seen. He could run with frightening force and terrific speed. He could pass like a dream, and he was a fine kicker. His long runs, his lovely passes, had pulled many of the tough ones out of the fire. He had been the spark, the drive, the key man.

And in last week's game against State U., Hobey had been carried off the field in the last quarter with a broken leg. It was so long to Hobey, and it looked very much like so long to the dream season. Howell and Tate remained ahead, and they were both great teams that sported unbeaten records against top competition. Without Hobey Clark, getting by them seemed an impossible task.

Tuffy Cantella said, "Now if we could get that guy Bagley to come out for the club. That would do it. The guy is terrific. I played against him in prep school. I never saw a better back. He's big, he's fast, he can pass."

"Except that he won't play ball," Shad said. They had been over the subject before. He had never seen Powel Bagley work, but he respected Tuffy's opinion. If Tuffy said he was good, he was good.

"What's his gripe?" Happy Terris asked.

Tuffy snarled, "The guy's a big phony. The joint isn't good enough for him. You know that his great-great grandfather helped found this place. You are sitting, in fact, in Bagley Hall. Also, the old geezer put a little clause in his will. Every male Bagley has to attend Barton Tech, or there is no dough waiting for them in the family coffers. So this guy comes to Barton because he has to. But he doesn't like it, and he won't bother to play football."

Terris said, "So we'll do without him."

Shad nodded. "We'll have to. But we won't do so good without him."

Tuffy said, "There's Haskins. He's no bum."

Shad had thought about that. Haskins

was Hobey Clark's understudy. He was a fine ball player, though not in Hobey's class. But he'd been hurt early in the season, and the injury handicapped him. He couldn't be depended upon for full service.

Happy Terris got to his feet. The center was a wide block of a man, a great defensive player. He said, "Let's go talk to Bagley. What can we lose?"

Shad looked at him. "It isn't a bad idea. We tried it once and it didn't work, but all the guy can say is no. Come on."

Tuffy didn't like it. "The guy bothers me. Half the money in the world, and he thinks he's too good for us. The hell with him."

Shad said, "Let's go see him. If he's half as good as you say he is, we can use him."

The three of them went out into the corridor, climbed a flight of stairs, and knocked on the door of Bagley's rooms.

HE WAS big enough, certainly, Shad thought. He was an inch or two over six feet and weighed in the neighborhood of a hundred and ninety. His hair was very blond, his features small and regular.

He said, "Hello. What can I do for you?"

They walked into the room, and it was an awkward moment. Tuffy was silent, and Terris looked at Shad as if they expected him to do the talking. He did.

"We'd like to ask you again, Bagley, to come out and play some football for us. You're a big guy, and Tuffy here says he played against you in prep school and that you have a lot of stuff."

Bagley looked at them, then shook his head. "I'm sorry. I don't think I can do it, Cooper."

Tuffy said, with a heavy note of sarcasm in his voice, "One of the greatest prep school players of the last twenty years. A sure thing for All-America when he goes to college. I'm just quoting from all the newspapers of three years ago, Bagley. They couldn't all be wrong. Besides, I played against you, and I know. You've got it."

Bagley shrugged. "I had a lot of fun playing football, and perhaps I was reasonably good."

"You know our setup," Shad said. "Hobey Clark was our big gun, and with him gone, we're pretty near finished. There aren't many backs like Hobey, but we figured you could help us a lot."

Terris said, "It's a small school. We don't get too many guys. The hot football gents go to the big schools."

Bagley shook his head. "I'm really sorry. I don't think I can help you."

Tuffy got up from the chair he'd taken. He said, "Come on, let's get out of here. This guy is a phony. If Barton was a big school he'd be out there soon enough. All that dough goes to a guy's head. He's got to come to the school, but he doesn't have to play ball with the poor people. We're wasting our time."

Bagley looked at him. "You're not only wasting your time, but you're doing a lot of talking out of turn. I don't think I know your name."

Tuffy sneered at him. "It ain't Rockerbilt, so you wouldn't be interested, punk." He turned to the others. "Let's blow."

He started for the door, but Bagley tapped him on the shoulder. He said, "I'd like an apology for some of those remarks."

Tuffy stopped and looked at him. "You'll get an apology. You'll get a punch in the mouth, Jack. Leave well enough alone."

Bagley said, "And this punch in the mouth. When do I get that?"

Tuffy looked him over for a moment, then said, "Well, bub, I suppose now is as good a time as any."

And he whacked Bagley with a fine right hand.

Bagley went back against the wall, and

Shad watched him with mixed emotions. The club meant so much to him, and to Pop Conroy's future, that he felt within himself the same anger towards Bagley that Tuffy was giving vent to. He didn't know Bagley well. The guy kept to himself most of the time, kept an expensive car in a garage in the village; and that he should refuse to help out, at a time like this, couldn't be considered decent behavior from any angle.

Bagley recovered from Tuffy's first punch and came walking back into the war. Tuffy threw another right hand at him, and then the bomb exploded.

Bagley could fight. Shad saw that immediately. Tuffy was a big guy, but he was no larger than the blond man. Tuffy was a rugged guy from a mining town, and knew how to handle his hands. Bagley, Shad saw immediately, could give him lessons.

It was brutal while it lasted. Bagley was down once, and Tuffy hit the deck three times. He got up on each occasion, and the look of scorn on his face had been supplanted by one of surprise. In five minutes he was a mess.

Bagley stood there, trading shots with Tuffy, but getting them away faster, hitting harder. He finally ended the thing. Tuffy threw a left hand at him and missed, and that was it. Bagley pulled the trigger on a right, and Tuffy went back against the wall, then fell forward on his face. He stayed there without moving.

Bagley looked at Shad and Happy Terris. He said, "Perhaps you'd better take him out of here. I don't like to have the place cluttered up."

Happy was wetting a towel, applying it to Tuffy's face. Shad said, "Okay. When he can move, we'll leave."

And when Tuffy mumbled his way into consciousness, they hauled out, Tuffy protesting that he wanted another crack at the guy. Terris said, "That's all you need. One more of those right hands and you'd be walking back on your heels."

It was a Monday evening, and Shad sat in his room thinking about the situation. They would hit Howell on Saturday, and the game would prick the bubble they had sustained so far. Howell wouldn't run up a score on them, for Barton was too tough defensively for that. But Barton would do much scoring, the way things looked.

And on Tuesday, Shad dressed and went out on the field. The squad seemed to have no pep, no drive. Hobey Clark's loss was being felt by all of them.

He was trying some place kicks, before the workout, when he happened to see Powell Bagley approaching the small gym. He wondered what the man wanted, now.

Pop Conroy was standing next to Shad when Bagley came out on the field. The little old man was cursing bitterly. "Bad enough that Hobey should get hurt, but I've never seen such a moth-eaten outfit as this. You'd think they were all dying. Hell, Hobey wasn't the whole ball club. We can win without him. We can beat both these clubs coming up."

And Shad knew he was talking through his hat, was merely being vocal in his wishful thinking. The little man wanted to win so badly that he'd even kid himself about his chances.

Bagley came over to them from the sidelines. He spoke to Pop. He said, "Mr. Conroy, my name is Bagley. I'd like very much to try out for your ball team."

Pop looked him over. "Little late, aren't you? Hell, boy, we've got only two more games this season. Better come around and see me next year."

Shad took him by the arm and led him aside. "Pop, I've worked hard for you for a couple of years, now. I'm captain of this club. Do me a favor. Take this guy on."

Pop looked at him. "You crazy, Shad? Why, he doesn't know the plays, he's not in shape. What's the idea?"

"Tuffy says he's a hell of a ball player. Played against him a couple of years ago. He was rated the best schoolboy back most sportswriters had ever seen. Give him a chance, anyway."

Pop shook his head in perplexity. "What did you say his name was?"

"Bagley. Powel Bagley."

Pop's eyes suddenly bulged. "Bagley? The kid who played with Rothmore Prep?"

Shad nodded. "That's the one."

"Well, why the hell didn't you say so!" He went back to where Bagley was standing and said, "Son, you go into the gym and tell one of those assistant managers to fit you out, then hurry back out here. We've got some work to do."

Bagley nodded. He started to say something, then stopped. He walked off toward the gym.

WHEN he came out with his gear on, Pop put him right in with the second club. He told Miggs Tierney, the quarterback, "You'll walk through all the stuff for an hour until Bagley gets the hang of it."

And Shad knew it wouldn't be too tough for the man. They worked from a single wing, and when the running back wasn't carrying the ball or passing, most of the time he was faking.

Tuffy said, "So the guy came out." He looked lovely. Both eyes were discolored and his lower lip was split. "What the hell is the idea?"

Shad shook his head. "I don't know." He grinned at Tuffy. "Maybe you beat some sense into his head."

Tuffy reflected on that. "You know, maybe I did."

"Sure. You hit him just once. That first time."

"I hit him twice," Tuffy protested. "With a left hand and a right hand. They're both sore." Then he shook his head in disbelief. "I never thought I'd see the day when some Willy-boy would knock my brains out. I must be slippin'."

And through the week, Shad watched Bagley at work. The man had a wonderful, natural grace, and the moment you saw him handle a ball, you were aware that he knew his business. He moved as if he knew what it was all about, and when Pop started him throwing passes, Shad grinned. The guy had an arm like a rifle, an eye like an eagle. He might come in mighty handy.

Howell had a full stadium when Barton went to visit them. In the locker room, Pop said, "This is a passing outfit, as you know. If you stop Beeson, you stop Howell. If you can stop Wilentz."

It was one of his old gags. Beeson was a wonderful passer, and Wilentz was one of the hardest running backs in the business. You had to stop them both if you wanted a chance.

In the first half they couldn't stop Beeson. The man was throwing clothes-line passes that usually found a receiver. They couldn't prevent him from completing most of the short passes, but they did bottle him up on his long attempts. Shad was very busy downfield. He and Kinsella and Nevins and big Jeb Blake, the wonderful Negro halfback, had plenty of work on their hands, dogging the Howell ends and halfbacks.

Howell sported a fine and varied attack, too, for if you watched Beeson too closely, spread the defense for his passes, Wilentz would knock your brains out, busting the line into small bits.

Barton came off the field at the half trailing by 7-0.

Bagley had not been in the game. Haskins had worked for a few plays, when they had been on the offensive. Shad had done most of the ball carrying from the bucking back spot, with Jeb Blake running on occasional reverse. Shad wondered if Pop were going to put Bagley

into the thing at all, for he knew the plays well enough to get by, and in their current spot, they could certainly use him.

Pop said nothing during most of the rest period. Just before they went out again, he told them, "You're playing a nice ball game. Beeson hasn't completed a pass for more than ten yards all afternoon. Hang onto those ends, and watch that Wilentz."

Tuffy mumbled, "I've been watching him, all right. He runs those tackles like a crazy horse. I've seen enough of the guy to last me a lifetime."

They went out and Shad knew that this was the beginning of the end, the last of a dream that would have taken them to the Rose Bowl, would have satisfied the alumni that were so eager for his scalp. Beeson was dispelling the dream. Beeson and Wilentz and the miserable lack of Hobey Clark. It was hard to take.

They worked hard in the second half. Shad labored for the entire third quarter without a rest, but this was a thing he had become accustomed to. When a club had a small squad, you went out there and worked. Sometimes it was fifty minutes, sometimes sixty. It all depended on the score.

It was Pop's theory that a good man could pace himself through a ball game without any help. He'd said, at the beginning of the season, "This isn't going to be a club where we have one team for defense and another for offense. Hell, we ain't got that many men. And if you're a football player, you're good on either side of that ball. Don't expect too much rest."

Neither club had been able to score in the third quarter. Barton had gone as far as the Howell twelve, but there Shad had been stopped short of a first down on two shots into the line, and Jeb Blake had been spilled on an attempted reverse.

At the beginning of the last quarter, Howell had the ball on the Barton twenty, with a first down. Wilentz had been hot, gaining yardage all the way downfield. He piled into the tackle again, now, and Happy Ferris, backing up the strong side of the line, got a wonderful shot at him. Wilentz dropped as if he had been shot, and the ball squirted out of his arms. Vizak, the big guard, fell on it.

And then Shad looked up and saw Bagley coming into the game. Nevins went out, and in the huddle Bagley said, "Pop says I'm only to pass. Nothing else."

Tuffy looked at him, and for a moment Shad thought the big end was going to say something, but he kept his mouth closed.

It did seem funny. They were all pooped, run out of juice by a long, tough ball game. And then Pop sent in a fresh man, but he was only to chuck 'em. Shad shrugged. Pop should know what he was doing.

Jeb Blake was calling the plays. He said, "Okay, son. Suppose you throw one to Tuffy. That forty-eight play."

They lined up and Happy Ferris passed it back. Bagley faded, and Shad, part of his protection, watched him out of the corner of his eye while he blocked a tackle coming in.

Bagley was as cold as a cake of ice. He went back in short steps, looking for Tuffy, taking his time, fondling the ball in his big hands. He faked once to the right, then pulled back that arm and let it go to Tuffy, downfield.

Shad saw that one from his knees. The pass was low, hard-thrown, on a line. It traveled thirty yards and it almost took Tuffy's head off. Tuffy had a step on the halfback guarding him, and all he had to do was reach up his hands. The ball hit right into them.

He got to the Howell thirty before they knocked him out of bounds.

It was a lift. Shad could feel it in himself and in the rest of the club. They made a little noise as they went downfield for the next play, and Shad looked at Bagley and grinned. The man winked back at him.

Jeb Blake said, in the huddle, "It was pretty, man. Real pretty. We'll try it again in a minute. Let's see if Shad can't get us a yard or two."

Shad got eight. He bolted inside the tackle, his legs churning, and he was almost in the clear when someone spilled him. On the next play, he went to the weak side for three more and a first.

Bagley passed again, this time short and in the flat to Blake, and Jeb got six fine yards before they stopped him. He came back into the huddle and said, "Shad, get in there."

Shad bit into the weak side for five and a first on the Howell nine. It was easier work, now. They had to figure on the passing, and the defense was necessarily looser. Shad wasn't hitting a brick wall that had no problem other than himself. He was hitting a line and backers-up who weren't sure what was going on.

Bagley passed once more, just over the line to Sonny Wilks, and it was good for six fine yards. The ball went back to him again, and he shoveled to Shad. Shad went over the line on his nose, then went back and kicked the point.

IT WAS a new ball game, and Barton had a new team. They were jaunty, confident, cocky. They had a passer, a guy who could hit you on the nose with it, could spread the defense so the running plays would go. They no longer had to try to stem the other club's attack and let it go at that. They were a moving team.

Bagley went back to the bench, and Nevins came on the field as they were about to kick to Howell. Tuffy said, "The guy can chuck 'em, all right. That one he gave me was right in my pocket. But how come he isn't supposed to run? He was a hell of a guy to stop when I played against him. Ran like a locomotive."

Shad said, "I dunno. Pop said he was just supposed to pass."

"Pop said? You mean the guy said Pop said. Maybe he just doesn't like the idea of running. Maybe he doesn't like to get hurt."

It had Shad stopped for a moment, then he remembered how Bagley had responded to Tuffy's punch. There was nothing wrong with the guy that way. He had guts enough, all right.

He said, "Don't worry about it. As long as he can heave them like that, he's nice to have around."

Howell was an angry club. They took the kick and came storming up the field. Wilentz was running hard, and Beeson was flipping those short, accurate little passes. They came up to the Barton forty-five before they were halted, and Beeson kicked outside on the five yard line.

Shad looked at the clock. There were six minutes to play, and he didn't want a tie. He said, "Let's get moving."

They moved out of there, but slowly. Nevins got six, and Shad got four. Jeb Blake took a reverse for eighteen beautiful yards, and they were no longer on their heels. Shad ripped in there for five, and Nevins made it a first on a wide sweep.

And Bagley came in. Nevins went off, and Jeb Blake asked, in the huddle, "You still passing?"

"Just passing," Bagley said. "Pop's getting a little worried about the time."

He passed to Tuffy for eight, then snapped one at Wilks that was good for ten and a first on the Howell forty-five. Jeb said, "I'll take one from you, Shad," and they ran the reverse again. It was good for nine sweet yards.

Shad went into the middle and was stopped after a yard. Jeb said, "Let's have that forty-sixth play, gents."

It was a pass to Jeb, cutting over behind the middle of the line. Bagley got it away beautifully, fast but unhurried, and it went for fifteen.

On the next play he passed to Tuffy, off in the corner of the field by himself. Tuffy

took it on the five yard line and went across for the score without a hand being laid on him. Shad kicked the point amid thunder from the stands.

And that was the ball game. Howell tried hard, but they couldn't make it. Bagley was on the sideline, and now it was Beeson's turn to pitch. He completed three short ones before Kinsella went into the air and intercepted at midfield. Barton ran one play before the gun went off.

Tuffy, in the showers, said, "One gone and only one to go. If we take Tate, we're in, boy. In like Flynn."

If they took Tate. It would take a lot of doing. . . .

They couldn't take Tate in the first half. Bama Fay and his hot club were having a fine afternoon. Fay was bolting through the tackles like a runaway horse, heaving his short, accurate passes over the line.

Tate scored the first time they got the ball, in the initial period, on a march that took them eighty yards. Fay also kicked the point. He did everything, here in the huge Tate stadium, but sell the programs. He was a huge, black-haired, laughing giant, and one hell of a football player.

Barton moved, but not too far. Haskins had started the game, but near the end of the first quarter his old injury had been aggravated, and Nevins had replaced him.

And all during the first half, Pop had not sent Bagley into the ball game.

They went out for the second half with the seven points looking mighty big on the board. Shad had plugged his brains out, hitting the big Tate line, and although he'd kept them back on their heels, there had been no score.

They took the kickoff, Kinsella gathering the ball in on the eight, bringing it back to the twenty-three. Jeb Blake said, "Gentlemen, we have a little work to do."

They went to the left, with Jeb back, and he got six yards. Shad hit inside the tackle for three, then busted over center for two more and a first on their own thirty-four. He was weary. He was a workhorse, but now he felt the weight of the whole, rugged season on him.

And he was very glad to see Bagley coming on the field.

Nevins went off, and Jeb Blake, one eye puffed almost shut, looked at him and said, "Just passing?"

Bagley nodded. "Pop thinks we might heave a few."

He did. He passed to Tuffy for twelve, to Wilks for eight. Shad hit inside for nine tough yards, and they were on the Tate thirty-seven and moving fast.

Bagley went back to pass again, and something went wrong. A couple of the guys up front missed the play, and the Tate line came pouring through. Shad did what he could, blocking off the right tackle and getting the end to run wide, but Bagley didn't have a chance to get the ball away accurately. He got rid of it, and the pass was incomplete, but they mobbed him. They hit him and stormed over him, and when the play was done, he got up slowly. Shad noticed that he held the fingers of his right hand in the palm of the left.

He said, "You get hurt, kid?"

Bagley looked at him, and there was pain in his eyes. There was something else, too. Shad had had a glimpse of it once before, when Tuffy had slugged Bagley in his room.

Bagley shook his head. "I'm all right. Let's play a little ball."

In the huddle, Jeb corrected the mistakes of the last play quickly. He said, "Let's try another. We could use a few fat yards. We'll show 'em forty-two."

Bagley shook his head. "No passes. The hell with it. Let me run it."

Jeb looked at him in surprise. "But Pop said . . ."

"It doesn't go now," Bagley said, "Let's run that thing."

They ran it. Bagley took a tackle play, and Shad was up ahead of him. He went through and tossed a block on the backer-

up, felt Bagley go past him like an express train. By the time he got to his feet, Bagley had been run outside on the Tate twenty-five.

In the huddle, Bagley wore a grin. He said, "This is the way it should go. Let's gang up on them."

They banged it down to the Tate fifteen, then lost it when Bagley fumbled after having made six yards. He cursed in a quiet manner and went back upfield. He said, "Hang onto these gents. We need a score."

Barton hung on. Terris messed up a play and Tuffy went through and nailed Fay for a five-yard loss. They failed to gain on the next, and Bama kicked. It was a lovely hoist, high and distant, and Bagley took it on the Barton thirty-five. He got back to midfield before they bumped him outside.

IT WAS work, then for Bagley and Shad, and occasionally Jeb Blake. Kinsella blocked beautifully, and they moved the ball by five and four and three-yard margins. But they moved it. They had a first down on the Tate ten, and the clock showed five minutes to play.

Shad got three, then three more. Jeb said, "Take it again, Mr. Cooper, my lad."

Shad took it and was stopped cold. Bagley said, "If I might give it a try, Jeb—"

He whammed through tackle like an armoured car. He scored standing up, with three Tate men clinging to him.

Shad went back and kicked the point, with Jeb holding the ball. It was tied up, and seventy thousand people were in an uproar.

So was Pop Conroy. The little man was pacing the sidelines, waving his arms. Shad went over to speak to him, but Bagley touched his arm. He said, "Shad, if you don't mind, I think he's calling me."

Shad wondered at that. He stood there while Bagley went and talked with Pop.

The conversation was short. Bagley left the sidelines with Pop still very evidently perturbed. Bagley said, "Let's get another while there's time."

They kicked to Tate. Fay took it on the goal line and roared back with it. Tuffy took a shot at him and missed, and at the twenty, Happy Terris hit him and bounced off. Fay was in the clear.

It was Bagley who stopped him at mid-field, with as lovely a tackle as Shad had ever seen. Bagley got up, and his face was writhing with pain. Shad went to him, and Bagley managed a grin. He said, "Let's hang onto them."

They did. Tate got a first in three tries. They weren't passing, now. It was Fay into the tackles, Fay into the middle, Fay around the ends. They got their first, but that was all. They ran three more plays from the Barton thirty-eight, and all they got was five yards. Tuffy was a maniac, pulling down plays, and Terris stopped one of them for a two-yard loss. The clock showed just two minutes to go, and there was nothing for Fay to do but kick.

It hit on the five yard line, and Shad could have sworn it was going out. But Bagley appeared from nowhere, snagged the bouncing ball as it was about to touch the sidelines; then he started his trip.

Shad was of assistance. He took the legs from under a Tate end, got up to follow the play and see what else he could do. What he saw was worthwhile watching.

He chased Bagley, saw the whole magnificent thing. The man was running like a wild horse, all speed and power and guile. He was in the middle of the field, halfway between the sidelines, at the twenty. A man hit him and bounced off, then he headed for the side of the field, picking up some blocking. He got to the forty, running through a lane of tacklers, it seemed. Tuffy threw a fine block that elim-

mated two men and got him in the clear, and at midfield Shad was up with him again, running to the other sideline.

They had one man to beat. Bama Fay was heading across on a diagonal, and Shad knew he'd beat them to the point of intersection. Bagley was running hard and was faster than himself. Shad strained for speed and Bagley sensed his presence, let him draw abreast.

Shad hit Fay with everything he had. It was a brutal impact and it took the wind out of him. But he knew that Bama was no threat to Bagley. He looked up from the short grass in time to see Bagley cross that last white line, outdistancing pursuit.

It was the end of the ball game. Shad kicked the point, then kicked off to Tate. They ran one pass play that failed, and then the gun went off.

Shad and Bagley were together going off the field. Shad said, "Okay, let's have it. How come no passing in the last part of the game? How come you didn't come out with the club much earlier?"

Bagley extended his right hand. The middle finger was twisted at a grotesque angle, broken badly. "When they hit me that one time, they did a job. I couldn't pass with that."

Shad examined the thing and grew slightly sick. It was a nasty break. He said, "You played with that thing? Why?"

Bagley shrugged. "A couple of reasons, I guess. I wanted us to win, for one."

"Tell us the rest of it."

Bagley looked at him. "In my last year at prep school, I broke my leg. At the knee. Did a real job on it. Doctors told me that if anything serious ever happened to it again, I'd never walk on it." He grinned. "I like football, but that's quite a price to pay. I figured I was through with the game."

Shad said, "Hell, yes. You were crazy to play. What changed your mind?"

Bagley grinned again. "Tuffy. When we had that little brawl, he knocked me down. Remember?"

Shad nodded. "I remember."

"I twisted the leg as I fell, could feel the terrific strain on it. And I knew then that if it hadn't gone on me then, it probably wouldn't go on any other occasion. I figured I could take a chance."

"It was one hell of a chance," Shad said. He thought for a moment. "And Pop knew about this?"

Bagley nodded. "He didn't want to let me play until I promised only to pass. Even then he was worried. That's why he was so excited today. He didn't know what I knew."

"And what was that?"

"I spent a whole night in the hospital last week with one of the best men in the country. X-rays, tests of every kind. The leg is fine again. Just as good as new." He smiled, "Maybe I'll get to play in that Rose Bowl with you, Shad?"

Shad grinned. "I guess you will. You're the man that put us there."

Tuffy came up to them, and said, "What goes on here? How come no passes in that last quarter? What—"

Bagley nudged him on the chin with his good hand. He said, "Tuffy, you talk too much. What are you guys doing tonight?"

Shad shrugged. "Tuffy made us some sort of a date, but it's out of town and we haven't got a car."

Bagley said, "Make it for three? I've got a car."

Tuffy looked at him. "You mean that big shiny heap I saw down in the village?"

Bagley nodded. "And if you'll do me a favor and drive the thing—I've got a bum hand."

Tuffy looked at him. He said, "Boy, oh boy, me at the wheel of that thing! Wait'll those gals get a load of that."

Shad grinned at him. It was a fine evening.

(Continued from page 65)

So Stub let the ball flow smoothly out of a full-armed whip. Lineback's bat twitched, held up in time, then lashed in a shorter arc as the slugger dragged with his wrists, pulling for the hole to Rube Gold's left. Gold, tied to the base by the runner, never had a chance at it. Head-high, the fierce liner sped for the fence, and Stub swore bitterly as the runners dug their spikes deep. But he stopped swearing, and his mouth hung open.

That ball seemed to be passing a dozen feet to Trueblood's right as the skinny shortstop took off in a twisting leap that flung his glove-hand across his body. That wild backhand stab swallowed the ball and slung it away in a crazy lob that Rube Gold picked out of the air as he stamped the bag to double the runner off third, and Rube's mighty peg passed over King's shoulder as the Blue tried desperately to get back to second. Cudahy was yelling wildly as he grabbed Gold's peg, and put it on King for good measure.

For seconds Stub could not move. A triple play! The Falcons had pulled him out of the hole with a triple killing.

He walked woodenly to meet Trueblood under an arch of cheers that was building higher and higher. Stub said, "Kid, I never saw nobody make that one."

Trueblood grinned happily. He protested, "Stub, we been trying to tell you to save that arm. Let these bums hit. We'll take care of them."

And suddenly the tension was out of Stub. He had been a lonely man, trying to beat the Blues with one strong arm. He was no longer fighting by himself. He had a team behind him. His doubts faded.

Rube Gold was doing an Indian dance. He screamed, "Triple-play! We kill three on the Blues. We are a sensation."

Stub snapped, "We going to celebrate one play all day? G'wan and get me some runs." But he was grinning.

SUDDEN DEATH GUY

(Continued from page 29)

"We can do it," Huck Lannigan said. "We're playing ball for the greatest guy in the business. He'd like this win."

They did it the hard way, on the ground, and now it was Joe Rienzi who bore the burden, and Rienzi still had it even though Huck didn't know where it came from. In the Italian's body was the kind of strength Huck had never seen before in an athlete.

It was Rienzi for three and Rienzi for two, and then Huck Lannigan off the tackle, spinning crazily for three and for two, and always first downs, taking the long chances on that fourth down because they wanted to keep the ball.

They faked the punt and they hit the line; they faked the passes and they hit the line and they started to move, and the big crowd knew that the Terriers were out to win this game, that they weren't content with the astounding tie they'd already insured for themselves.

They got up to midfield and they stalled, and then with fourth down and two to go, Rienzi poured it on. He went through a tiny hole, made it a large hole, and gained eight yards.

Again on the thirty-two they were stopped, and this time for good. Huck failed to gain; Ben Ford failed to gain, and it was third and ten.

In the huddle Huck said to Red Grogan, "I want to throw this one and I want you to get free. You haven't gotten away this half."

Grogan managed to get loose; he was the Grogan for one brief moment of the first quarter, slippery as an eel with steel springs in his body. With two men on him, he broke loose for a fraction of a secdon, and Huck slammed the ball up against his chest as he turned. He was nearly broken in half by cross tackles, but he held on to the ball and they made another first down.

The crowd started to go mildly mad when they reached the fifteen yard line. They expected a field goal, but Johnny Crandall kept calling for the line smashes. It was Rienzi two and Rienzi three—the hammer smashing against the anvil, and the anvil giving way.

"Pay him back," Huck Lannigan said to the Italian. Pay him back before you go. The greatest guy in the world, Joe."

It was all Rienzi now; all eyes on the Hilltop fullback, and then Huck Lannigan crossed them up, tore around the right end, and streaked for the goal line ten yards away. He nearly made it; he got to the four and they hit him—four men rolling over him, four big men in the gold and black of State with the sun shining on those golden helmets.

Huck went down, his body filled with pain, and he thought he'd never get up again. He did, and he walked into the huddle, weaving a little, but still on his feet. They had to go four yards, four big yards.

In the huddle Huck said hoarsely, "Pay him, Joe. Pay him back."

The tough Italian, one hundred and eighty pounds of bone and muscle and wild Sicilian fury, hit three times, and the third time he boiled over into the end zone for the score.

They were in the dressing room, not changing their clothes yet, not taking their showers, just sitting, letting the weariness ride them, and the dressing room was jammed.

A reporter came up to Red Grogan and said,

"Red, there's a guy out there from the pro Falcons wants to talk to you."

He said, "Tell him I'm busy. Tell him I'm playing football for the next couple of years with the greatest team on earth, and for the greatest coach."

Joe Rienzi said quietly, "That goes for me, too, mister, if they should ask."

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"Dandy," pedigreed white poodle, painted from life in the music room of his famous owner, Efrem Kurtz, Conductor of the Houston Symphony Orchestra.

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Noteworthy fact: moderate men everywhere are finding Calvert Reserve *is really* smoother, *really* milder, *really* better tasting. All because America's most experienced blender *really does* create better-blended whiskey. Switch to Calvert Reserve—just once. You, too, will find it the most satisfying whiskey you ever tasted!

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