

A
DOUBLE-ACTION
MAGAZINE

FEB.
1947

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SUPER SPORTS

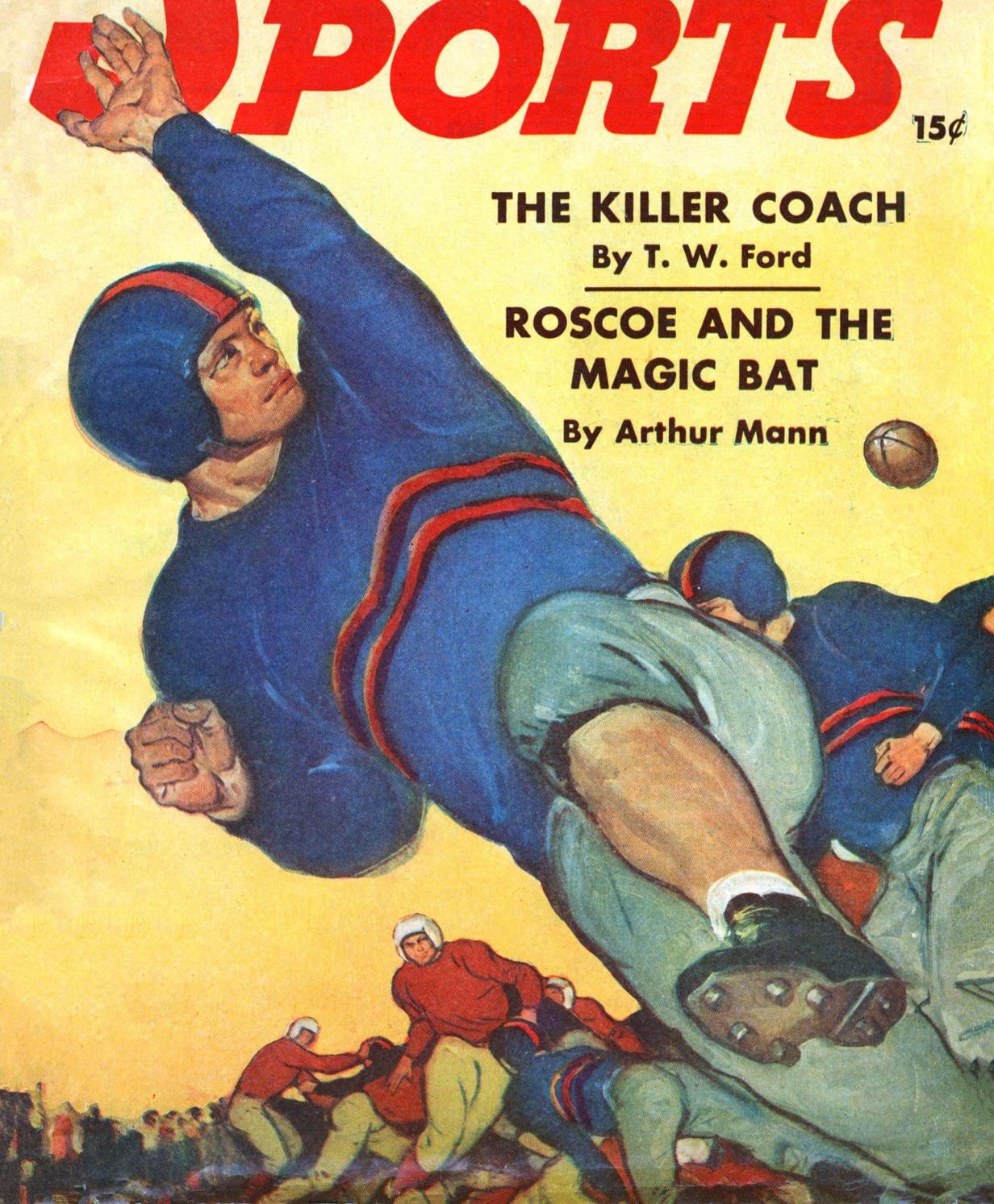
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THE KILLER COACH

By T. W. Ford

**ROSCOE AND THE
MAGIC BAT**

By Arthur Mann



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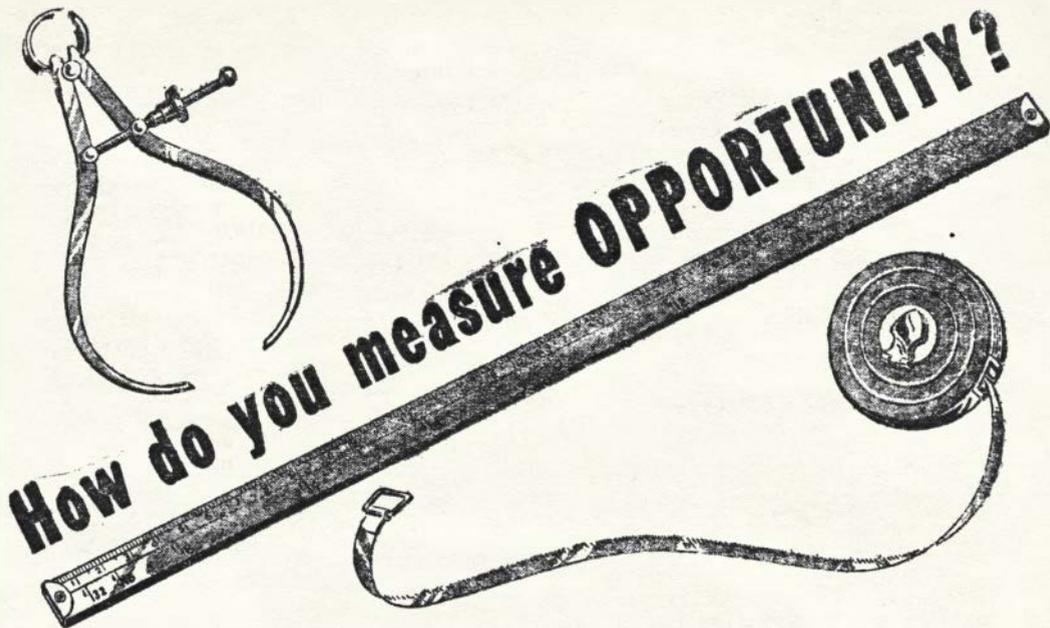
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SUPER SPORTS

Volume 6

February, 1947

Number 1

TWO POWERHOUSE NOVELETS

- THE KILLER COACH** (Football) By T. W. Ford 10
The Dexter U. team was ready for mutiny, because it was clear that Coach Fortson was forcing them to wear themselves out needlessly with outworn plays!
- ROSCOE AND THE MAGIC BAT** (Baseball) By Arthur Mann 74
Here's a new one—the story of a straight-playing manager who started bearing down on a man because his batting average was too high!

SHORT STORIES

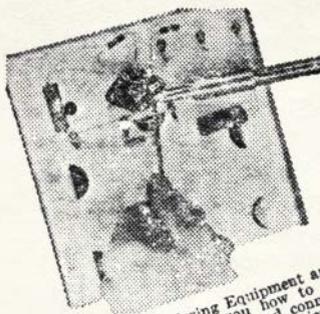
- THE SPOILER** (Fight) By A. R. Thurman 30
Eddie Mulloy figured it was a good idea to look a gift horse in the mouth!
- TRACK CHAMP** (Track) By Ted Stratton 40
Sometimes the only thing you can do is let a kid learn the hard way!
- TELLTALE TENNIS** (Tennis) By Richard Brister 49
Only one man knew the true story of Big Jim Kendall's last great match. . .
- THE SCIENTIFIC AGE** (Fight) By Robert Densmore 58
Benny Bains had nothing left—except his knowledge of the science of boxing!
- THE PROMOTER** (Baseball) By Cliff Campbell 66
According to the writeups, this bird Hatlin was fantastically good—but there was something about the situation that was even more incredible!
- SINGIN' BIRDIES** (Golf) By Theodore J. Roemer 70
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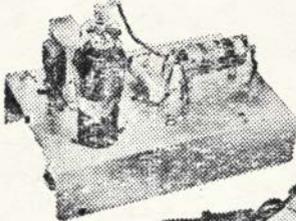
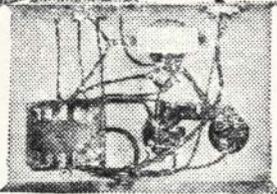


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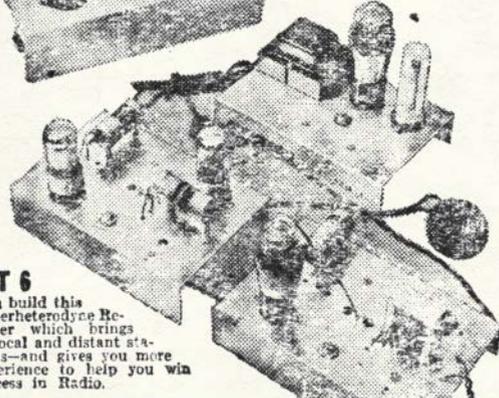
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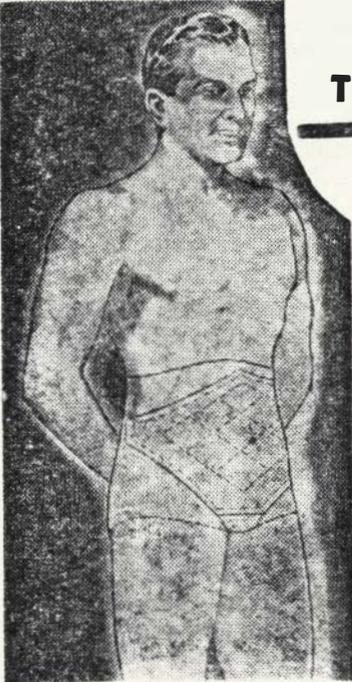
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MAKE THIS TEST WITH YOUR OWN HANDS AND FEEL WHAT WE MEAN

Commander Wearers all over America Say—

"I am sure you will be pleased to know that it is by far the best and most practical supporter I have ever had. I have been pleased to show it to several of my friends and they are likewise impressed with it. You shall probably hear from some of them in the future."

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"Enclosed find order for another belt. I wouldn't be without this supporter for ten times what it costs."

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"Received the Commander about a week ago. To say that I am well pleased with it would be putting it mildly—I can see that it fills a long felt want, giving the needed support and a most comfortable feeling. I never miss outlin-

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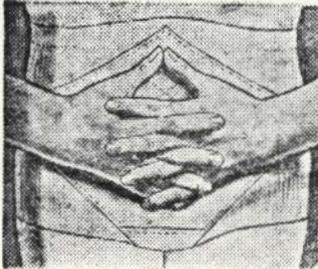
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GET "IN SHAPE" INSTANTLY AND ENJOY A HAPPY STREAMLINED APPEARANCE. The **COMMANDER** presents the exclusively designed "**INTERLOCKING HANDS**" principle for extra double support where you need it most. It flattens the burdensome sagging "corporation" and restores to the body the zestful invigorating feeling that comes with firm, sure "bay window" control. Order this new belt today and begin enjoying the pleasure of feeling "in shape" at once.

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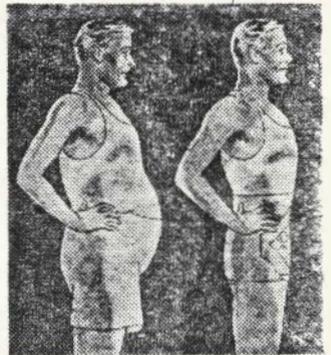
YOUR BACK IS BRACED—YOUR CLOTHES FIT BETTER—YOU APPEAR TALLER. The **COMMANDER** braces your figure . . . You look and feel slimmer . . . your clothes fit you better. Your friends will notice the improvement immediately.

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and other externally caused skin troubles

JUST FOLLOW SKIN DOCTOR'S
SIMPLE DIRECTIONS



SQUEEZING pimples or blackheads to get rid of them is a nasty, messy business—but that isn't the worst of it. Because doing so may also be injurious and leave your skin with unsightly, embarrassing blemishes. There is, now, a much easier, safer, cleaner way to help you rid your face of ugly, offensive, externally caused skin troubles. You merely follow a doctor's simple directions.

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I CAN MAKE YOU COMMANDO -TOUGH

inside and out . . . in double quick time
—OR IT WON'T COST YOU A CENT!"

says *George F. Jowett*
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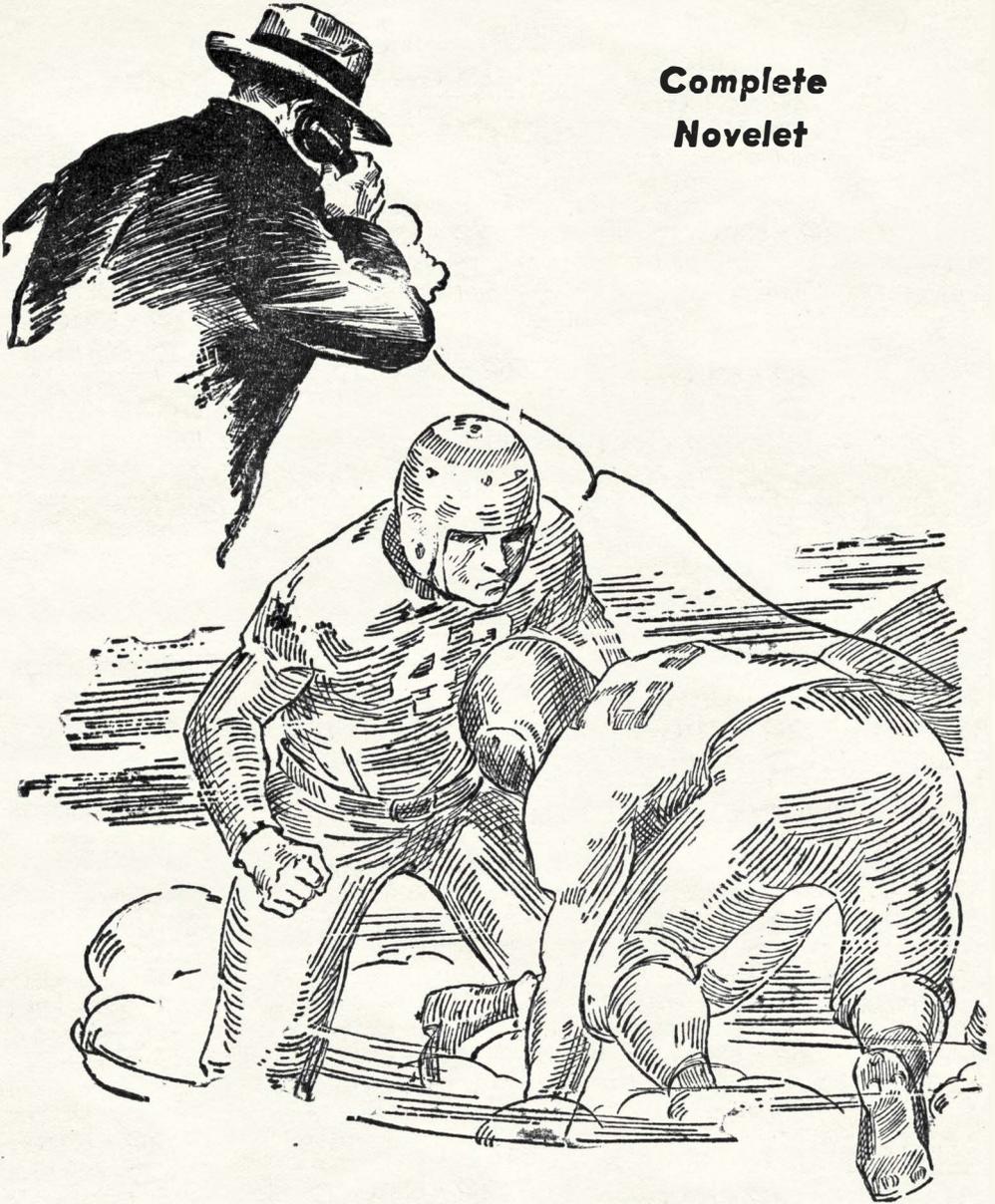
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IT WAS THE early part of the fourth quarter and the State machine led Dexter U. by six points, 20 to 14. That last cutback play over the left side had garnered five yards. But the Maroon of Dexter was deep in its own territory, inside its own thirty. Five yards wasn't enough at one clip under the circumstances if they ever hoped to go to town. Big Jem Nye, Maroon fullback, knew it as he came into the huddle, rubbing

a bruised jaw. So did Landeman, the quarterback, Cleary the right end and Captain Bos Purvis, the guy who was built like a fireplug and played left tackle.

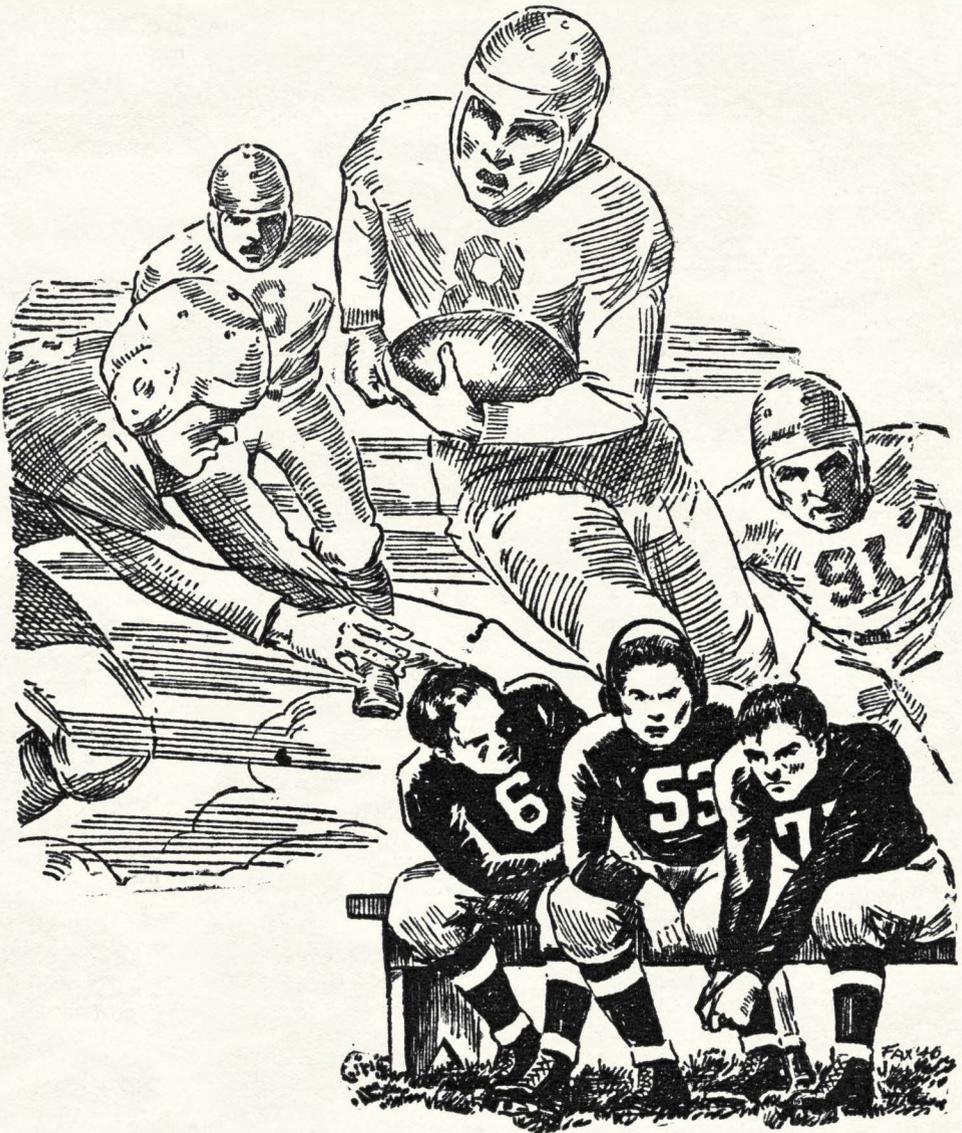
"When the hell is Fortson going to let us open up?" somebody complained. The words might have been taken from Jem Nye's mouth.

He sleeved the sweat from his forehead and raked fingers through his short-cropped blond hair and put his

The Killer Coach

By T. W. FORD

Sure, we've been winning right along, but we've been winning the old-fashioned, hard way when we could have beaten them easier, and run up better scores, with streamlined stuff. That Fortson's a killer coach if you ever saw one, and it's time we stood up to him and told him we weren't going to play his bone-busting, obsolete routine any longer!



headgear back on. He was tired. This sock-and-rock-'em football took it out of your hide, and it wasn't getting you anywhere—not fast enough at least. They knew how State had a trick of bracing when they got back in their own territory. Head coach Ab Fortson on the bench must be aware of that. Yet he was doing nothing.

"Let's try a pass," Nye said. He was a triple-threat man and could pitch that pigskin almost as well as Cauley, the flashy feather-footed running halfback. Cauley wasn't in the game now. He and several other first-stringers, including Bull Hartwell, the pass-snaring left end, were cooling their pants on the bench. Nye heaved the powerful shoulders of his six-foot frame, blue eyes a little sullen.

"Nope," vetoed Landeman, rubbing his hands on his maroon-and-white striped jersey. "Fortson's orders were to stick to the straight stuff." He named the 88 play, a single reverse.

Jem Nye cursed under his breath. This was the way Ab Fortson had been playing it all season, making them stick to the hard-driving stuff till late in the game. Then he would shoot his first-stringers back onto the field, pour his fleet-footed scatter-backs in. They would open their bag of tricks, come from behind, and pull it out in the final minutes. But that seemed like the hard way to Jem Nye and to many of the others. They had the stuff, plenty of hipper dipper in their bag, a double-pronged aerial attack. Why not cut loose with it earlier and get in front, for a chance, early in a contest?

They ran the single reverse, a substitute halfback picking up three behind good blocking. State sent in fresh linemen. Landeman called for a fake pass. He feinted toward the left end, shovelling it back to big Jem. He cocked his arm, faked the throw as he sidestepped the incoming left end. Then he tucked the leather under an arm and crashed inside of the left tackle. He roared for eight more and a fat first down as the Dexter cheering section yelled with delight. The hole had been opened perfectly for him at the right instant. Dexter's forward wall boasted no stars. But it

was strong and tough, with capable replacements, and gave the other team a going over from the opening whistle.

"They're pulling their secondary up tight," Cleary said as he came back. "Let's shoot for something! Let's gamble on a touchdown play!"

But Landeman shook his head, he had his orders. And if he violated the tactical instructions Fortson had given him, he would be promptly yanked. He knew, he had tried that earlier in the season.

AN END-AROUND picked up four, but the gain was nullified when an offside was called against the Maroon. Big Jem Nye went wide to the strongside on a double reverse, taking it almost to midfield. But a spinner was smeared for no gain as State pulled its defense up closer. Several of the men were grumbling as they came back after that one. This was old style horse-and-buggy football. And then Landeman himself bobbled the ball as he sought to feed it to a halfback on a delayed buck. A green-shirted State man recovered.

State had shot its bolt. They were dead-legged and had been repeatedly smacked back since the start of the second half by the Maroon line. They tried two running plays with little success. Then Jem himself, fading back from the line, slapped down a pass in the center alley. State kicked it out of bounds on the Dexter twelve. And again the Maroon warriors started the grim march, using only straight running plays. The last quarter was wearing away. Jem Nye flashed a look at the bench. Ab Fortson sat there in the middle of his players, a stocky block of man, hatless, G. I. style haircut making him stand out clearly. Nobody was warming up.

With Jem spear-heading the attack, they brought it up beyond their own forty. An offside against State gave them another first down. Then a substitute tackle was running in with orders.

"Ab says to quick kick," he gave them.

There was a groan all around. That

was one hell of an indirect way to score a touchdown. But they obeyed, Nye booting the ball from a close-up formation. State was caught flat-footed. The ball sailed over the safety man's head and was downed on the State six yard line. State did pick up five through the middle on a quick-opener play as two blockers double teamed big Jem. But after that they could get nowhere. Cleary hurried their punter as he booted on fourth down, almost blocking it. It was a bad kick that went outside at midfield.

"Almost blocking 'em isn't winning us this game," big Jem said to himself bitterly.

"Maybe Ab will order us to cut lose with the old Statue of Liberty play," Purvis grouched.

Jem hit the weakside tackle on a cutback, found a nice hole, and picked up eight before the secondary ganged him. Then replacements rushed in from the Maroon bench. Cauley, the dangerous break-away runner, the left halfback, Moore, a tough blocker who was comparatively fresh, having been used little that afternoon. Bull Hartwell the left end who had glue on his fingers when it came to hauling down a pass and Billson, the crack center.

But the one thing the team was interested in was the coach's orders about strategy. Jem Nye took one look at Cauley's face and knew. Cauley confirmed his fears as he spoke to Landeman the quarterback.

"Ab says to stick to the straight stuff and keep pounding them," Cauley relayed the instructions.

SOMEBODY swore. They went back to it. With Cauley feinting to the outside, Jem Nye finally rammed the pigskin down inside State's twenty after a series of plays. And then Cauley, after knifing inside the end for six, had the ball stolen from him as the tight State secondary hit him. It was heart-breaking. The Maroon team felt they were being unnecessarily handicapped, shackled, deprived of the full use of the weapons in their repertoire.

State kicked on the third down that

time to avoid the danger of having it blocked. Landeman in the safety spot brought it back to midfield. A fresh guard came in for the Maroon. He had nothing to say. It was still stick with the straight football. Big Jem blasted the middle for four and wondered why he was trying. He admitted to himself if he had spun a split second sooner after breaking through he might have evaded that backer-up and gone for more. It just didn't make sense, this kind of football, when they had their first stringers back in there.

Then the substitute guard spoke up in the huddle. "All right, fellas. Ab says to cut loose!"

They did, with a vengeance. Landeman brought the hipper dipper stuff out of the bag and threw it at State. On a lateral evolving from a double reverse, Peanuts Cauley scooted wide and danced his way down inside the State thirty. Cauley swung out on the flank, feinted a pass, lateralled to the inside to Jem who powered his way for ten. Jem ran wide to the strong-side, started to cut, then pitched a pass to Hartwell. Hartwell had it but dropped it as he was hit and it was ruled incomplete. With panicked State's secondary now spread wide in a 2-2-1 defense formation, Jem Nye went on a cutback, squirmed over the left tackle, and boomed down inside the ten yard stripe.

State held on two plays. A fumble set the Maroon back another five yards. Big Jem blasted at the strong-side tackle. The latter, pivoting from position, took the ball off Jem's hip and flipped it back to Peanuts Cauley. Cauley raced to the outside and darted down across the goal-line in the coffin corner. Purvis dropped out on the line to placement kick it over for the extra point and Dexter went ahead, 21-20. The stands exploded with sound.

But the players themselves weren't too gleeful. They figured they could have done that before with ease.

"Maybe Fortson makes bets on how many points we'll score in the final minutes," the sharp-faced Cauley said as they went back for the kickoff. "This doesn't make sense."

STATE TOOK the kickoff, but the tired visitors could do little. They kicked down to the Maroon thirty five. And the opened-up Maroon machine, travelling in high gear at last, the shackles off, launched another march. They powered the ball across midfield, then clicked on two out of three passes with Jem and Cauley splitting the pitching assignments, to go inside the enemy twenty. Cauley faked another heave and Jem took it on a lateral, lashed inside of tackle to pick up twelve yards. He was vaguely conscious of how the State backs had slowed up. One half-back had failed to reach him and he had run right through another for four extra yards.

Cauley trigger-passed one down the center alley to put the ball on the two yard line. State made a plucky stand and two running plays were stopped cold. And then they used their favorite, big Jem faking at the line with Cauley sprinting to the outside with the leather. He paused, cocking his arm as State screamed warning of the pass. Then he flipped it to Jem Nye standing behind his own line. Jem put his shoulders down and went over for a score standing to sew up the game. Right after the next kickoff, the game ended.

In the stands, they were singing the Dexter Victory song to be followed by the Alma Mater as the purple shadows slid down from the hills. The Maroon trotted off briskly, fresh as victors always seemed. Ab Fortson was waiting for them in front of the bench, grinning tightly, egg-shaped head nodding.

"Nice work, boys, nice work," he called out to one after the other in that sharp heavy voice of his, belting his Camel coat about him.

But there was a sour note amongst the player as they went up the runway under the stands to the locker room.

"Hells bells," growled Bos Purvis the hulking tackle. "We always got to do it the hard way!"

Landeman slung his cream-hued helmet at the locker next to Jem Nye's. "We had those babies whipped

all afternoon—but Fortson wouldn't let us prove it!"

Jem Nye grimaced as he peeled his jersey over his head. Just before they had opened up and turned on the hipper dipper, he had reinjured that sore left shoulder again. That was Ab Fortson's fault.

CHAPTER II

SUNDAY afternoon, Jem really realized a revolt against Fortson was building. Peanuts Cauley, the pony back, dropped around to the room, talked about things in general, them suddenly got down to it.

"Jem, maybe Fortson's just pig-headed. Or maybe he's too damn old-fashioned to realize the lateral and the forward pass has come to stay. But I've got a bellyful of his brand of football!"

"We win 'em," Jem said placatingly though without conviction.

"Sure. But how? Fortson drives us like the devil all week, then puts us out there Saturday afternoon and makes us beat our brains out! He makes us go through most of the game with our hands tied!"

Jem nodded. He knew Cauley had made the All-Mid-western team last season, was hoping for at least mention on the All-American this year. But the guy was right.

"Well, Fortson was trained by Metcalfe up at orthern," Jem said. "Metcalfe always was a stickler for straight football. Maybe Fortson can't forget the master's training."

"Is that any reason why we got to knock our brains out to come from behind on Saturday? This week, we hit Atlantic; that bunch opens up with the razzle dazzle from the first kickoff. They'll pile up a lead on us we'll never get back."

Again Jem Nye was forced to nod. "I don't like it."

"Well, why not stand up in meeting and say so, Jem? Purvis is captain but he isn't much on making with the words. A lot of the guys would follow you."

"What?" Jem was surprised. His eyebrows shot up.

"I've been talking with Landeman

and Cleary and a few others," Cauley said. Jem saw then he had planned something. "Tell Fortson we play our kind of a game—or he's going to be looking for some new players!"

Jem frowned. "We'll see how things go this week," he temporized.

AFTER Saturday's bruising contest, Monday's workout consisted of a light loosening-up drill. Then the squad was taken into the field-house to see the motion pictures of the State game. It had been a big one to win, State had been the favorite in the pre-game dope. And yet Ab Fortson, lecturing up there at the screen, seemed to take the attitude that the Maroon had played below itself. He kept pointing out flaws in timing, in blocking, in individual play. He had the film run over again where Jem himself, breaking through the line, had failed to spin in time to get away from the backer-up.

"You make those mistakes against Atlantic—you letdown like that on the details—and you'll be whipped," he said once.

"Let us use *all* our stuff, all our plays—and we'll take care of ourselves," breathed somebody in the back of the room.

Tuesday they settled down to scrimmaging, contact drill. But there was little snap in it. The blocking was sloppy. Backs were slow getting out of their tracks. The line was sluggish. Big Jem Nye could feel the attitude of the team even before he saw what was happening. It was a reflection of their antipathy for Ab Fortson.

He kept striding up and down the sideline, barking through that megaphone hung on a cord about his neck. Nothing seemed to please the stocky hard-eyed man. A scrub end sifted in and nailed Jem himself around the knees before he could get free on a double reverse. It was a nice tackle, but Fortson had the megaphone up to bawl out a scrub lineman because he let himself get mouse-trapped. There was no good word for the man who'd handcuffed Jem.

"Maybe that guy thinks he's made

us," one of the varsity grumbled. "Maybe he thinks he's so hot he could win games without putting a team on the field! What the hell!" This Dexter team had figured it was going to have a big season before the first game had been played.

The varsity swung to kicking practise. Fortson hadn't been satisfied with the way his ends had been getting down under punts Saturday. He kept calling for more speed and more speed. Cleary finally got a bellyful and just loped down the field under one of Jem's arching boots.

"Cleary!" the head coach barked through his megaphone. "You can call it a day...Go on in. But before you do, take ten laps around the field!"

It was stiff disciplinary punishment. The whole varsity began to mutter. Hartwell said:

"All right! That tough guy isn't going to be satisfied till he sees blood. All right!"

HARTWELL went tearing down the field under the next kick as if it were the last play he was ever going to make. Jem had given it plenty of lift. And when the D Team safety man gathered it in, Hartwell was waiting to spring. He hit the poor devil so hard it was a wonder he didn't knock him out of his shoes. And Bos Purvis, the tackle, came in on the guy at neck height a split second later.

Then the trainer was running out. The scrub back had arisen after the whistle, taken one step, then collapsed. They found he had a broken bone in his ankle and he had to be carried off the field. Fortson called a halt to the drill shortly afterward. Then he himself hustled into the fieldhouse and left there a few minutes afterward for his radio broadcast. Twice a week he lectured over a national hook-up with tips for high school footballers.

"Maybe he'll tell them how he was responsible for breaking a man's ankle today," big Purvis said as he emerged from the showers. "That poor kid! We were all so hepped up, thanks to Fortson, we didn't care who

we killed. You'd think we'd lost to State!"

"That's right," put in Landeman. "He was driving us till we were half crazy!"

"And one hell of a lot a sympathy he gave Duchoos," another man said, mentioning the scrub back who'd suffered the ankle fracture.

Cauley said, "Fortson still thinks football is back in the Flying Wedge days. And I don't know why we put up with it!" He slammed down a hip pad. "That so-and-so can come back here tomorrow to find I've turned in my uniform!"

Jem Nye took control then as a couple of players promptly seconded Cauley's attitude. Jem walked over to a rubbing table and slapped it hard to get attention. He knew he had to do something to keep the team from disintegrating. He said:

"Wait a minute, fellows. Why let the school down?"

"What the hell are you going to do about it, Nye?"

He hadn't been too certain till that moment. Then he knew definitely and clearly. "Nobody's going to turn in their suit," he said sharply. "We're as much a part of this system as Fortson is. He can't win any games without a team to take the field."

"So he has us knock our brains out winning the hard way every Saturday," put in Cleary.

"So next Saturday we play our own way against Atlantic—or we don't play!" The big fullback was surprised himself when the words came out though he realized they had been building in him for some time. "That's the alternative we hand Fortson tomorrow!"

CHAPTER III

A COMMITTEE of three, headed by Jem Nye himself, walked into the head coach's office the next afternoon before they took the field for a drill. Landeman, very white-lipped, and Captain Bos Purvis, sweating like a bull, flanked him. Fortson had been late arriving at the fieldhouse. He sat talking on

the phone, soiled Camel coat still on. He cut his eyes up at them once. It was as if he had read their minds. For he went on talking to the person at the other end, obviously prolonging the conversation. They stood, uncomfortable, keyed up to get a nasty job over with, and compelled to hold the primed pent-up prepared workage behind their teeth.

Finally Fortson clicked down the receiver, glanced at his wrist watch, drawled ironically: "Are the assistant coaches dead or all drunk? The squad was supposed to be on the field six minutes ago."

"Maybe some of them won't take the field," Landeman popped out beligerently.

Ab Fortson's face went stony and his egg-shaped head seemed to sink deeper into his shoulders. "If they don't, they can get the hell out of this locker room and stay out!"

Landeman started to snap back but Purvis of the fireplug physique clamped a warning grip on the quarterback's arm. And Jem Nye took over control. He spoke slowly to keep his voice as calm and emotionless as possible.

"Ab, we didn't come in here to fight with you. But there is something we've got to get understood. We—"

"Who the hell is 'we'?" the head coach jabbed in.

"They're enough of us to leave you with less than a damn poor facsimile of a football team," Landeman told him.

Jem listed the men to Fortson. There was Cleary, the varsity right end, Bull Hartwell who played the other flank, Peanuts Cauley, too, the running halfback, and Sillers, a good blocking back. Billson the center had withdrawn from the ranks of the rebels at the last moment, saying he felt he would be betraying the school. But there were several of the second stringers siding with Jem's bunch, including three line replacements. And there were the three of the committee themselves.

When Jem finished checking them

off he thought he saw Fortson's face go faintly gray. But the cold fierce fire that gleamed in the coach's eyes made Jem forget about the gray.

"So you came in here to pull a walkout, eh?" Fortson said very quietly. "Don't approve of the way I run a team, do you?"

The head coach was stealing their ammunition before they could fire it. Captain Purvis sucked in his breath sharply. Jem nodded, big hands fist-ed with the strain.

"That's about it, Ab." And he gave him the story, detailing the game strategy that the men were protesting against. Trying to be as impersonal as possible, seeking to give the head coach every opening to save his face, he explained how the men felt they were handcuffed for the better part of the game because of Fortson's tactics. "Ab, you've taught us plenty. We know we've got the stuff. We want to cut loose with it earlier. Understand?"

FOR ANSWER, Ab Fortson hauled his stocky body out of the chair and walked over to the window looking out across the campus. He swung around, sharp voice harsh.

"And I'd always figured with my brains and your brawn this team could really go places this season." He shook his head sadly.

"Your brains and our—" Landeman swore. "Dammit, you act as if we were a bunch of dumb galley slaves, Fortson!"

"Why, Mr. Landeman, how can you say that? Why you know that you fellows know more about the game than I do, the man *paid* to teach you."

The quarterback gestured so vehemently he knocked over the pen stand on the desk. "Hell, Fortson, maybe my eyesight's failing fast. But I'm damned if I ever saw you lugging the leather for a first down out there. We're the guys who do that. And as such, we've got a right to have some say about how it's done."

"You fellows sound as if you'd formed a union. Damned if you don't. Labor wants a say in management,

eh?.. Now, boys, trot out there on that field. We got some serious business coming up Saturday afternoon." The bullet-headed coach smiled and started over for some charts.

It was then that Jem Nye's temper broke its bonds. Fortson was treating them like mischievous children. Fortson was quietly laughing at them, mildly mocking. The fullback's voice screwed up out of his tight throat.

"All right, Fortson. The gloves are off! You asked for it this way. Now, get it straight. Saturday afternoon, we go into that game with the handcuffs off, shooting modern football from the first whistle—or the men I listed before won't play. Believe me, we—aren't—kidding!"

AB FORTSON went rigid. He lowered the charts to the desk, making an obvious effort to steady his hand. He eyed the three of them in turn. "If I recall correctly, you've won all your games thus far—following my strategy as a coach. I don't see, therefore, why I have to explain. I give the orders and if you don't care to follow them—" He paused with dramatic significance.

But Jem Nye was reading Fortson by then. He saw that this was a bluff, that the coach was trying to intimidate them. "We think we could have won them more easily our way, Fortson. It still stands. We're quitting if you insist on that horse-and-buggy style football." As he finished Jem became aware of Eagle-Eye Chuck Gans.

Gans had stepped in the second door of the office from the field-house hallway. Tall, leathery-faced, the backfield coach, he had been dubbed "Eagle-Eye" because, during games, he sat up on the rim of the stadium with a pair of binoculars. From that vantage point, he could study overall play with a birdseye view. A special telephone line connected him with the bench so that he could talk in pointers, make recommendations, and report details on individual play. Now he stood locked in his tracks at Jem's final words, his big blue eyes bulging out of his head.

The head coach swallowed and the

sound of it was plain in the tense stillness. Then he said, "This—uh—ultimatum is sort of sudden. Give me some time to make up my mind. Suppose we get on with our work. And—and I'll give you my answer in a day or two."

PRACTISE that day was like an armed truce. Everybody on the squad, even those not among the rebels, knew something was wrong. The whole coaching staff was wise too; Chuck Gans had spread the word. The usual banter, the bits of horseplay, of ragging, between players was missing. Everybody was on tenterhooks. They went through their assignments efficiently, nervously, but with the healthy spirit. The Duchoss incident was still too fresh in their minds, also.

The D Team, wearing the green-and-white shirts of Atlantic, and coached for days in Atlantic formations, went in on the offensive against the varsity. Began to shoot the tricky hipper dipper and razzle dazzle stuff of Atlantic at the varsity. A couple of the younger members of the coaching staff, who'd scouted Atlantic, were in the D Team lineup and faking and feeding those complicated laterals. Backing up the line, big Jem realized the regulars looked none too impressive. Repeatedly they were outflanked or caught with the defense spread against quick-opening plays to the inside. Jem told himself the key men were working under a mental burden, that when the decision was made, they'd be all right.

And, as Peanuts Cauley said in a lull, "Sure, that Atlantic stuff is hot. But when we open up, we'll score more than they do. And that's the main idea of any football game."

Fortson himself was stone-faced, controlled as always as he picked out flaws in the defense and made corrections. As the drill went on, he kept calling for speed and more speed. His voice sharpened as the afternoon wore away and the floodlights threw their yellow glow over the field. But he gave no other sign of his awareness of the dangerous undercurrent. After-

ward the dressing room was about as lively as a smalltown morgue on a dull day. Jem Nye was worried as he strode down from the stadium to the campus.

He was even more worried as he tried to concentrate on his books in his room that night. Bull Hartwell and Cauley and a couple of others dropped in. Cauley the scatter-back was sanguine.

"Fortson's got to give in," he insisted.

Somebody said Fortson could be damned stubborn, echoing Jem's thoughts. But Cauley was confident, shaking his head vehemently.

"If he plays stubborn this time, he'll hoist himself on his own petard! Look. Suppose he tells us we can quit, that he'll put a team on the field without us. Then—"

"We'll look like a lot of dirty traitors!"

"No, Hep. No. Fortson will be the one who gets marked as lousy. That team he fields will get beaten—because we're the key men. And that isn't boasting. They'll get whipped. Then the whole campus will realize who's been winning Fortson's games for him, and the whole campus will be ready to listen to our side."

The unofficial meeting broke up shortly. After they left, big Jem paced the floor worriedly. He hoped Cauley was correct, because Jem was sure the head coach would not retreat an inch. The fullback went to sleep trying to throttle the haunting furtive feeling in a back corner of his mind that he might be betraying the Crimson.

With a feeling of relief he saw there was nothing about the situation in the next morning's papers. No reporters had called him. Nobody on the campus, as he moved through his first two classes, mentioned a thing about trouble on the squad. Which meant that Ab Fortson must have kept buttoned up. The rebels had been sworn to secrecy themselves. Jem was somewhat surprised. He had figured the coach might use publicity as a weapon to force the mutineers back into line.

THERE was no contact work in that afternoon's drill. But that was no sign that Fortson was weakening or prepared to compromise. At that stage of the season, there was no scrimmage after Wednesday because of the danger of physical injury. The team was far enough advanced not to require a great deal more of the contact work. Again the D-Team threw Atlantic plays at them, running them from the single wing and the T formation combination that versatile Atlantic used. Then, midway of the drill, a scrub manager came out with word that Fortson had an important long-distance telephone call waiting for him in the fieldhouse. The head coach left the field as the two teams took a breather.

Cauley said, "Look at that wind shake those goalposts! Hope we don't have a gale like this Saturday. It'll raise hell with the kicking."

As the man who did the punting, Jem Nye should have thought about that himself. But his mind was too taken up with the other, the big problem. He was mentally cursing Fortson for waiting till the end of the days' work to announce his decision. Then Fustig, a lineman of the D Team, was talking to some of the varsity. Fustig's cousin, a graduate student, was assistant graduate manager of athletics at Dexter.

"I don't know what the story is," Fustig was saying. "But I know Fortson hasn't been offered a new contract for next season yet. It seems some of the grads are talking about getting a more modern coach... Uh-huh."

Jem Nye felt his determination to see this thing through weakening. Now it was like hitting a man when he was down. This revolt could cost Ab Fortson his job, and that was more than they'd bargained for.

As they came off the field at the end of the day, he hinted at it to some of his followers. "Maybe we ought to talk to Ab again," he said hesitantly. "Shucks, we're all out to win, Ab and ourselves both. We could suggest we try the wide open game one quarter, then his system, then—"

The usually taciturn Captain Bos

Purvis interrupted. "No," he said heavily. "We give into Ab's bull-headedness now—and we'll never win our point. We can't even give him an inch. He's a killer coach. He makes us knock ourselves half dead on the field. Why? To win the hard way, his way. And look what he did to Duchoss." Purvis took a deep breath. That was a long speech for him.

"Bullseye, Bos," Cleary seconded it. "You want him to laugh in our faces, Jem?" Cauley chided.

Jem tried to find words. Then none were necessary and he felt himself doing a slow burn. For over at the other side of the field, Ab Fortson's Cadillac convertible coupe was swinging out toward the open northwest gate of the stadium. Fortson was leaving without giving them his decision.

CHAPTER IV

FRIDAY afternoon, before they took the field, Jem Nye laid it in Fortson's lap—or, at least tried to. He walked into the head coach's office and told him they wanted a decision. Fortson looked very sad about the whole matter.

"Mind waiting till we come in from the field, Nye? Let's get our work over with. Afterward, I'll let you fellows know what I've decided."

And there was something about the way he said it that made the fullback give in. Jem was wary though as the short drill wore away. They came into the fieldhouse where Gans and another member of the staff gave them a blackboard drill on Atlantic plays. Then Fortson himself stepped forward, bullet head tucked down into his heavy shoulders, somehow managing to look several years older. He addressed them in a quiet tired voice.

"It seems that some of the members of the team—quite a number, in fact—don't approve of the way I run things on Saturday afternoons. I might as well admit that these men are the key men of the varsity. Without them, Dexter couldn't put a first-class football team on the field. So that is why I am bowing to them."

Jem Nye was taken aback. He had

more than half expected Fortson to defy them, to try to shame them on the campus by playing without them if necessary. And he had fully expected the bullet-headed hard-driving man to stage a melodramatic act here in the locker room when the show-down came, denouncing them and defending his own Saturday tactics. But there was none of that. He broke his long pause and continued in a flat voice.

"So, I am giving way to the men who want to run their own game this Saturday, tomorrow. I wish them all luck. Whether the other members of the squad want to string along with them—well, that's for you to decide among yourselves. I want to remind you of one thing, though. Never forget, that regardless of who is running things, you are playing for the Maroon of Dexter."

He paused again and a couple of substitutes cheered. Fortson took a step toward his office door, then half turned back.

"I have one favor to ask. This is an argument between ourselves. So far, there has been no publicity on the matter. And, I would like to keep it that way—until after the game at least. I want to ask each and every one of you to make no mention of this—this trouble—after you walk out of this fieldhouse this evening."

"You can bet on that, Fortson. Any man who does will answer to me," Jem Nye said. It popped out of him in sheer gratitude for the big way the head coach was handling a tough situation.

The latter nodded, took another couple of steps, then halted again. "Oh, another detail. When my coaching staff heard the story, they wanted to walk out with me. I have persuaded them not to, that wouldn't help anybody. I have even persuaded the backfield coach, Chuck Gans, to offer to run things from the bench if you wish. After all," and his narrowed eyes shot right around to Jem Nye them, "you will have to have somebody on that bench to help."

He made one more statement as he stood with his hand on the doorknob. He said he would explain his absence

from the bench tomorrow by giving out a statement this evening, before he left town, that he was being called away by the illness of a dear relative.

"Good luck, fellows." Then the office door closed after him.

NYE HAD a hollow feeling. A feeling, that somehow, Ab Fortson had won, at the least, a moral victory. And when he met Peanut Cauley's glance, he knew the running halfback had gotten the same reaction. Captain Bos Purvis was wiping his forehead as if he'd just put in thirty minutes of tough football.

The whole squad held an informal meeting. Most of the men were only too glad to try something new after the bruelling body-wracking tactics Fortson had been putting them through each Saturday. But going down from the field Jem felt that somehow, indirectly, Ab Fortson had made his presence felt in the dressing room even after he had left. Jem still hadn't thrown off the uneasy feeling when he went down to the local airport after dinner with the assistant coaches and the captain to greet the Atlantic squad as it came in in a couple of specially chartered planes. Atlantic looked big and tough and as confident as a bunch of bulls. Foulange their great breakway back seemed to show no signs of the attack of tonsilitis that had bedded him some ten days ago.

"They didn't look as if they'd be beaten easy," Jem said to Bos Purvis afterward.

Purvis shrugged. "They all look good before the first kickoff." But there wasn't much enthusiasm in his voice.

THE NEXT day, as they sweated out the endless pre-game period in the fieldhouse, taking orange juice and eating cube sugar and getting taped up, Jem again had that premonition of trouble. Then they were finally going down the runway for the pre-game dummy drill with a cheer from the massed crowd exploding in their very faces. Everybody felt better after running through a series of dummy plays. They came

back into the dressing room.

Eagle-Eye Chuck Gans seemed more than a trifle nervous. "Shall I say anything to the gang or not?" he asked Jem and Bos Purvis.

"We're going out there and jump those guys from the opening whistle," Cauley cried.

They went back out as Atlantic, looking like behemoths in their white shirts with the narrow bands of green, came pouring from the other runway. The visiting Atlantic band struck up "Atlantic, Always Victorious." Purvis went out and won the toss, eyed the frosty sun-shot windless afternoon, then elected to receive the initial kickoff. There were a few uncomfortable moments as the varsity stood before the bench. It was Ab Fortson's custom, before each contest, to shake hands personally with every starting player before they took the field.

"Well, fellas, lotsa luck. Maybe—maybe you're going to need it," Gans muttered. He sat down.

Beside him, at the middle of the bench where Fortson usually held court, was the telephone that connected with the expert, always Gans himself in the past, who watched proceedings from the rim of the stadium. Jem found himself wondering who'd be up there today. But it was too late to do anything about that then as they trotted on to take that first kickoff.

"Let's go get 'em!" Landeman pepped it up.

"Let's go get a fast touchdown," Bull Hartwell seconded him.

They almost did. With all their regulars in there for a change from the beginning, big Jem took the kickoff, came back to the forty-one behind sweet blocking. Cauley leather-footed it for a first down on the enemy forty-five after being on the receiving end of a double lateral. The visitors braced for two downs. Then Cauley, after having one attempted pass grounded, faked another, shovelled to Jem Nye. The latter swept to the strong side and fired one on the run. It connected with Hartwell for a first down on the Green and White's twenty four. A double reverse picked

up four more. And then Landeman as he faked on a delayed buck was caught behind his own line for a six-yard loss by an Atlantic tackle who'd seeped through.

Jem raised his eyebrows mentally. The Maroon wasn't used to having its forward wall outplayed. Another pass attempt on a feinted end-around was batted down when a touchdown seemed in the bag.

"Tough luck," they said to themselves in the huddle.

JEM GOT seven on a cutback over Bos Purvis' position. Then Cauley pitched down the center alley and it was intercepted by Foulange of Atlantic who zipped back to his thirty before being grounded. And the Green and White opened up its bag of tricks. They shot their stuff from the T-formation, switched into the single wing at times. And Dexter looked bad. The visitors picked up forty odd yards on five tries. Foulange almost got loose on a double reverse to go the distance. But Jem, shifting over fast from his position as backer-up of the line, bumped him over the sideline after Billson cut down a blocker. And then Billson, the first-string center, was limping off with an injured ankle.

The Maroon finally stopped Atlantic close to the twenty yard line when Cauley stole the ball out of the arms of a pass-receiving Atlantic halfback. And once again, with the whole backfield talking it up and Jem Nye spearheading the attack, the Maroon went on the march. Playing with electrifying brilliance, they rolled over the midfield mark. Cauley dodged and switched and swivel-hipped his way for twenty odd yards. Cauley faked a running pass and flipped it back to Jem cutting behind him. Jem cocked his arm as if to throw. The secondary pulled up. And he galloped wide to outflank them and then powerhouse his way down the far sideline, running over two men, to go for the first touchdown. Purvis dropped back out of the line and converted for the extra point to make it 7-0 in Dexter's favor. They were clapping each other

on the back as they trotted upfield for the kickoff.

"That's just the first one," Cauley cried.

BUT THE Green and White headed for town after taking that kickoff. Their fast-breaking backs began to pick up distance. They would feint to the outside, then come through on the inside, running the tackles behind neat rush blocking that kept the Maroon secondaries off balance. They they would reverse it and lug the leather on deceptive in-and-out plays, outflank the Maroon with sharp laterals, and they cross them up again with trigger passes flashed down the center. Jem kept dragging down Atlantic backs who burst through the supposedly stronger Maroon line. But the legs of those backs seemed electrified, and Foulange finally skirted a wing to go over. When Atlantic converted for the extra point the game was tied up. And the first quarter was only a few minutes old.

The Maroon had the stands raving as they staged a series of fat leaping gains following the third kickoff. Then a ball-carrier fumbled as a lineman pierced through and hit him. Atlantic recovered.

That time the Maroon halted their attack just inside their own forty. Jem was congratulating the team mentally when he studied Atlantic and realized the great Foulange wasn't in the backfield, hadn't been for some minutes.

"Wonder why they jerked him?" Cauley asked as the Maroon huddled. "Let's throw the B-44 at them!"

The play went, but not for as large a gain as they had expected. And three substitute linemen plus a second-string blocking back came in for Atlantic. Big Jem roared wide on an in-and-out to pick up a first down. Cleary, coming behind the line on an apparent end-around, reversed the expected by pitching a short pass to Cauley who usually ferried the aerials himself. And Cauley, turning on a dazzling exhibition of broken field running, went across the enemy goal-line. But the head lineman's horn was already tooting. The play was

nullified as holding was charged on the Dexter left guard.

A few moments later, with two successive off-sides by the Maroon, and Atlantic had taken possession of the pigskin. And on the third play, with the Maroon spread against those laterals and short aerials out to the flanks, a substitute Atlantic halfback seeped through the line, picked up two blockers, flipped a lateral when he was trapped on the Maroon fifteen. The receiver of the lateral crossed the goalline standing up. Atlantic placed the extra point and it was 14-7 against Dexter.

"Those guys must carry horseshoes and four-leaf clovers," one of the Maroon players said. Dexter was somewhat dumfounded.

DEXTER cut loose with a fresh burst of hipper dipper as the period ended. In the first moments of the second quarter, they smashed down inside the enemy twenty. But a pass interception rocked them back on their heels. Maloney, the Atlantic quarterback, flipped a heave for a nice sixteen yard gain. Jem Nye was getting a worried feeling again. It suddenly came to him that as the ringleader of the rebels he would be responsible for a defeat if they suffered one.

He smeared two plays to the inside. And then, running from the T, Atlantic got off a perfect end-around. The ball-carrier got down to the Maroon nine before he was hauled down. On two plays, as the Maroon line seemed to go to pieces, Atlantic pushed it over for their third touchdown. When they went back for the kickoff, the visitors enjoyed a 21-7 lead.

When the Maroon offensive went to work again, Jem Nye rose to new heights as a fullback. It was his great leather-lugging that set up the second touchdown. And in the closing minutes of the half, after intercepting an Atlantic pass, he spearheaded the drive for Dexter's third. But Purvis missed on the try for point after touchdown. And the Maroon trailed, 20 to 21.

"Now we're really rolling," Cauley,

who'd gone over for that score, exulted.

"What's a point? Let's go for another score," Landeman called.

But Jem was puzzled. For one thing, he noticed that Peanuts Cauley, while gaining ground, wasn't getting away for those breakaway gains he used to make. And Atlantic backs were getting through the young tough Maroon line more than seemed natural.

Foulange came back in and almost broke into the open as he took a pass into the flat. The half ended and they trooped into the locker room. All the men seemed optimistic, but Jem sensed there was something wrong. It seemed as if they were making a lot of noise to cover up their own fatigued condition. Cauley, for one, stumbled just after he got inside the door. Jem's own shoulders were tired and sore from smacking into those Atlantic backs who seemed jet-propelled.

"We had some tough breaks that first half," one man said. "We'll really roll over 'em in the next two quarters." And there was plenty of agreement.

Gans gave them a blackboard talk, illustrating defenses against those Atlantic plays. And all too soon they were going out there again.

CHAPTER V

THE SUN was blanketed by leaden clouds though no wind had yet risen. The Dexter cheering sections were yelling for a fresh Maroon surge.

The Maroon looked as if they might stage it after Atlantic fumbled on their own forty to lose possession. Jem bulldozed over the left tackle to pick up six, hit again off the other end for three more. Landeman threw Cauley wide to the strong side on a double reverse with a pass feint. And Cauley was forced back deep, then trapped as he failed to outrun the tacklers, dropped for a twelve yard loss. Even as he pushed himself off the ground after throwing a block, Jem realized one thing. Atlantic had diagnosed that play perfectly, having seen it several times before.

In the huddle, Landeman called for the J-17 pass. Fading Jem pitched it down the middle alley to Cauley as the wingmen feinted out wide. Cauley had it, stumbled as he started to take off. He was hit, bobbled. Atlantic recovered. And then Peanuts Cauley sank to the ground again after half rising.

The trainer came out. But Jem saw there what had happened too. Though he had been rested several minutes in the second quarter Cauley was played out. Actually he had not been smacked hard enough to hurt him that much. But now he walked around on wobbly legs with a dull look.

"Take him out," ordered Captain Purvis even as Jem was about to speak up.

And on the next play, Bull Hartwell the left end got stretched out by an Atlantic blocker. He had to be helped off. Jem shook his head as he drew off his helmet to cool his scalp. He couldn't understand. The Maroon had never weakened like this before. Usually it was the opposition that wore down.

"Are we playing a little too rough?" called Foulange mockingly across the line. "We heard you were tough, too."

Jem cursed and then settled down to business as he tried to stop the latest Atlantic onslaught. Once he slapped back Foulange himself for a loss as the latter cut into the line. The Maroon finally regained possession down on their own eighteen. But when they sought to run it, the heart seemed to have gone out of their attack. Landeman opened up the bag of his magic wide, calling for plenty of the razzle dazzle. But the Atlantic defense seemed to be waiting for most of their stuff. Once Jem himself and once Cleary were almost loose for big gains. But "almost" wasn't quite it. Jem was forced to punt from his own thirty three. And the visitors came slashing back.

SOME TOUGH line play finally stopped the rampant visitors again after Jem himself smacked Foulange so hard on a sweep that he fumbled to have it recovered for a

heavy loss by one of his own teammates. Again Jem was forced to boot it out of the hole. And Foulange, shifted back to the safety spot, ran the ball back to the Maroon thirty five. Two strikes failed. And then Foulange, zigzagging off the flank, pitched a touchdown pass. The Dexter rooting sections were silent as it went up on the scoreboard, Atlantic—28, Dexter—20.

Landeman fumbled on the first play after the next kickoff. And on the third down, Jem punted desperately again. It was a bad kick, angling out of bounds at midfield. The fullback began to envisage a defeat by a lopsided score even though the Atlantic coach had already taken out Foulange for a breather. The Maroon attack seemed to have lost its potency. Then a sub guard trotted on as Purvis and Jem Nye stared. Neither had given any signal for a replacement which was the way things were being run.

The new man said, "Gans isn't giving orders. He just says the member of the staff up at the rim of the stadium says if you shift to a five man line with a 3-2-1 secondary defense you'll stop these guys."

Purvis looked at Jem, got his weary nod, and gave the order. Atlantic made one first down, almost made a second on a pass that missed completion by a hair's breadth. And then with that secondary line of backs outflanking them, their attack broke down. The Maroon took the ball on downs, and the third quarter ended. Atlantic intercepted a pass of Jem's on a complex double reverse as the fourth quarter opened. Foulange returned to action, but once again that new Maroon defense bottled up Atlantic. They kicked down to Dexter's twenty six. Another replacement came in for the Maroon.

"Gans thinks a lot of you guys need a rest," he delivered this message. "But he says it's up to you."

Big weary Jem hesitated only a couple of minutes. Then he nodded, headed for the sidelines. Almost at once a small herd of reserves came running in. Landeman was relieved. So was Billson, so was Cleary and Bos

Purvis and half the line. As he went off, Jem saw Cauley standing in front of the bench with a puzzled look on his face. Then Gans, leathery face a mask, was walking to Jem as he crossed the sideline.

"The guy who was watching from up at the rim of the stadium has some suggestions. He thinks he knows how you can win—if you admit you're licked now." And he was thumbing toward a stocky figure in a belted raincoat with sun glasses hiding the upper part of his face and a slouch hat jammed low.

Then the man was moving toward Jem and Cauley and Landeman and the other first stringers. And by the way he walked, Jem realized it was Ab Fortson himself. Fortson jerked off the smoked glasses and ran his eyes over them.

"All right. You're losing it now. Do you want to win it—by just listening to some sense and taking orders?" he barked.

The battered Cauley muttered something. An angry retort was on Jem Nye's lips, the upper one of which was cut. Then he remembered how they had gotten the tip on the deep defense alignment that had stopped Atlantic from the "guy up on the rim of the stadium." Jem nodded hesitantly.

"You think we still can win, Ab?" he said.

"I know the better team when I see it. And it can win provided it uses its weapons to the best advantage—and time lasts long enough."

JEM GLANCED around at Bos Purvis and Landeman and the others of the rebels, read what was in their weary faces, and nodded. They were giving Ab Fortson back his team.

Fortson didn't gloat, didn't even so much as smirk. He just tossed away that hat, revealing his well-known short-cropped bullet head and took up his position in the center of the bench. And in a matter of minutes Jem had to admit to himself the old master was back at the helm.

The second stringers couldn't do much gaining against the Green and

White—they kicked. Foulange was back on the bench. Atlantic tore off a couple of fair gains, was set back by an offside penalty. Fortson sent in two more fresh linemen with detailed instructions. After a few moments, an Atlantic end-around was halted for a stiff loss. Then a spinner was stopped also as the center of the Maroon line crashed through. Atlantic kicked, certain they had the game well tucked away.

"We want a break—somewhere along now," Nye heard the head coach mutter. And it came sooner than anybody could have hoped.

Picking up a loose ball in his own backfield, a third-string kid for Dexter snaked through guard and garnered eleven and a first down. And on the next play, Atlantic, a little carless, was offside. After the penalty was paced off, the Maroon was sitting pretty for the moment. But a new man was already going in for Dexter. And Jem Nye had heard the final instructions Fortson had given him. It sounded crazy, too. Then it happened on the field, that quick kick. And Atlantic was caught flat-footed.

THERE WAS no safety man back there at all. A Maroon tackle downed it inside Atlantic's ten yard stripe, and Fortson sent his varsity line back into action, whacking each man on the shoulder as he dashed out.

The game abruptly seemed to have taken a new hue. One of Atlantic's razzle-dazzle plays came off for a short gain, but it was sandwiched in between two losses. And when they, a little worried, punted, it was half blocked. The Maroon downed the ball just inside the enemy forty. And Atlantic called for time out.

Fortson stood beside Jem at the sideline as the latter donned his cream-colored helmet. Fortson spoke very calmly.

"You fellows weren't quite as brilliant with the hipper dipper stuff as you thought, Jem. More than that, all the deception and flash in the world wears thin fast if you haven't got the straight ground attack to provide variety and threat."

Jem nodded meekly.

Fortson went on, "Dexter's hipper dipper has been clicking in the last quarter this season because the opposition has been worn down and slowed up by the combination of your running stuff to the inside and that tough strong line ripping them apart and cutting down the secondary. The opposition knocked itself out trying to stop the running game. Then, when the hipper dipper was turned on—do you see?"

"I do, I see, Ab," big Jem said sincerely.

"All right. Landeman, go in too. Jem, hit 'em with the running plays and keep shooting plenty inside. Then, if the time gets ripe."

Tired, legs heavy, discouraged at his own failure, yet as he ran in to report to the official, Jem Nye felt as if he were entering a new football game. He had a hunch it wasn't too late....

THEY began to cut and slash off the tackles, inside, over the flanks on sharp fast-opening plays. There were spinners and pass foints, acute cutbacks, occasionally an in-and-out play, with big Jem himself doing most of the leather-lugging. They kept faking to the outside, repeatedly shooting a man wide only to have him lateral back inside. The going was tough, an illegal man in action set them back once, but a break helped them as Landeman on a full spinner jumped over center, was hit, fumbled up into the air. But Billson, back in the game with an ankle brace, plucked the ball out of the air and legged it ahead for a first down before being dragged to earth by two tacklers.

Jeb's left knee began to ache with pain. His calves felt as if they were loaded with lead. And down around the enemy twenty, they lost the ball on downs when he and Landeman agreed not to resort to the aerials Atlantic expected. Foulange tried to run it for the visitors. He did execute one sweep on a daring naked reverse for a gain, but the Maroon line was bashing through repeatedly and spilling the star's blockers before they could get under way. The Green

and White punted, but it was hurried, high and angling. Landeman brought it back to the enemy thirty five.

Again that banging and tackle slashing began, big Jem crackling just inside the flanks on explosive cutbacks again and again. Once he was half knocked out and the trainer came on to revive him. And then Peanuts Cauley and Hartwell returned to the lineup, refreshed by their rest. But the flashy running halfback shook his head as they huddled. Fortson had not yet given the word to open up.

Cauley carried and sneaked over the right side for five yards after cutting and reversing his field as he feinted two pass throws. Big Jem went out closer on the left side on an in-and-out play, carrying two tacklers for an extra three yards as he made a fat first down. Landeman on a spinner that was stopped. Again no gain as Cleary ran it on an end-around. Then Jem was fading, arm cocked, only to lateral to Cleary who came sweeping around again. And that time the right end broke away to the twelve.

JEM remembered hazily blocking for Cauley as he cut short. And the explosive cheer from the stands that followed that one. He remembered two plays being brought up with no gain. And then Landeman squeezing his arm and telling him he could do it. And somehow, half dead with fatigue, he was booming on a cutback over tackle after taking a shovelled lateral from Cauley who'd feinted for a sweep. He saw two men converging on him, defensive backs. He stiff-armed one off, sliced away from the other. The man seemed slow. It was almost too easy. In a hazy way he realized they'd been slowed up by the pounding of that Maroon line ahead of those stabs and spinners and cutbacks, been worn down by the hammering impact of the running attack. He was running with a man clinging to him. Then Bull Hartwell came up beside him and yelled:

"You're over, big boy! You're over!"

It was a touchdown. They lined up and Bos Purvis came back to toe it over for the extra point to make it 28-27, but with Atlantic still in the lead. Jem strained his eyes at the big clock on the scoreboard and saw there was a little over four minutes of play left.

He doubted that they could pull the trick, but he was still honest enough to admit to himself that Ab Fortson was right. Fortson had known the team and its limitations better than any of them.

Atlantic naturally stalled after receiving the kickoff, fighting for that one-point advantage, out to freeze the ball as long as possible. Foulange came off the tackle and big Jem hit him. There was the crunch of bodies. Foulange limped off as a replacement came in for him. An Atlantic reverse was stopped cold. And then Bos Purvis bulled through and stole the ball from the quarterback as he faked it, spinning, on a double reverse.

The Maroon lined up behind a cursing snarling line on the Green and White forty-one. Jem slid off the right side and bucked ahead for four and wondered how he did it. Landeman faked twice and added four more on a quarterback sneak through the middle. The seconds were running out though. Then Landeman glanced at the bench, got the sign from Fortson, and said:

"All right. We start throwing rocks now."

JEM FAKED into the line and Cauley pitched. But Hartwell dropped it in the open. Jem hit the middle to pick up three for the first down. Cauley circled wide behind the flank and jump-passed to Landeman who hit for the open passes. But a whistle was blowing. An offside against the Maroon. It was heart-breaking.

There was a fumble in the backfield on a double reverse. Big Jem gathered it up and boomed through the line for eight. As the enemy secondary tightened up, Cauley looped out wide but was halted for no gain as one of his own blockers stumbled into

him. The situation was desperate. Jem hit for the line, handed it to the pivoting Purvis. Purvis shovelled it back to Cauley for the big pass. Cauley faced and cut and dodged like a cornered jackrabbit as he sought an uncovered receiver. There were none. And then, almost trapped, Cauley spotted the swaying battered Jem standing there at the scrimmage line. Cauley barked and triggered it to Jem. Grabbing it, the big fullback raced through the flattened line and was off. He simply just ran one tackler underneath him. The game ended while he crashed on. But the final play had to be completed.

And Jem Nye kept driving, swerving, lashing fiercely determined legs. He was down to the six before the spread defense could hem him in. And then he just lowered his head and went over for the touchdown, hauling two men with him. It put Dexter ahead, 33—28....

THE boisterous jubilant team half carried Jem into the fieldhouse. They practically had to. The bees buzzed in his head so he could barely stagger. But, some minutes later, when he was able to sit up on the rubbing table, he pushed away the men telling him what a great guy he was and walked slowly but purposefully to the closed door of the head coach's office.

Inside, Ab Fortson lolled back in his chair, again wearing that Camel coat that was his hallmark on Satur-

day afternoon. He said offhandedly, "We'll have to let in those sports reporters soon."

Big Jim rubbed a nose that felt as if a hammer had been applied to it. "Ab, I was wrong.... dead wrong.... If you want me to hand in my suit, say so. I wouldn't blame you if you never forgave me, Ab."

Fortson cocked an eyebrow. "Forgave you? Listen, Jem, this thing was building. That team was getting a swelled head. Thought they were better than they were, as good as they may be some day perhaps. You were square; you brought it out into the open. Now it's settled. So forget it."

He stood up and headed for the door, mouth set. Jem asked him what he meant to do, fearing perhaps Fortson might take it out on some of the lesser players who'd been among the rebels.

"Oh, just going out to tell them what damn good football they played in those final twelve minutes or so.... And," he paused as he passed the big fullback, punched one of his arms, "incidentally, Jem, you were a great fullback out there in that last quarter!"

Jem Nye smiled a little. He knew one thing. That afternoon he had learned more about football than he had in his whole previous experience....

THE END



In The January
Issue Of

On The Stage He Was A Wow!

But could Hamlet's magic help him when the murder of his lovely assistant brought him face to face with a

KING OF KILLERS

Don't Miss This Thrilling
Mystery Story

By **EMIL PETAJA**

Crack DETECTIVE Stories



The History Professor Goes To Ebbets Field

By **GEORGE W.
BISHOP, JR.**

What matters it if with the tread of time,
The world again binds up the wounds of war,
Or Kings and Empires vanish overnight,
Since Stanky's singled once again to right.

What matters it, and yet, again I find,
That history is being made today,
In every country underneath the sun,
While "Pee Wee" singles with the hit and run.

Our mind turns to the conquerors of old—
The Mongol chieftain, brilliant, Genghis Khan,
Who had all Asia at his beck and call—
Ah hah, my friends, see Reiser hit that ball!

And noble Caesar, with his legions strong,
Who brought within the fold of Ancient Rome,
Brave tribes, who to the Tiber brought their due—
Now, Dixie,—Over Bedford Avenue!

Alexander, of Macedon, who cried,
When there was no one left for him to fight.
A mighty warrior. Praise him for his feats.
Oh, Cookie, Park one in the left field seats!

We all recall grand Richard Coer de Lion,
Who taught the Infidel respect for him,
And his strong arm, greatest in his own day—
See Stevens start that snappy double play!

Napoleon, the little Corsican,
Made Europe feel his presence we all know,
And caused nations to raise the hue and cry—
See Whitman go and get that long high fly!

THE HISTORY PROFESSOR GOES TO EBBETTS FIELD

Jeb Stuart, of our own sad Civil War,
The North could never lay a hand on him.
Swiftly he rides, while sabers cut and jab—
See Edwards make that sudden, back hand, stab!

And who is there to choose 'tween Grant and Lee,
And who to say in all finality,
That one outshone the other in the fray—
Old Hig' and Casey sure are hot today!

JOHNNY ALL-AMERICAN

By FRED L. MELCHER

Are you a Johnny-on-the-spot when it comes to recalling football stars of past years? Here's a little quiz to test your memory. All the Johnnys listed below were All-American selections in the year shown, and to help you out a bit we've tossed in their alma maters. You fill in their last names.



| Position | Year | School | Name |
|--------------|------|----------------|------------|
| Left End | 1938 | Villanova | John _____ |
| Left Tackle | 1932 | Army | John _____ |
| Left Guard | 1945 | Army | John _____ |
| Center | 1944 | Indiana | John _____ |
| Right Guard | 1935 | Princeton | John _____ |
| Right Tackle | 1937 | Villanova | John _____ |
| Right End | 1943 | Notre Dame | John _____ |
| Back | 1940 | Texas A & M | John _____ |
| Back | 1938 | Michigan State | John _____ |
| Back | 1931 | Alabama | John _____ |
| Back | 1941 | Mississippi | John _____ |

(Answers On Page 96)



The Spoiler

By A. R. THURMAN

The set-up was neat, a little too neat for credibility, and Eddie Mulloy wasn't quite the starry-eyed, vacant-brained, eager-beaver he appeared to be!

EDDIE Mulloy ducked under a feathering left and thought how swell it would be to finish this fight without even having his red hair mussed. But you can't make a fast fight with a pretty solid puncher like Bo Black and think about your looks at the same time. You might have luck enough to escape the tough wallops, but you simply have to take a few light ones to connect—

With a gasp Eddie side-stepped, tilted his bobbing head and missed Bo's black, swishing arm by inches. Bo's heavy lips were curled now, and he was stewing up a bit of mad. Mounting failure was irritating. It had accelerated for three rounds since the second. He knew that Eddie had stowed away each of the five rounds neatly, piling one on the other much in the manner of a bricklayer putting up a wall.

And it was a wall. Bo Black was butting his anger-filled head against it stubbornly, fiercely. Eddie backtracked as the dusky middleweight charged with greater speed and power. He clipped the bullet-shaped head with hooks from both hands. They must have stung, for Eddie was not a light hitter. And he could shoot sharp. Cornered now, he laced the brown skin accidentally, but Bo Black regarded it as intentional.

The result was a fury that made Eddie forget all about his unmussed hair, and wonder if he'd escape from

this corner-trapped with his consciousness. He could have clinched and waltzed out, but that would've been the easy way. And the guy down in the first row, ringside, would have snickered. The idea was so to impress Joe Amada that he'd never forget this first sight of a fast and hard-punching middleweight. Eddie could see Amada's half-closed eyes, still doubting after five good rounds. Only it wouldn't be five, if he didn't get out of this mess—

The Parkside Arena seemed to vibrate with the roar from the crowd as Eddie fainted with his body and ducked to the other side. With a cry of dismay, Bo Black turned to follow, but ran into an unexpected barrage of straight punches that bobbed his head like piece of bark in a mill-race. Surprised and hurt, the boy tried to cover, but Eddie was ready for that. He lowered the attack and stepped up the speed of the hooks. He drew back when Black tried to clinch, and shifted the punches to the weary head. The roar of the crowd was so loud that Eddie didn't hear anything, not even the soggy slug of wet leather against a sweat-soaked and bleeding face.

He tried to fight off the clutches of the referee, and fully five seconds passed before the official could convince him that the round was over. Bo Black's seconds were in the ring claiming foul and demanding the

fight, but the referee advised them to get their fighter to his corner and in condition to answer the bell for the sixth, which was only fifty seconds away.

Two indifferent seconds broke five rounds of silence with exclamations of praise for the sensational finish. They had thought he was trapped. Panting, gasping for badly-needed breath, Eddie could hear their voices, but he scarcely understood the words. Of course it was good. It was also lucky. Bo Black was just sucker enough to fall for the feint. If he hadn't—

A CHILL and a shudder of reaction shook Eddie's glistening body and he closed his eyes to the imaginary fate. Young strength began to pour back through the stout arms and legs. The deep breaths of smoke-filled air contained enough oxygen to satisfy his needs. He sat erect on the stool as one of the seconds and then the other responded to the warning buzzer. He glanced down at the small, dark figure in the nearby ringside seat. Joe Amada met the glance with a shrug.

Eddie could feel the hot blood rushing to his face. What did the guy expect anyway, atomic fission? He was beating Bo Black, soundly and scientifically. Surely, the escape act in the tough fifth was enough to remove any remaining doubt.

Well, if it wasn't, Eddie muttered silently as he answered the bell, maybe this would. He hiked up his trunks with a mechanical movement of his elbows and strode across the ring. Bo Black came in behind a crouch, cautiously, slowly. Eddie started a left hook and then a right for the Bo's curly head. The ebony hands and arms went up, and Eddie's right hand came down, around and up. It sank into a small unprotected patch of leather-colored middle. Bo Black gasped, his hands went down instinctively, unavoidably, and Eddie's left crashed against the boy's cheekbone. The Bo staggered sideways and the crowd rose with a roar.

Eddie leaped after the unsteady

figure, and hooked with a right to the other cheekbone. Bo started toward the floor, but Eddie took no chance and smashed the hardest left of the fight to make sure that the thing was over. With a final glance at the topping figure, he walked to the nearest neutral corner, waited for the count, then helped the stricken boy to his corner.

"It was good. It was quick an' clean," Joe Amada agreed noncommittally, and studied his lighted cigaret.

Eddie Mulloy watched the swarthy features for sign of capitulation. He reached under the cloth-covered restaurant table and found a small, feminine hand. He squeezed it reassuringly, and the girl at his side blushed. Joe Amada smiled.

"Of course, if you head for Chicago," he said, nodding at the blonde. "Miss Heran can't be around. She stays here."

"Rose knows that," Eddie said quickly. "Don't you, Rose?"

The girl nodded and managed a wry smile. "Yes, I know," she said. "Dames is perzon to fighters—"

"Not at all," Amada corrected.

"Yes, while they're fighting," Rose insisted. "After they're washed up, though, a girl comes in mighty handy."

"Don't talk like that," Eddie laughed. "She's only kidding, Joe. Y'see, we...well, we're kinda nuts about each other."

Amada shrugged. "That's understandable. After all, where'd any of us be, if somebody wasn't nuts about somebody else? The point I mean is, if you head for Chicago, we have to move aroun' an' fast. It's all business. Very little pleasure, practically none. You'll pardon my language, Miss, but it's damned hard work."

"Well, what's the answer?" Eddie persisted.

"Will this old fella, Pop—"

"Pop Alderman," the fighter finished.

"Will he be satisfied with a grand? An' no strings on you?"

"Sure, he'll let me go," Eddie said. "He'll sign a waiver of claim or any-

thing. He's been like a father to me all along. Taught me everything I know about fight. He wants me to go up."

"You might as well know," Amada went on, "that gettin' into big-time matches, with a whack at the title, takes more'n just a contract. It takes pull, finesse, politics, contacts—valuable contacts. Frankly, it costs dough."

"But it also returns big dough," Eddie reminded. "I'm prepared for that, so long as you can guarantee bigger matches, and a fight for the title—"

"When you make the grade," Amada added quickly. "You cert'ny don't want a title shot nex' time out."

"But I want a title shot within a year," Eddie said firmly, "and I want that in the contract. Otherwise, there's no sense of my making the change from Pop to you and Monk Everly."

Amada held up a restraining hand. "Please," he cautioned. "I said not to mention Monk. He doesn't figure in the contract as a party. I'm the manager, I take one third an' expenses."

"And the expenses won't go beyond fifty percent of my gross take, right?" Eddie asked. "That'll be in the contract."

Rose's pretty face broke into a smile, for her Eddie was driving a nice bargain. He wasn't being pushed around. They just couldn't push him around, in the ring or out.

"That's a fair demand," Amada declared. "I'll have the papers drawn up, an' we'll head for Chicago. Whether or not you get there is up to you. I'll make the matches—"

"And I'll win 'em," Eddie finished, slapping the table firmly. "Like I did tonight. Is that okay with Roscoe Harris?"

Amada laughed. "Roscoe Harris is in business to promote live matches, an' he never ignored a consistent winner. He won't ignore you, if you keep on winnin'."

MONK EVERLY paced the carpeted confines of his inner office at Chicago and digested the array of developments reported by Joe

Amada. He walked with a quick, waddling step, as though trying constantly to balance his thickset and powerful body. His brush-cut hair was blond—almost white, and his light blue eyes seemed hidden behind white and narrowed lashes. He wasn't exactly displeased with Amada's report, because the courier had followed general orders. But he could see no particular advantage, beyond the fact that Eddie Mulloy had been signed to a contract.

"The old man," Monk muttered and slapped the back of one hand against the palm of the other. "Did he have to get a grand?"

"Pop Alderman?"

"Pop!" Monk exclaimed with impatience. "Another 'pop.' Why do they always call those two-by-four local managers Doc or Pop?"

"Maybe it's because he was like a father to the kid," Amada suggested simply, and received a look of disgust from Everly.

"He could've been froze out," the nervous Monk went on, still pacing. "This dame—"

"Rose Heran," Amada finished. "She stays there."

Monk grinned slyly and adjusted his green tie. "Maybe she could've come on to Chicago an' waited."

"You said to stash the dame there," Amada protested.

"A dope could realize there *could* be exceptions," Monk murmured.

"Not that dame," Amada laughed. "Strictly the fixated type. She can't see nothin' but Mulloy. Take it from me, she'd be a nuisance anywhere but back home."

"Well, a good-lookin' nuisance makes a headache worth while."

Monk sighed. Then he stopped pacing, and his white brows mashed down into a scowl. He studied the swarthy Amada, who stirred uncomfortably, and crunched the remains of a lighted cigaret.

"You guaranteed Mulloy a title shot within a year," Everly said mechanically. "Fifty percent maximum—"

"Look, Monk," Amada protested. "The kid's got nineteen kayos in twenty-three fights since he quit the

army."

"Local yokels... for peanuts—"

"You tol' me to judge by the Bo Black fight," Amada interrupted, his voice rising. "On what I saw in that fight, Mulloy is rank poison. He'd get to New York in no time, an' all your build-up work on Rocky Hood wouldn't be worth a dime. This way, you've got him. After two lousy fights, he goes back to Pop an' the sticks. *Two fights!*"

Everly nodded his bristling white head. Of course, that was way it would be—the way it *had* to be. You simply can't spend a small fortune building up a strong contender for a high-priced middleweight title shot for Chicago, and then see an unbridled muscle-man come along to upset the fruit-cart. Yet, Monk Everly wished that he could have handled the details. He'd have felt safer, though it seemed all right, except that it wasn't quite one-sided enough. Still, Amada had done his best. Joe was an honest fellow... so far.

"Two fights," Monk mused, and finally sought the comfort of his cushioned swivel chair. "Babe Fenton'll do it in the second at Springfield. He can't miss.

"Fenton *has* to do it!" Amada exclaimed. Now he lighted another cigarette. "Fenton will watch his fight with Corrigan... Mulloy'll be carried. We'll take movies. We'll run 'em in slow motion. Babe'll know every kind of move Mulloy can make. It's simple!"

"I think you're right, Joe!" Monk said, and punctuated his belief with a loud slap of the desk. "Okay, go ahead. Take him into Jackson. I'll have a good set-up. Plenty of lights. We'll get the best camera man for the job. Take good care of the kid. See that he gets plenty to eat. Heh-heh!"

Amada joined the laughter. He could laugh now, for the strain of the situation had subsided. Monk Everly was a tough article to please, and you strove to please him, because the consequences were always painful when you failed. Disappointment and chagrin made him break out in a rash of temper and inhuman rage. But this was okay, Monk was smiling. The

pale blue eyes disappeared completely behind the white lashes. Rocky Hood would be kept in line for the big shot at the middleweight title in New York.

A FEW DAYS later Eddie Mulloy was bidding a very fond goodbye to Rose Heran. She was clinging to his coat lapels, his sleeve—anything that would give her the assurance that he wasn't gone. Eddie chided her gently.

"This'll be quick and simple, honey," he confided.

"That's what I'm afraid of," she admitted. "Very quick... and you'll be left simple. And I don't mean to be funny."

"But I got a charmed life, don't you know that?" he laughed. "I knew it all through the Pacific unpleasantness. They couldn't even hurt me. And how do you think anybody in the fight business can do what bullets failed to?"

She sighed and shook her yellow head wearily. "You're just too confident," she said. "Phone me as soon as it's over."

Eddie promised and they walked to the station-platform. The train roared in, whistled to a stop. Eddie kissed her flushed cheek and raced up the steps without looking back. He threw the small bag into a vacant seat, pushed back his felt hat and wished aloud that he could be as confident as he tried to sound—even half as confident. He wasn't afraid of what he could see. The scary feeling came from an unseen enemy.

What or where it was, Eddie couldn't say. He only knew that it existed, chiefly on the strength of the fact that somebody just doesn't drop out of the sky and offer you an express trip to heaven. That's what Joe Amada's offer amounted to: a swift journey from nonentity to stardom in the big time. It was something that Pop Alderman, with all his cunning, craft and managing experience, couldn't arrange. Pop had admitted as much, reluctantly, of course.

Pop was old, maybe too old for the business of piloting a fighter into big gates in this stream-lined age. Eddie

Mulloy had thought of that, but it was up to Pop to say so. Now that Joe Amada dropped out of nowhere with his offer, Pop had willingly agreed to let go. Eddie should've been screaming with joy. Instead, he was wondering why...why...why?

Now this quick match with Kayo Corrigan, a strong and rugged veteran who had things pretty much his own way around Jackson. He'd come in well over the middleweight limit of 160. Eddie was sure of that, and Pop Alderman had warned Eddie about it. You couldn't protest, because Amada certainly had the interests of his fighter at heart. He was out to make money from better fights. If Eddie didn't show to good advantage, Amada would suffer. Well, Amada didn't look like that kind of sucker.

NO, SIR, HE'D see that his fighter got a fair shake. Eddie heaved a welcome sigh as he spied Amada on the station platform at Jackson. The swarthy face contained a warm, thin smile, and he gripped Eddie's big hand.

"Glad to see you, kid," Amada greeted. "We got the town steamed up pretty good."

"More the merrier," the fighter said. "I like the way you keep your promise, Joe. I hope I can live up to mine."

"You'll be okay," Amada said, as they taxied to the hotel. "Just don't let success go to your head. Especially tonight. Corrigan has made a reputation on eager beavers."

Eddie nodded understandingly. "You mean, I've got to feel out this guy? Take it easy at first?"

"Anything else would be suicide," Amada muttered. "You can pick him to pieces, get the duke nicely. But rush him, and he knows the answers. He'd send you back to Rose in sections."

Eddie winced, but he understood. Amada had said the work would be hard. All you had to do was keep your head, use your eyes and your fists. Okay, he could do that. It was an easy rule to follow.

Recreation Hall was nearly full

when Amada and Eddie arrived at 8.30 p. m., and the empty seats had disappeared when the Commission Inspector entered the dressing room to announce that he was on next. Only then did the feeling of apprehension grow deep, and set his bare legs to trembling. Amada noticed the vibration and laughed.

"It's not that bad, kid," he whispered. "Just another fight. It'll disappear when you climb into the ring."

"I hope so," Eddie murmured, but he had his doubts.

But he forgot the shaking knees as he entered the auditorium proper, for he blinked from the unexpected glare. It was the brightest ring he had ever seen. He ducked away and his face behind Amada's shoulder. The contrast from the dark hallway and the brilliant hall was almost frightening. He said so.

"It's big-time, Eddie," Amada explained, and led him down the noisy aisle. "Neon lights. They glare. Also, they make photographs better. This shindig has drawn a lot of interest."

Eddie could understand that. It was the biggest bank of press seats he had ever seen in a comparatively small fight house.

"Any writers here from Chicago?" Eddie asked.

Amada nodded. "Couple...nobody of importance, but don't let that bother you. Get in there, give 'em something to write about."

"That's an idea," Eddie said, grinning.

He thought of the greatest fight in ring history. He hadn't seen it, of course. He wasn't even born when it was staged, but he had read more about it than any other. Pop Alderman had seen it, and Pop considered it the greatest. Pop knew. Eddie was still grinning when the referee called them together for the instructions. Corrigan, more of a light heavy than a middleweight, was a powerhouse with a florid face and a shock of straight black hair. He was scowling, but avoiding Eddie's copper-colored eyes. Eddie felt the referee's final slap and heard the admonition to come out fighting. He touched Cor-

rigan's gloves and raced to his corner.

Amada dragged off the robe. The referee held up his hand. The bell sounded. Eddie dashed from his corner and reached the opposite area in a few long strides. He was swinging as he raced, swinging and timing the most vicious right hand he ever threw. Corrigan wasn't even looking. The cry of the crowd had startled him. He took the full force of the right on his jaw and fell back against the ropes. His eyes glassed. His head fell back. Eddie smacked it with a left. He started a right, but pulled it. He turned to the referee.

"This man is unconscious! What'll I do?"

THE REFEREE hastened over. His face was pale, his lips apart. He swallowed nervously and tugged at Corrigan's arm. The fighter lurched forward and fell prone on his face. Eddie turned toward a neutral corner, but the trip was unnecessary. They were hauling Corrigan on to his stool, dousing him with water and stuffing the ammonia bottle up his nose.

Eddie watched the faces at the ringside in the white glare of the unusual lights. They were dividing attention between Corrigan and this amazing red-head. They didn't know what to do, or say. They weren't all writers, either. Eddie could see that. Some—

"Come over here, wise guy!"

Amada tugged angrily at his bare arms. Undeniably outraged, Amada cut the laces with careless slashes of a small blade. Eddie watched, half-smiling. It was as he thought. A manager doesn't like to be crossed.

"Be careful of that knife," Eddie cautioned. "I get hurt easy."

"I oughta cut your throat," Amada muttered.

"Or your own, eh, Joe?" the fighter laughed.

"Listen, mug, we wanted to get a line on you."

"Who's we? You and the name of the man I'm not supposed to mention. That's the line on me. I'm crazy, but I can punch."

Now the bustle of the crowd reached bedlam stage. They were clamoring for another fight, their money back, a re-match, another look at Eddie Mulloy. They charged frame-up, dive, and sundry accusations. Amada ignored them, and hustled Eddie from the ring before the announcer could quiet them down long enough to call the official time, which may or may not have been some kind of record. Certainly, it was one of the shortest fights ever staged.

"I got to phone Rose," Eddie said. "I promised."

"Tell her you won't see her for a spell," Amada growled. "You're comin' to Chicago with me!"

EDDIE Mulloy didn't like Monk Everly's looks, and made no effort to hide his feelings. He had been brought to the Chicago inner sanctum against his will, though without force. His idea had been to return to Rose and Pop Alderman for a visit and a celebration before starting work for his next fight. Amada's insistence that he see Everly in Chicago seemed nonsense, until the Monk began his harrangue.

"Did we meet all the conditions you asked?" he thundered.

Eddie nodded, his gaze fixed upon the narrowed eyes.

"Then, why didn't you meet our demands when we ordered you to fight Corrigan a certain way?"

"Because my way was better... more thrilling."

"What gave you that idea?"

"Jack Dempsey," Eddie replied blandly. "The most thrilling fight in history was one of the shortest—less than two rounds. Dempsey and Firpo. The length of a fight means nothing, if there's no action. The crowd remember only the big round. One is enough."

"That's story-book stuff!" Joe Amada exclaimed angrily. "You agreed to feel out Corrigan, cut him down, put on a show, give us a look at you over a distance."

"I didn't promise outright," Eddie corrected. "I sort of asked if that was what you wanted."

"You *knew* that was the thing we

wanted," Everly shouted, and he punched the desk for emphasis. "We got to see what you look like."

Eddie shrugged. "I figured Joe here saw plenty of me against Bo Black." Then he grinned. "Maybe if it hadn't been for the kleig lights. I wouldn't have changed my mind. When I saw the moving-picture camera, and you hadn't said a word about movie profits in my contract—"

"You stupid yokel!" Everly muttered savagely. "That was to study your style. We weren't sellin' any films. What makes you think you're a box office attraction?"

"I am now," Eddie reminded. "I kayoed Corrigan in less than twelve seconds, pretty near the record. It's a record for middleweights. If you take movies of the next fight—"

"We won't!" Everly broke in. "What's more, you'll never want to see the pictures of your next fight. We were going to bring you along slowly, but you want speed. Well, my young bucko, that's what you'll get. You're a good drawin' card, so we'll let you climb as fast as you want to. Your next fight is with Babe Fenton."

"Is he a light-heavy or a heavy-weight?" Eddie asked, smiling.

"He's a middleweight!" Amada roared, unable to check his temper.

"Corrigan wasn't," Eddie reminded angrily. "He was close to one-seventy or more. Just make sure this bum, Denton—"

"Fenton!" Amada roared. He rose and advanced toward Eddie.

"Siddown, Joe," Monk ordered. "Don't take the hook. I think we're bein' taken for a ride." He emerged from behind the desk and crossed over to the fighter. "You meet Fenton a week from tonight in Springfield. Take my advice an' save your good humor for the fight. You'll need it. That's all."

"Except the money," Eddie corrected. "I need a thousand in advance, besides what I earned on the Corrigan fight."

"A thousand for what?" Everly puzzled. "Don't you trust me?"

"That has nothing to do with it."

the fighter said, rising. "I'm betting every dime I have that I'll beat Fenton."

Everly and Amada exchanged glances. The Monk's face slowly twisted into a humorless smile. The blue eyes disappeared.

"In that case," he said, reaching into the desk drawer, "Take two grand . . . in cash. I'm sure you'll find plenty of takers!"

SPRINGFIELD may have been a warm spot for native citizens, but it contained a special chill for Eddie Mulloy. And the chill didn't come from the early Winter weather, or lack of heat in the hotel. It came from that confounded apprehension that seemed to be mounting in Eddie's system. The unseen enemy, so to speak. He could feel something tightening around him, yet couldn't see it.

Maybe, he said over and over again, between trips to check the door-latch, he should have returned home to be with Rose and Pop Alderman. But getting to Springfield seemed more important than all else. Whatever Monk and Joe Amada had up their sleeves besides their arms would happen in Springfield, and Eddie wanted to be on the scene early, in case.

The whole sickly business unfolded now as he checked back among the events leading up to the first appearance of Joe Amada. Eddie could have sworn Amada was at several fights, but perhaps it was his imagination going into high gear. Thin, swarthy, shifty-eyed—Amada was the personification of his type that infests fight clubs. Some are better. Some are worse, perhaps. Eddie wasn't sure of how bad Amada was. Suppose he offered the guy money—

Too late. He could only wait for whatever was to be. Meanwhile, he limited his "training" to floor-pacing, and a stiff piece of roadwork out toward the Springfield suburbs. He got out early and didn't loiter. In this way he kept his body supple. Three days passed—three days of loneliness and fitful sleep—before

Joe Amada showed up. And he wasn't alone.

Eddie was digesting the fight ballyhoo in early afternoon when the knock came. He called, and Amada answered. Eddie opened it. The manager entered, followed by a larger character, whose puffy face indicated that he may have seen better days in the ring.

"Al Axelrod," Amada introduced, thumbing over his shoulder.

Eddie nodded, but offered no hand, because one good, bruising squeeze might be in the program. He closed the door behind them.

"Axie'll take your bet," Amada said. "You can get nine to five. Axie runs bets for a big Chicago bookie."

"I placed it in Chicago," Eddie said. "I couldn't wait, and I got good odds."

Amada's swarthy face darkened. "What is this?" he stormed. "You said you were goin' home. We went there, waited, an' now you're here. Are you punchy, or somethin'?"

"Could be," Eddie replied blandly. He motioned to chairs. "I didn't know you wanted the bet. You had plenty of time to tell me that before I left Chicago. Is Monk a book-maker?"

"Monk who?" Amada echoed cryptically, and looked at Axelrod's startled face. "Skip it. What I want to know is your condition. Pop Alderman thought you'd be back there to train. Have you done any trainin' at all?"

Eddie shrugged. "I've paced this floor a lot. I haven't been able to get out much," he apologized. "People recognize me from the newspaper pictures, and they pester me."

"Okay, it's your funeral," Amada muttered and lighted a cigaret. "Come on, Axie." He turned to Eddie. "See that you don't fall down any coal holes between now an' the fight."

"I know the date," Eddie laughed, and closed the door behind them. He snapped the lock, and leaned against it. "Whew!" he murmured. "Good thing I got rid of that dough."

SO, AMADA was satisfied, as long as he had bet the money on himself in Chicago. Evidently Monk Everly was picking up whatever came to hand. Suppose he had told them the truth: that the money was safe in Rose Heran's hands, banked in her name back home!

He shuddered at the pictured consequences—a brawl with Al Axelrod, and no holds barred. What a mess! Good thing Rose didn't suspect. He had kidded her into believing that this was just a tea party, staged for the sole purpose of getting enough dough together for a happy marriage, with no money worries from the start. She'd have fits, Rose would, if she ever suspected the possible consequences of defying this Chicago lightning. No telling what a girl like Rose would do. Girls in love are funny—

Eddie learned exactly what "a girl like Rose in love" would do, for she descended upon Springfield the day before the fight, breathless and with a desperate apprehension. She reached the room unannounced and refused to be quieted.

"It's insane. it's suicidal!" she protested. "Eddie, you simply can't do it. You can't fight him. You don't know—"

"Wait a minute, honey," he interrupted and tried to hold her. She pulled away, and brushed back a loose strand of straw-colored hair. "It's a little late to back out, and... why do you say it?"

"I know everything about this sickening mess!" she exclaimed.

"Did you put the money away all right?" he asked, hoping to change the subject.

"Let me give the money to this... this Amada," she pleaded. "Ask him to let you off. He'll make a thousand clear."

"Is the two grand in the bank?"

"Yes, but—"

"Then sit down and calm yourself, honey," he said softly, and led her to an overstuffed chair. "Let me take your coat."

She let the garment drop from her shoulders and said, "Eddie, you're fighting a spoiler...the toughest

ring-cop in the business. They're out to stop you from getting a title match, even if it means... *killing you!*"

"Who told you this?" he puzzled. When she failed to answer he supplied it. "Pop Alderman." His red head shook sadly from side to side. "You wormed it out of him. . . like a woman. Honey, I told you everything was okay. I know what I'm doing. I've known all along."

"You...you've known they were out to deliberately cross you?"

"Yes...sure," Eddie declared. "I don't know exactly when I was positive, but I suspected from the first—Amada dropping from the sky that way, with gold and glory in each hand for me. I knew he had a price, but I was willing to find out the price later, and pay it, regardless."

"But me..." Rose stammered, stifling a sob. "Didn't I figure? Didn't you realize that *I'd* have to pay part of the price."

"Look, honey," he said, replacing her coat. "Let's get down to the station. You take a train back home. You'll go nuts around this town before the fight, and I wouldn't let you see it anyway."

He passed up the elevator, led her down the back stairs and out a rear door to escape a milling fight crowd in the lobby. At the station he said:

"Just remember this: Crooked guys always have an angle and so have a weakness. I've spotted it every time so far, and I'll spot it tomorrow night. Tell Pop I'm safe as a government bond."

THE "SPOILER," the "ring cop," or by whatever other name he is known, necessarily works in rat-like fashion, protected by darkness or channels beyond normal reach. Invariably, his identity is seldom known, until after his lethal wallops have been administered. Eddie Mully had heard Pop Alderman speak of them, never dreaming that he would meet up with the opposition.

Even Pop admitted that this was something new—the gang behind the ring cop going out after trouble be-

fore it struck. He wasn't sure, until Eddie had convinced him. Then Pop Alderman had wanted to pull Eddie out of the "mess." That was when Eddie revolted and tackled the situation alone. Sure, it was dangerous, but half the battle was knowing that underhanded treatment was on the way. The fight was a little tougher, sure, but the real trouble came with expecting the unexpected between fights. You couldn't be too sure of what the opposition would try to pull.

Thus, Eddie reached fight time with quaking knees, but all in one piece. Joe Amada was in attendance, and two strange seconds. The Springfield Coliseum was loaded to the rafters, for Babe Fenton had a tremendous following, a hero of countless slaughters. Eddie had stopped worrying about the fellow's weight, because Amada wouldn't tell the truth anyway. More important was the fight itself. And the introductions.

Eddie was all eyes as they stood at the microphone and listened to the referee's instructions about "clean punches, you two know the rules, I want you to break..." Eddie studied the inside of Fenton's gloves. With the order, shake hands now and come out fighting, Fenton extended his hands. Eddie twisted, slipped Fenton's left arm under his own, turned and gripped the right arm similarly, so that he had both gloves locked and exposed. A cry of protest rose from the ringside and from Fenton seconds, but Eddie's was louder, for he used the microphone.

"Take those two pieces of wood from these gloves!" he called.

"Go to your corner!" the referee shouted.

"Take 'em out, I say!" Eddie yelled. "They slipped swabbing sticks in behind the twisted laces to make 'em protrude more. You take 'em out now, or I'll demand a forfeit. I'll make you give every dime back to the crowd. Take 'em out... take 'em out!"

Excitement mounted as Fenton cursed and struggled to free his pinioned forearms, but Eddie's elbows were gripping with vise-like

strength, keeping the groves exposed. He continued to shout his demand into the microphone until the perspiring referee acceded. The official finally examined the lacing and, within full view of 10,000 outraged partisans, withdrew two inch-wide tongue depressors from behind the twisted lacing of Fenton's gloves.

"Thanks!" Eddie called into the microphone. "The twisted lacing won't cut as deep now!"

"That won't save you, wise guy!" Amada muttered as Eddie returned to the corner for the bell. "You're on your own!"

"I knew that long ago," the fighter returned. "One look at you and I knew I was in a rat-race. You wanted to see me box. Well, you'll have plenty of time tonight."

THE BELL sounded, and Babe Fenton rushed to the center of the ring. He fainted a left. Eddie moved with the feint and took a light right to the head. He careened and tumbled to the floor. As the crowd shouted approval, he took a count of seven. Any more was a mathematical risk.

Rising, he jumped free of Fenton's lunge, threw a few feathery lefts and watched the bruising Fenton come on for the kill. He was a large and leather-faced fellow with heavy whiskers and bushy brown hair. His mouth was drawn in a tight line as he measured his quarry, edging closer with each step. He was edging Eddie into a corner, and Eddie knew it. Space was running out, but Fenton was getting closer. Close enough—

A sudden overhand hook came out of nowhere and descended with pile-driving force on the bridge of Babe Fenton's nose. It landed with the sledge-like sound of a wet rag, and Eddie could feel the impact to his shoulder. He stepped to the left and turned Fenton around with the same motion. The bruiser was gasping in pain, but Eddie didn't pause to admire the view. He danced in and out, stabbing, thrusting, cutting with close-up hooks. The nose—or what was once a nose—seemed spread all

over, yet hadn't started bleeding. Thus, Eddie continued to punch, and cut, aiming at first the left eye and then the right.

He must have thrown a dozen well-directed and savage hooks at each eye before the puffy flesh closed them to view. And yet, the round was scarcely half-over. Fenton hadn't moved from the corner. He couldn't see to move, nor to protect himself. With the eyes closed, Eddie set out to cut the lips to ribbons, if he could. The referee now began to come close and, after three solid whacks that reduced the puffed lips to spongy masses, he held up his hands and rushed in between Eddie and his quarry.

In an instant the ring was filled with seconds. Then came the police, for the defeat of Fenton meant serious trouble. Eddie rushed to the cops, his face split by a grin.

"Is there a man among you named Mulloy?" he shouted.

"Mine's O'Brien," said a sergeant. "That's just as good. Here, step between me and McNally."

"Fine, now if you'll just stay with me till I get on the train out of here, I'll be able to leave in one piece," Eddie said.

The unbridled shouts of a Coliseum gone mad drowned the rest of his words. He watched Amada helping minister to Fenton, who was emptying his stomach of a nose hemorrhage.

Amada finally returned to his own fighter and motioned him from the ring. Eddie took the arms of the police, O'Brien and McNally, and followed to the dressing room.

"You've outsmarted us twice." Amada said coldly as he removed the sodden gloves. "You didn't even bet the money, did you?"

"Nope," Eddie replied and unwrapped the bandages from his hands. "It's safe in the bank back home... with my girl."

"We're sellin' your contract... to a guy in New York," Amada murmured. "In that way, Monk can get you a fight with Rocky Hood."

"That's okay with me," Eddie

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Track Champ

By TED STRATTON

When a kid's determined to learn the hard way, the only thing to do is to let him go, and hope he'll get wise in time!

ELEVEN thousand track fans jammed the Coliseum to the rafters for the annual running of the Eastern Indoor Track Meet at Buffalo. Five hundred spectators stood in the lobby, thick as crowded wheat stalks at harvest, and craned their necks for a fractional glimpse of scantily clad tracksters who thudded past on the steeply banked south turn next to Broad Street.

A flat voice blared over the loud speaker: "Last call for the six finalists, the Sixty-yard Special Sprint Race! In lane one, Mathewson of

North Tech; lane two, Whizzer Webb, the defending champion; lane three, Batson of—uh, Colburn College; lane four—"

Inside the oval, young Tom Batson began to dance out the kinks in his smoothly muscled legs. He remembered the last words of his coach, chunky, silver-thatched John Rorke. "Starting you tonight was a gamble, son, because the sixty-yard dash is all over in a single breath. You did well to fight through to the finals. If things break right at the start, you've a slim chance to cop.

Anyway—good luck and give your all for Colburn.”

Butterflies bumped together in his stomach. He took several slow, deep breaths of the stifling air and eased the trip-hammer pounding of his heart. The muffled surf in his ears he recognized for what it was—the nervousness of an athlete before a big race.

The great Whizzer Webb was no stranger to the local track fans. The big-sprocketed flyer from the mid-West had been crowned the National A.A.U. sprints champion at Randall's Island the previous summer. By all standards, he was the fastest man in America, a sure double sprint winner in the Olympics—if the war hadn't cancelled international competition.

There was time before the race for a single trial start. Tom crouched on the blocks, ghosted off easily, taking a single inhalation. Short, driving steps on the shift into high. Easing off, he turned and trotted back. Near the starting line, a tall blond-haired runner with big-muscled thighs, said: “Swell crowd out for the meet, Batson. Who's going to cop this race?”

Tom grinned, said: “You.”

“Mallarky,” Whizzer Webb grunted. “You did very well in qualifying. Why not pick yourself?”

“I'm a track oddity,” Tom explained seriously. “Actually, I'm a quarter miler during the outdoor season, Whizzer. My coach took a gamble because I start pretty fast. I guess I've just been lucky so far.”

“Mallarky,” Webb repeated. “You looked plenty good to me.”

Easily the lithe runner slipped into a rhythmic dance with plenty of high knee action that whipped his leg muscles like soft jello. He was tall, leggy, with breadth through the shoulders and long arms to pull his body forward. And swift. Just look at the records.

The clerk of the course blew a sharp blast on his whistle. The runners approached the starting blocks. The clerk checked their positions in the lanes, nodded. Cocky Bill McCue, the veteran starter, strolled across the boards.

“Now just yez relax, boys,” McCue brogued breezily. “I'll take care of the preliminaries and then it's up to yez all. If anyone beats the gun, I'll fire a recall. Two false breaks for one of yez and it's down to the showers for the night, see? Come along, boys, and we'll get this thing over.”

The six sprinters grinned and set their rubber-spiked shoes against the high blocks. An expectant hush settled over the crowd. Somewhere nearby an excited youngster piped: “Hey, pop! Which one is the Whizzer?”

In the stillness, a high yell rocketed across the floor. “Come on, Tom!” Tom thought: “That's my roommate, Spud Nash.”

McCue backed off the track. Up came the .22 calibre pistol loaded with blank cartridges. The first order: “Marks, boys.”

THE GRINS vanished. Tom settled his weight lightly on hands and one bent knee. McCue called sharply: “Set!” Up came six tails in unison. Six men tensed like statues in the park. Tom's eyes found a spot ten yards down the boards and glued his gaze fast. The pregnant pause.

CRACK.

The pistol spat flame and tiny fury. The tension snapped. Coiled bodies lunged forward and upward. Tom snapped off five quick steps. No runner showed on the right or left of him. Jubilant, he realized that he had beat the field off the marks. Could he hold the brief important advantage? Could he hold off Whizzer Webb's challenge?

One swift inhalation had filled his lungs. Hold that, by sticking out the chest. Tuck in the chin, arc the arms smoothly and blaze down the wide lane. Up ahead he saw the chest-high red yarn that was drawn taut across the finish line. Rapidly it drew nearer. Then, up from the rear, he heard the rising thud of pursuing spikes. Whizzer Webb, the big-sprocketed champ!

Tom gathered his body for the important times, all-out “throw” for the finish yarn. From one eye corner he glimpsed the Whizzer's approach-

ing profile. A roar from the crowd. He flung his body forward in a last mighty effort....

Slap on the brakes and open the eyes wide. Up ahead he spotted the broad scarlet jersey on Whizzer's back, topped by the sleek blond head. Let out the held breath in a "whoosh," slow to a stop. "For a reformed quarter mile," Tom thought, "I did a good job to stave off his finish kick for so long! John will be pleased. Yeah, I did well for Colburn."

Whizzer turned around on one heel. There was a tight expression in his fine eyes, around his lips. Tom grabbed his hand, pumped. "You're great," he enthused. "What a kick in those legs! I thought you wouldn't catch me, but—"

The tension slid off Whizzer's face. "Mallarky, plain mallarky! Take a look at your chest, Batson."

Puzzled, Tom glanced down. He saw it for the first time. Across his thin blue jersey—the long raveled red yarn, the proud badge of victory. "But it can't be," he thought. "He's a champ."

But Whizzer was shaking Tom's hand, patting his arm and saying: "A nice win, Batson. You're lightning off the blocks."

"I can't believe it yet!" Tom gasped.

"It's true. You won, Batson. You'll be out on the Coast for the championships next summer. We'll match strides again."

It was true. He'd just licked the fastest sprinter in America! Tom Batson, the unknown quarter miler from Colburn College, had licked the famous Whizzer. Run him right into the boards of the Coliseum! Tom Batson, the new champ!

A little wonder in their eyes, the officials crowded around Tom and shook his hand. He overheard an elderly man in a Tuxedo say: "Now I've seen everything, Mike! An unknown beating the Whizzer!"

And Mike Diestel, the famous timer, nodding and answering: "Reminded me of Barney Elwell the night he set the world's record. Just catapulted down that stretch!"

"Three more yards," someone else

interrupted, "and the Whizzer would have nipped him. He was just getting up steam and—"

The photographers took the usual number of pictures. There was a shot of the Whizzer congratulating Tom Batson for the mystification of track fans all over the country. Tomorrow morning they'd pick up their Sunday papers and mutter over coffee and toast: "Batson? I never heard of *him*! What happened?"

Then the crowd scattered and Webb disappeared and Tom headed for the ramp. Past the banked fans. Handclaps. He waved one hand. It was great. Great to be the new champ! And through it all, four words beat a wild, exuberant iteration in his mind: "I beat a champ! I beat a champ! I beat—"

DOWNSTAIRS. The little contingent of Colburn tracksters shouted the incoherent words of athletes in the moment of great victory. John Rorke's eyes were filled with pride and the wisdom gained from watching a thousand trained athletes run down through the years. "A nice race, lad," John Rorke said. "The gamble paid off, but it was just that. You'll have confidence now to run a faster quarter outdoors this spring."

Spud Nash, Tom's long-legged roommate. "Wouldn't have missed seeing you win for anything!" Spud chattered while Tom slipped off the flimsy blue regimentals of Colburn College. "Sure, I bummed rides out here through zero weather. Boy, oh, boy! A champ I got for a roommate! Did you hear me shout 'Come on' at the start, Tom?"

Tom nodded, his thought zooming high in the sky outside the Coliseum. "Thanks, pal."

Later, home on the snow-blanketed campus of Colburn College. Headlines in the *Blue Target*, the campus newspaper. COLBURN STAR LICKS FAMED SPRINTER. FIRST LOCAL RUNNER EVER TO DEFEAT A NATIONAL CHAMP! At morning chapel, the long cheer for Batson, Batson, Batson, and make-it-loud-boys! Freshman staring their eyes out. Even

the bearded profs turning to watch, thinking: "That's young Tom Batson. Out at Buffalo—"

It was heady stuff for twenty-year-olds. Oceans of it. Kill-the-fatted-calf-stuff, at lunch. Hail-the-conquering-Tom-Batson, for dinner, Every single day! Instead of study at night, the long bull sessions upstairs with the race run and won, again and again. Tricky, heady stuff. Oceans of it.

Four glorious weeks for Tom Batson drifted by. He waited impatiently until the sun acquired warmth. He watched it turn the snow banks into slush. Taylor Lake lost its ice mirror, overflowed. The little outlet, not to be outdone, had its moment of brief glory and turned into a river for a week.

When the purple, brazen grackles flocked on the campus, the trees along the stately Willow Path pushed out their fuzzy yellow buds and it was spring again. Spring. Track, again. Dual meet season. Yeah, Tom Batson, champ!

Brief days of calisthenics and loosening exercises. Long, slow jogs and striding walks around the soft quarter mile oval. Tuneup time, at last. Competition. Watch out, Tom thought, here comes the champ!

Clad in baggy trousers and an ancient buttoned sweater with patches at the elbows, silver-haired John Rorke assembled the squad and talked. "Five dual meets coming up, lads. Hamilton College and Wheaton U for a prep before the tough ones—State, North Tech, and Syracuse U. We're a good squad. Not great, but good with few weak spots for a dual meet season. Remember that a dual meet is a problem in arithmetic. Each point we win means two points because it adds one to our score, takes one from them! If they got a star who scores five points to win an event, we try to take second and third with the four points that keep us close. Now—"

RDERS. Jumpers to the pits. Weight men to the rings. Distance men jogging six laps. Middle-distance men two fast laps. And,

"Sprinters at the starting line," John finished, getting out his gun. "Let's go and it's everyone for the good of the team!"

The squad scattered to the far parts of the field. What about Tom Batson, the quarter miler? Remember Tom Batson and that frozen night in the stifling Coliseum? The night he'd licked Whizzer Webb, remember? Of course, Tom strolled off with four other sprinters to the starting line.

John arrived on the straightaway, loading his pistol. When he saw Tom Batson, his eyes widened. "I'd planned to use you again in the quarter mile," John said softly. "Al Granning is the star and he'll cop the double furlong, sure. That means five points in a meet. But I need you right behind him for three additional points. And don't forget, lad it's your best distance."

It was Tom's turn to stare. "But after that sixty-yard race at Buffalo," he protested slowly, "I'd thought that you'd use me where I do my best. I learned that night that I was really a sprinter, John. I aim to become a great one! Besides, I've got a date out on the Coast this summer."

"Date, on the Coast?"

"Sure. The Whizzer said he'd see me at the Nationals this summer. He wants to get another crack at me. A sort of revenge race, see? These dual meet sprints, John, will get my sprinting legs in shape."

John masked his wise, old eyes and thought: "Sure, and the lad's got a head full of dreams. Maybe I did wrong by him to take that gamble in the Coliseum. But I won't interfere, he wants to learn the hard way!" He nodded, said: "Take your marks."

Five men dug double holes across the cinders. There was Norm Sand, a leggy, big-sprocketed newcomer up from Butler Prep. With a pocketful of clippings to prove how fast he was. And Norcross, a compact, eager veteran. Two fair-to-middling sprinters. And Tom Batson, lightning off the blocks indoors.

"Just ten yards at first," John ordered. "Marks. .set!" CRACK.

Tom shoved off, lifted and drove. The soft cinders pulled at his long, steel-spiked shoes. But he bested the others by three yards, slowed and turned back. "Nothing to it," he thought, lifting his head high. "I'm fast." A half dozen times John sent them away. Each time Tom bested the others.

"I got to check the jumpers and weight men," John said. "What you four sprinters need is plenty of instruction in fast starts. Take over. Tom. They'll listen to you."

Listen to Tom Batson, the champ? Whizzer's conqueror? Sure. Tell us, their eyes pleaded. Tom was ready. All the time since that great night had not been wasted listening to flattery. There were books to peruse at the library. "How to be a World Champion Sprinter", by Charles Paddock. "The Flat Races" by Lawson Robertson. Jack Scholz's, "I Won the Olympics". Good stuff. If you were going to be a world beater, those books were required reading.

Tom sent them off, watched each one closely. He showed leggy Norm Sand a few tricks with the feet. "Arm leverage at the start," he explained to the others. "That's important. Watch."

He drove off to let them see how each arm snaps with the legs on the takeoff. Step with the left foot and shoot the left arm forward, see? Push off the right leg and jerk the right arm back. Their eyes soaked up the knowledge, their eager minds drank in the track wisdom.

Wisely, John Rorke let Tom handle the sprinters' starts for the rest of the week. Then—qualifying trials for the Hamilton meet. Tom won the hundred, a short step ahead of Norm Sand, with Norcross right behind and the other two out-distanced. Then the two-twenty. Big-sprocketed Sand caught Tom at the two-hundred mark, surged on to win. Norcross breathed hot on Tom's shoulder, but Tom held him off.

IT WAS A little difficult to understand, at first—Sand beating him in the two-twenty. He might

have asked John Rorke for the reason, but he didn't. He worked it out in his own mind. Maybe what he needed were a few longer spins, say a couple of punishing three hundreds to build strength. He'd concentrated too much on the shorter stuff indoors. Yes, that was the answer. Next week he'd increase his regimen. He was due on the Coast.

On Saturday afternoon, the rival hurdlers flashed up and down, over the barriers. Colburn College swept into a quick lead over Hamilton with a one-two victory. Then the hundred yard dash and excitement swept through the stands. The undergrads had come out in force to see the champ run. "That's Batson," they said. "Watch him clean up the others."

Six runners poised at the mark. The start and Tom broke fast on the hard-packed cinders. At seventy-five yards, big-sprocketed Norm Sand zoomed up fast, surged past Tom and broke the yarn. Cheers, and a little disappointment when Tom just nosed out Norcross. What had happened? they wondered. He's a champ.

"Can't understand it," Tom thought, strolling to his pullovers. "I was first off the marks. I'm fresh and yet Sand caught me. Maybe I'm not used to the softer cinders. It's not quite like hitting the hard boards. Wait for the two-twenty. I'll show 'em. They came out to see me win and I won't disappoint them!"

Methodically, Colburn runners and jumpers piled up the points. Al Granning coasted to a win in the quarter with two Hamilton runners ten yards back in second and third. Four points for Hamilton. John Rorke thought: "Tom would have copped second. His three points would have helped. In the tough meets later, we're going to need that second place in the quarter." His eyes hardened. When would Tom Batson come to his senses?

Long-legged Spud Nash, Tom's roommate, held off a Hamilton's challenge at the finish of the half mile and won second place. Then the two-twenty. Tom shot off the marks and swept into a quick lead. He drove

relentlessly. Again Sand caught and passed him. He could not hold the long-legged sprinter. It took every desperate ounce of his strength to beat off Norcross' hot challenge in the last ten yards to hold second place. He was still fresh at the end, with the strength of a trained quarter miler.

"Oh, you'll get better," Spud Nash encouraged, as they trudged up the Hill to the dorms, afterward. "Running on the cinders is a little different from the boards. You've got to get used to the dirt, Tom." He shot a puzzled, sidewise glance at his roommate. "Sure, you'll get going, champ."

"Sure," Tom thought. "Only I can't wait too long. There's that date with the Whizzer on the Coast to think about. And if I can't beat Norm Sand or more than hold Norcross—

BACK TO the steady grind on Monday. Showing Norcross and Sand more of the sprinting tricks. Tricks that won races, like the "throw" at the tape that John Rorke had so patiently taught him indoors. "You've helped me a lot, Tom," Sand said, his fine eyes sparkling. "I'd never have licked a champ—" Sand stopped, flushed.

Tom understood. Sand had meant to say,—"licked a champion if it hadn't been for you." That was it. Why, he showed Sand how to beat himself! But Sand was only doing what he'd have done if the positions had been reversed. Lick the champ, no matter who he was—Whizzer Webb, Tom Batson.

He drove himself over the punishing three-hundred yard distance. When Spud Nash came out late to practice—he labored long hours in a Chem Major—Tom paced him through a fast six-hundred. "You need to get more zip in your long legs," he told Spud. "You'll do better in the half mile against Wheaton U."

"You'll help me some more?" Spud asked eagerly.

"Sure, pal," Tom answered, but his

thoughts were on his own problem. Exercise. Strength to beat off Sand's confident, ferocious challenges. Strength to check the surges of Norcross.

Wheaton U. "This is to be my day," Tom told himself. "I'll show 'em I'm no flash in the pan. I'm a champ."

Today. But big-sprocketed Sand beat him in the hundred. Norcross came on with a late rush that beat out Tom by a whisker. Only third place in the hundred! He turned away bitterly when Norcross rushed up, said: "Tom, thanks! You did me a world of good."

In the other events, Colburn slaughtered Wheaton U. Again Spud Nash placed in the half mile. In the two-twenty, a Wheaton U runner closed with a rush and shut out Tom by a whisker. And Sand and Norcross had finished one-two for Colburn.

No more killing-the-fatted-calf. Not for Tom Batson. He'd lost. Been disgraced, failing even to place in the two-twenty. John Rorke grabbed him before he could leave the field. "Lad," John said, "I've a nice spot for you in the relay."

"No," Tom said.

"Wait. You did a swell job coaching Sand and Norcross. They remember that you took the measure of Whizzer Webb and they believe every instruction you give 'em."

The bitterness welled up inside of Tom and overflowed. "John," he said brokenly, "what's the matter with me? I've got that date with the Whizzer on the Coast, and I can't even beat Norcross and Sand. What's the trouble with me?"

"Indoors it's different," John said kindly. "All over in a single quick breath. The hard boards give your type of running a faster lift than the cinders do, and you start fast. That's the secret indoors. Remember I told you that the Coliseum race was a gamble? A gamble, lad, is only a desperate chance."

The coach nodded. "Let me explain it to you in detail. In track you've got what we call a small-

sprocket. That's like first gear on a car. It gets you off to a fast start. You can hold that speed for a long ways, but you can't get it beyond a certain speed, see? Now take the Whizzer or Norm Sand. They're big-sprocketed boys. They've got a slow first gear which gets them started behind you. Then they shift into that next gear which gives them a speed that you can't match. No matter how hard you try, lad, you'll never equal their best speed. You can take Whizzer or Sand in a sixty. But you can't beat Sand or Norcross in a hundred, never. Your real distance is a quarter mile where your sustained speed will run them into the ground. Now about that leg on the relay—"

"John, I want one more try at the sprints."

And because John had been proud of Tom that night at Buffalo and because he understood the complications in Tom's mind now, he nodded. Sure, let the boy alone, he thought philosophically. Even if we lose the State meet.

THAT WEEK, Tom drove himself hard. Twice he worked out with Spud Nash. Spud had improved against Wheaton U, but he was still Spud. Just average. Maybe good enough to cop a second or third place against the easy stuff and run the second leg, the weak sister leg on a mile relay quartet, but never better than that.

State U. A hot, blue day with fluffy balls of cotton dotting the sky. The filled stands, the long rolling Colburn cheers. The dual meet got underway with the high hurdles. Colburn ran second and third to a timber-topping specialist from State. State, five points. Colburn, four. It would be tough—and close.

"Glad to meet you, Batson," Vetter, State's best sprinter, told Tom at the starting line. "Boy, you were hot that night you beat Whizzer Webb!"

"Thanks," Tom answered.

"It must be great to be a champ," Vetter prattled on. "Yeah, I'd like to lick a great champ once! Watch

out today, Batson. If I can take you—"

Tom thought: "You can't."

Six men on their marks. Set. The pause. CRACK. Tom got off to a flawless start, broke on top by two yards. His arms arced the air. He toed in, running on a chalk mark. They caught him. He glued his eyes on the beckoning yarn up ahead. His whipped his body forward, his eyes narrowing to slits. He lunged.

Afterward, he sensed that he had been shut out. Vetter turned, sprinted back. "Nice race," he said, pumping Tom's hands. His eyes filled with happiness, overflowed with laughter. They seemed to be saying: "I licked the man that licked Whizzer Webb! I licked—"

Tom shut his ears to the hateful announcement over the loud speaker. He'd just hit the bottom. What hope was there for him in the two-twenty? He dragged his pullovers on and hid the flimsy blue regimentals, regimentals that had suddenly become hateful. The blue that he'd disgraced. Shut out! Tom Batson, the unknown who'd licked—

A lonely spot by the far turn with no one near. The hot sun was a benison on his face. The end! "I wish that I'd never been in Buffalo that night!" he thought bitterly.

The track meet went on. Granning won the quarter with a driving finish. State U men copped second and third. Once Tom heard the score. State ahead by ten points. The half mile. The limber runners striding past. Spud Nash, his plain face set, following the pace. The gun lap. The accelerated pace. A State U man swirled into the lead. Colburn's best half miler clung to his shoulder. Another State man sped past Spud. At the last turn, Spud was far back, beaten, but driving.

On the turn, Spud stumbled. He pulled up, pain distorting his face. Tom was on his feet, running, calling. "Spud! What happened?"

Spud clung to his right ankle "Muscle pulled," he gasped.

A piercing Colburn cheered. They watched the finish of the half mile. The Colburn runner snatched the lead, poured on the pace down the

stretch. Colburn first! State U, second and third. And the scoreboard would show that Colburn had only gained a single point.

"Get to the rubbing table," Tom ordered. "Ice that ankle."

"Tom, the relay!"

"Don't worry about that. Fix that ankle."

THEY wouldn't need to worry about the relay. State U was too strong for Colburn. The meet was lost. There was still a chance, however, that he could regain something in the two-twenty. Maybe a sweep for nine points. Yeah, but what about Vetter? The guy would be cocky after the hundred, harder to beat.

The announcer called: "First call, the two-twenty."

"Tom," Spud pleaded, "You've got to win this!"

Tom moved toward the starting line, but John Rorke intercepted him. Worry seamed his tanned, serious face. "How you feel?" he asked.

"Fine, fine."

"We need every point, lad."

"I can place—win!"

"That accident to Spud Nash—you know he runs a leg of the relay. Sure, he's been just a fill-in, but he's the best I had with you in the sprints. Now if Sand and Norcross can head off Vetter in the furlong—we've got two good men in the broad jump! We'll be right up there with them at the relay."

"What's in your mind, John?"

"It's your decision. I'd like to save you, sort of insurance for the relay."

A fine end for a champ, Tom thought. Scratched from a race! "I'll do it, John."

"Fine, lad, fine."

Tom watched the two-twenty from the center of the field. He saw clearly what John had been trying to explain to him. Vetter beat Norcross and Sand off the marks. He saw Norcross pick up speed with a bouncing drive. But big-sprocketed Sand!

At the halfway mark, Sand suddenly broke out on top. He seemed to forward. Great scissored strides that Vetter and Norcross couldn't match. No one could head him now.

And Norcross? He matched strides with Vetter in the closing yards. Tom found himself yelling: "Use the throw!"

In the wild excitement, Norcross couldn't hear the command. Suddenly he lunged forward. A thin gap showed between him and Vetter. Second place! Eight big points for Colburn. Breathlessly, Tom waited for the announcement of the results from the next-to-last event.

Colburn had won that event. The clerks tallied the totals. The crowd waited breathlessly. The announcement: "State U, fifty-nine points! Colburn, fifty-eight!"

Tom stripped off his pullovers. He pranced up and down. The relay counted three points, with no points for second place. The relay race would decide the dual meet. Al Granning, waiting at the tape, saw him coming.

"Glad to have you back, Tom!" Al said, grabbing his shoulder. Smith and Gladstone, the other two legmen, nodded.

"Hold 'em, you two," Al ordered. "Just keep us up there with State so that Tom can take 'em! We got to take 'em, gang!"

Gladstone held the State U man even on the first lap. Smith ran smack into trouble. The State coach had switched his swift timber-topper into the relay to win the meet. He ran Smith into the ground around the first turn and down the backstretch. Smith made a mistake. He sprinted, instead of striding. His strength failed on the long home-stretch.

Vetter, also switched to the relay, grinned at Tom. "Watch my back," he called confidently, and grabbed the baton.

TOM LIT out after Vetter, using the swift pickup of his small-sprocketed legs. Vetter had a ten-yard lead. They swarmed around the curve. "Easy, easy," Tom told himself. "This isn't a sprint."

He held his stride smoothly, holding Vetter to the ten-yard lead down the backstretch. He leaned in on the final curve, upped the pace. Slowly, steadily he gained on Vetter. He

came off the last curve, six yards to the bad.

All the bitterness, all the longing to win, welled up inside him. Seventy yards away he saw Al Granning, waiting eagerly. Seventy yards. Why this was a short sprint! His best distance for speed. Less than a hundred yards. Like—like that race in the Coliseum against the Whizzer. It wasn't Vetter that he raced down the stretch. It was the Whizzer and he had the confidence of a champ.

Sprint, sprint. Drive, drive. Arms like lead. Legs fading. Come on! He saw Vetter break stride. He rushed forward with failing strength. Now he reached Vetter's shoulder and the Colburn stands went insane. Two more strides and he shoved ahead. The last desperate surge and Al Granning grabbed the baton.

A spontaneous cheer from Colburn flooded the field. It was anti-climax, now. Al Granning piled on the pace. The State U anchor man colared him at the far turn, clung like a leech with the desperation born from the desire to save the meet. Pandemonium rising from the hoarse throats of the crowd. Granning pulled ahead a little on the homestretch. It was enough to win.

And Tom Batson was cheering. Running, leaping on the grass. Colburn had licked State U! Gold old Al Granning! It was good and—then he saw Spud Nash. Spud finished a cartwheel, jumped up and down on both feet. Tom stared. Why the guy—

Tom collared his roommate. "Hey, you! I told you to get inside and ice that ankle."

"We won!" Spud shouted. "You old-son, Granning couldn't have won if you hadn't walloped the daylighters out of Vetter!"

"The ankle, the ankle, guy."

Spud grinned. "It's all right, Tom."

"What do you mean?"

"I didn't hurt it, Tom. You see, I didn't stand a chance of placing in the half mile. I figured that we might have a chance to win the meet if you'd switch to the relay. So I—"

"Faked an injury, right?" Tom charged.

Spud's face lengthened. "That was it."

A trick. A trick to get him out of the sprints and into the quarter mile where he belonged. Maybe it was better that way. Spud had figured it out right. Yes, far better to run for the team than to keep remembering that he was the guy who had licked the Whizzer.

"You're not sore?" Spud was saying, tensely. "We're still friends and—"

Friends? Teammates! That was it. "All that matters now," Tom said. "is that we won the meet. Someone had to bring me to my senses after John explained my style of running. And it won't be so bad, after all. You see, twenty years from now, I can gather my kids around my knee and tell 'em how I licked a national champ. Me, their fat-bellied old man, telling his kids about that night in the Coliseum!"

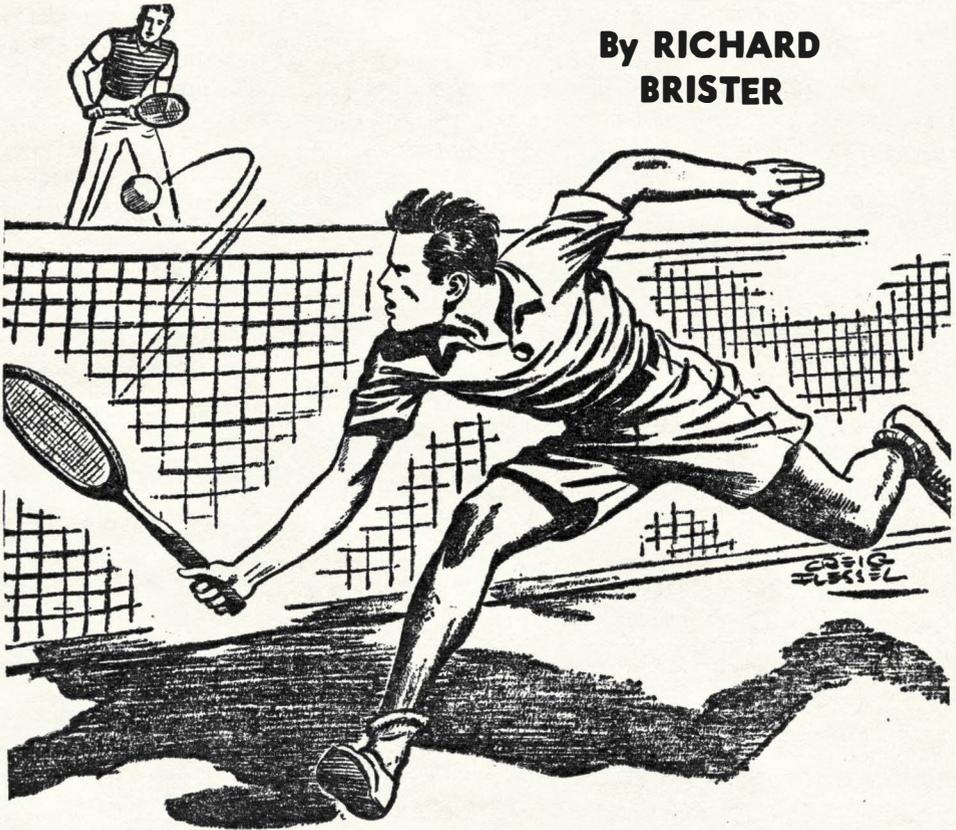
Arm in arm, they moved across the green infield.

THE END

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TellTale Tennis

By RICHARD
BRISTER



Only one man knew the hidden, inside story about Jim Kendal's last match—the man who said Kendal had been too good for his own good!

ACTUALLY I suppose it was the epitah Jacques fashioned for Jim, more than anything else, that got me grubbing around in the ashes of Jim's defeat, in hopes of uncovering some fresh slant on the story. "Here lies Jim Kendal," Jacques had written over that simple, dignified grave—all in French, you understand; I'm not going to even try to reproduce the idiomatic French of it here; I'm just a poor babe of a New York reporter who got lost in the wilds of the Paris office, and my French is strictly what I can read off a Champagne label, plus a

few scattered phrases remembered from college.

"Here lies Jim Kendal..." so Jacques had written "...who was too good for his own good."

Cute, you'll say, and let it pass. But somehow, I couldn't get that thing out of my mind. It was like one of those silly little novelty tunes that keeps buzzing away in your ear for hours, and just won't lie down.

I kept thinking: "These words are the final salute from one of the world's greatest tennis stars to another. Jacques must have been thinking in tennis terms, when he wrote

that line. But it doesn't make sense, there's a link missing, somehow."

Because Jacques had licked Jim in that final match, the one that wrote 'Finis' to their weird story. He had licked the pants off the old master, had figuratively and literally knocked the stuffing out of him and, if you were in a hard-boiled mood that day, you might even say he'd killed Jim, that blistering hot day out at Croiden. And then to write on Jim's grave "too good for his own good!"

Well, you could add that up, if you were the adding-up kind, to mean that Jim was so heads-and-shoulders over his competition that tennis had got a death grip of him, kept his nose to the tournament grind so many years past a man's normal prime that it had finally killed him. But Lord, what was Jim Kendal's normal prime? When he played that last match with Jacques he was fifty-three, and not an ounce of ballast around his middle.

Besides, if that was Jacques' meaning it was hardly in good taste, not quite the *mot juste* toward a defeated rival. I couldn't help feeling Jacques meant something else, because Jacques loved Jim Kendal. Hell, everybody loved Big Jim, for that matter.

I REMEMBER that day in the ship's saloon, going over. We bumped into some rugged seas, in that seven-day crossing. I was pretty green in the gills, wondering whether the newspaper man's proverbial escape from trouble—getting frizzled—would quell the small uprising going on in my stomach.

Well, the answer was not. In fact, after three Scotch-and-waters, I was set for a sprinter's start to the rail, and then Jim came in alone and sat down at a corner table, all the way across the room from me.

Jim was like a big sleek cat, with a prominent nost that runs half the length of his thin, long brown face six-feet-four, as straight when he stood as a bottle of bourbon, and—well, hell, I don't guess there's any real need to describe what Jim looked like. Reference, any sport page or roto section.

A funny thing, though—Jim was a worse sailor than I am. And Lord knows how many crossings he'd made, in a quarter century devoted almost exclusively to international tournament play, and back in the twenties and early thirties, to Davis Cup matches!

He looked utterly miserable, across the bar there. His Adam's Apple kept working, as if he was engaged in a losing battle against some part of his dinner that had bounced off his insides with strong reverse English.

I was staring—who wasn't?—and then Jim's grey eyes flickered up and across the room, and he looked straight at me. I felt queer, wondering if he'd speak or nod to me. I'd been around almost as long as Jim had; I'd covered dozens of his matches, both in the glory days of the twenties and more lately; and along with probably hundreds of others, I'd interviewed him. But I'm sort of a drab apple, to look at, and it would have been a Chinese wonder if the big guy even thought my face vaguely familiar.

But Jim wasn't only one tennis player in a hundred million. In his case—and as a sportswriter I can tell you this happens too seldom—there was a champion's soul behind the champion's headlines.

Sick as he looked, he cracked a wide friendly grin. I thought: "Here's where I get sprung to a drink," and waited for him to wave me over. He did no such thing. He stood up and walked to my table. I scrambled up and beamed like a Ceshire cat.

You naturally want to spare a guy like that any embarrassment you possibly can, so I stuck my paw out and said hurriedly, "Guess my face gave you some trouble, Jim. I'm Ch—"

"Daniels," the big guy announced easily, and plopped down across the small table from me. "No trouble at all, Chuck. You still batting out bilge for the Boston *Globe*, are you?"

THE CHESHIRE in me was purring softly. "I'm with Ace International, Jim. Paris office. What's by you and la belle France these days? I thought the Germans had

been pretty thorough. Don't tell me they scrambled without takin' the tennis courts with 'em."

Jim's gray eyes clouded over, and deep in their depths I read a warning signal. Tennis was out, as a conversation piece, for the moment. That seemed strange, in a man like Jim Kendal, who more than any living symbolized tennis. The Cheshire quit purring, curious, but I allowed Jim tactfully to change the subject.

He teed off carefully on personalities in the sports world exclusive of tennis. We replayed the baseball season, confessed a mutual fondness for Bing, himself no mean athlete, and in general helped each other forget that the ship was rolling, over a couple of Scotches. Jim's drinking surprised me—he hadn't touched the stuff in the old days—but after all, when a man passes fifty, still playing tennis for pay, he's got a right to a few didoes, the way I look at it. You've got to investigate that side of life sometime, before earning your obit.

The thaw came late that night—I mean Jim's strange freeze-up on the topic of tennis—then suddenly the big fellow was leaning earestly toward me across the small table, saying: "You've always had a rep for straight-shooting, Chuck. I know you're mighty curious about what makes with me—this trip to France. If you'll give me your word to keep it under your Stetson, I'll spill it."

Normally a newspaperman hates to give that kind of promise. But I was busting with pride at the implicit compliment, at the confidence Jim was showing in me. I said: "Like a clam, Jim. Like an oyster."

"All right," Jim said. "It's orders." And when I shook my head, puzzled, he went on: "Doctor's orders. Seems I'm no more of an iron man than Lou Gehrig turned out to be." His gentle voice was overlaid with an infinite sadness. I had that uncomfortable sense of inadequacy I always get, in the presence of tragedy.

"Hell, Jim, you had to lay off the campaigning some time. So after about twenty-five years' competition, you've been ordered to take a trip

and rest up. Is it any wonder? You'll be back, though. There's only one Big Jim Ken—"

"I'm not so sure I'll be back," he said glumly. "My case had the doc kind of puzzled. He couldn't name the trouble, exactly; all he said was that I'd punished the devil out of my whole constitution, all these years with never a let-up, and it was like a machine wearing out—you know, like an old jalopy."

I didn't look at him. Somehow, hearing the intensified gloom in his voice, I didn't want to. I stared at the frost-coated glass in my hand and said, "You pays the man your fifty bucks—or your hundred—and you drives it away, and everything's fine for ten miles, and then it starts falling to pieces. Never know when it'll start to crumble. All you *do* know is that some part of it's *bound* to cork out on you. That what you mean, Jim?"

"You put it in better words than I could have." He sighed. His wide shoulders drooped limply. "That's the tough part about it. I could go out tomorrow and play a good set of tennis, and maybe nothing'd happen. It's the blasted temptation. You know how I am about the game. There's never been anything else in the world that mattered a damn. Not really."

"That's what made you the best, pal." I needled an ice cube out of my glass and rolled it around against my palate. "But you don't dare, hunh? Because if you do go on, the old jalop could crumble all of a sudden? That it, Jim? I mean—is it serious?"

"The doc seemed to think so," Jim said morosely. "Oh, he didn't come right out and say I'd be killing myself, if I insisted on playing more tournament tennis. He just kept drilling it at m.: 'Take a long trip. For at least six months, do nothing. Absolutely nothing.' You know the line they always hand you."

I was thinking: *Six months. Lord, it must be bad with him!*

I suppose I'm as hard-boiled as the next guy. You get sort of crusty inside, in my business. I don't cry in the movies, or at all, for that matter. But I'm not ashamed to admit I came

close to it that night, across that tiny table from the greatest tennis player the world's ever known.

Funny, the way Fate seems to reserve all her Sunday punches for the best. It was that way with Lou Gehrig. Same thing in a different way with Will Rogers. And now it looked like Jim was up on the chopping block, with Fate wielding the axe.

But I didn't know how tricky the old gal could be till we walked into the lobby of our hotel in Le Havre, the night before I moved up the line to Paris.

WE'D found a lot to talk about, during the trip, and Jim had asked me to share a room with him, before we parted next morning. Jim was like that, nothing stagey or conceited about him. Going through the swing doors, he insisted on following me. You'd've thought, to look at us, that I was the all-time world's tennis champion!

I was keeping a wary eye on the 'boy'—he must have been all of eighty—who had larcenously grabbed my hand luggage, when an excited high voice somewhere behind us squeaked: "Jee-e-em! Jeem Cane-dowl!"

I turned and watched a small middle-aged man with a sharp nose and pinched nervous features, throw himself bodily on Jim. He hugged him and kissed him on either cheek, after the time-honored French custom. Jim grinned good-naturedly as he submitted to the smaller man's ebullient display of affection, and then turned somewhat sheepishly toward me. "This is Jacques Lavigne, Chuck. You must remember—"

Of course I remembered. I remembered sweltering days at Forest Hills, when I had seen this same little man with the hollow, somewhat saddened eyes, flicker effortlessly around the court, back in the twenties, and turn in some of the most stupendous tennis artistry that the world's ever known. Jacques Lavigne had not had the staying power of the incomparable Jim Kendaal, but he had been tremendous, during those brief few years when his star had been in the ascendant.

He was the only man who had ever licked Jim consistently. Some folks insisted that Jacques had the Indian sign on Jim—as a matter of fact, I seem to remember having used something to that effect in my Globe column, years back, as a rainy-day filler—and the subject of which of these two had been greater was still causing a lot of public conjecture.

I said, "Of course I remember Jacques Lavigne, Jim," and stuck my mitt out. "Lo, Jacques. 'S good t' see you."

I was stretching it there. It was not good to see him. Jim had borne the weight of the years with the durability of a steel racquet, but Jacques' eyes were sunken and his thin face was bony. He looked thin and frail, and his coal black hair was streaked with gray tracers. The serge suit he wore had been good when bought, but its cut was ancient. He gave me that indescribable feeling I get when I see some broke 'pal' closing in to put the bite on me. He just looked hard up, I guess. It made me uneasy for Jim's sake. I don't know what Jim was thinking. His cordiality was a natural thing with him. A technique for brushing off pals was not part of his social armor. He insisted on Jacques' coming up to the room. I said I'd drift along up later, thinking to give them some time alone, to rehash the glories they'd shared in the old days.

Jim's long nose wrinkled at me. "Come on up now, Chuck. Hell, Jacques and I aren't so dilapidated that we can't still make 'copy' for you, are we? You may get some human interest stuff out of this."

It *would* be story, I realized, this chance renewal of friendship between the world's two best tennis players. I went along up. Hell, if I hadn't, and the Old Man ever got word about it, I'd've heard him cuss all the way from New York!

Jacques didn't seem too eager to have me, and upstairs in the room, I soon learned why. He had not just happened to be in the lobby downstairs. He had read of Jim's coming, and he had made it a point to meet the big fellow. Jacques had a proposal to make, but he certainly skirted all

around the subject before he got down to brass tacks about it.

"No, I am not doing—how you say, such great shakes," he admitted in his high precise voice, when Jim asked him. "I had a great deal of money saved, both from coaching and playing." He smiled ruefully. "Then the Germans come. Pouff!" He snapped his fingers. "They leave nothing. It would not be so bad, Jeem, only I am forgotten. La belle France has forgotten the great Jacques Lavigne. It is as if nobody remember the way you and I blast away at each other, back in the 1920's."

Jim said tactfully, "They haven't forgotten, Jacques. Not really. Maybe it's just that people are a bit too pre-occupied with their own troubles these days in your country. Sports don't seem so important to folks, when a whole nation's going through a crisis."

"No!" Jacques protested. "Now is just when we need the sports, to get the mind off the troubles. The sports are coming back quickly, yes, even the tennis." He shrugged his shoulders in a small, pathetic gesture. "Only—Jacques does not come back weeth them. Jacques is too old, they say. Let the young men take over. Jacques is too old even for coaching."

"Nonsense!" Jim exploded. "You're not fifty." The big fellow said that as if he were speaking to a comparative baby. He seemed to mean it, but I felt sure he was mainly trying to spare Jacques' feelings.

"It is true," Jacques said, hope flashing briefly in his dark sunken eyes. "I am not fineesh. I am still good to coach. I could have a fine coaching business, Jeem, if I could only prove to them, some way, that Jacques Lavigne still have that touch, that—how you say?—that finesse, in the tennis."

I SAW JIM stiffen then. The big fellow had been lolling back on the bed, listening carefully, but without too much intentness. He sat up stiffly now, and I wondered if his mind had taken the Cook's tour that mine had just taken. He said in a

strange, worried voice, "You mean—you want—come out with it, Jacques. What do you want of me?"

Jacques stared pathetically at the big fellow and said slowly, "One beeg match with you, Jeem. Like the old days, remember? I always used to have the—how you say?—Indian sign?—over Beeg Jeem Kane-dowl. Who can say?" He shrugged his thin shoulders. "Perhaps I still do. Maybe you beat me." He smiled. "But not too easy, I don't theenk. What matter? It show the people of France that Jacques still play good tennis. They remember Jacques then, when he play again with Jeem Kane-dowl!"

I felt sick in the pit of my stomach. I wished he would learn to say 'Kendal.' I wished he had never walked in this room. I almost wished that little man dead, in that moment. For I knew Jim Kendal's weakness. I knew his reputation for sportsmanship, for unselfishness. I knew the long streak of sentiment that was so deeply ingrained in the big fellow's nature, and how it went double in matters connected with tennis.

The big fellow sat there on the bed, his elbows on his knees, staring down at the frayed carpet, and I knew, with a sudden weak feeling in my stomach, that he was actually thinking about doing with Jacques had asked. I thought, "Sucker-r!" But as I thought that, I loved him for it. Aloud, I groaned,

"Ix-nay, Jim. Don't be an ump-chay."

Jim's eyes flickered at mine with impatience. "Keep clear of this, Chuck. This is my ball."

"You run with it, pal, and I'll walk at your funeral."

"Funeral?" Jacques stared queerly from Jim's face to mine. "What is theez talk about—"

"Nothing. Jacques." Jim said shortly. "You know these newspaper men. Always gagging."

Jacques looked relieved. He stared anxiously at Jim, and went on pleadingly, "You will do ee. Jeem? You will make theez one final match with Jacques, for old time's sake?"

I was squirming all over my chair,

thinking: *Murder. Plain murder!* I said angrily, "Jim! *Dammit!*"

But the big fellow had made up his mind already. He wore a thin trace of a grin on his long thin face, and his voice drawled gently, "Of course we'll play, Jacques. And understand, it's not as a favor I'm doing this, either." His handsome smile broadened. "I've often wondered," he mused gently, running a long-fingered hand over his chin, "how it would go if we met again, after so many years. I've often wondered whether you'd still have the Indian sign on me."

Well, maybe he had. But it was not that, I knew. It was not that at all. It was just the blasted decency of him that had led him to accept Jacques' challenge so quickly. At the risk of his own health, almost, even, his life, if he'd quoted his doctor to me correctly! But he could not let the little Frenchman look on this thing as a favor! Favor indeed! I could have throttled the big fellow right then, for this ridiculous gesture he was making against all better judgement. But if I had, he'd probably have picked me up in one hand and thrown me out the window. I didn't move. I just sat there and suffered, while the Frenchman beamed, and made a big fuss over 'Jeem,' and even shed a small tear sedately.

I didn't shed any. I sulked, being too hard-boiled to show any emotion.

Perhaps, unconsciously, I was saving my tears. Lord knows even I couldn't hold them back later, when the thing came to a head, when those two sentimental old fools squared off against each other, the following month, on the smooth center court down at Croiden.

EVEN I HAD to admit it was a dream day for this monumental bit of nonsense the big fellow had let himself in for. Crystal clear, not a cloud in the sky, and dry hot, too much so for comfort. But heat is the friend of middle-aged muscles.

There was a crowd, such a crowd as promoters dream of. The electric thrill of a rematch, after all these years, between Jacques Lavigne, one-time pride of France, and the world-

famed Big Jim Kendal, had swept France like wildfire. They swept in from every surrounding Province, like iron filings swept toward a magnet.

Jacques was in a delirium of joy, almost uncontainably happy. He stepped out on that court like a king returned to his people, after long years of exile, and it was true, in a way. He had been the tennis czar of his country, before the war years. If he played with even a shade of his old skill today he would be king again, to those who remembered, and would gain staunch advocates in the new generation. Oh, he was set. His coaching fees would run into thousands, if he played well today. And for all this, he could thank Jim Kendal.

And for more, I thought grimly, watching them rally idly before the flip for service. Jim was, as always, a long graceful cat, moving about over the packed sand of the court with no obvious effort. My chief hope was that he wouldn't be pressed, that he could take it easy throughout this three-set exhibition. And that his doctor was crazy. Especially that, but of course any doctor Big Jim would consult must have known his business!

Jim won the toss and served first to Jacques. He flipped the ball high above him, brought his racquet around from behind his shoulders in a blazing arc. The ball seemed to take wings as it crossed the net, dipping down sharply. It bounced in a vicious high hop. Jacques slapped it back with a neat, choppy forehand. The tense crowd found its voice in a sharp roar of delight as the match got fairly started.

Jim drove from his baseline. Jacques blocked back deep. Jim ran to midcourt and full-volleyed, then rushed to the net. He had been trying a force play, thinking to put the Frenchman on the defensive. But there were wings in the wiry legs of Jacques Lavigne, even at fifty. He raced to the ball and sent a high lob floating lazily over Jim's head.

Jim had to run like a madman to get back there. He sent the ball back with a tricky over-the-shoulder

stroke. Jacques stood at the net and killed it. First blood for the French, and the crowd screamed its pleasure.

I groaned to myself, "Good Lord, he's going to have to work for it! Jim looked sort of dazed, as if he himself must have guessed the same thing, must have seen that Jacques Lavigne had stubbornly clung to his skill with a racquet, down the long years. Jim settled down and won the next point, after an extended spirited exchange of volleys that had the crowd roaring with excitement. This promised to be a struggle of Titans!

But after all, there is only one Big Jim Kendal. He finally solved the Frenchman's chief weakness, an awkwardness in returning a high-bouncing ball to the backhand. Jim gave him nothing but high stuff to the backhand for a solid ten minutes. Sweat popped out on the Frenchman's thin forehead. He began to crumble slowly to pieces. At last, Jim passed Jacques' service, and forged ahead to win that opening set at 6-4.

IT WAS LIKE the old days. I remembered these two at Forest Hills in the hectic twenties. I could shut my eyes and imagine them as they'd been then, and it was all much the same. They were both trained athletes still. They looked almost the same, except that they were gray now, and just a shade slower. But there was a subtle difference there too that did not at once meet the eye. It was on Jim's side of the court, and I was at a loss to understand it. You couldn't see the thing; you could just feel it.

And then Jacques proceeded to run Jim ragged, that second set. The score piled up against Jim with sickening swiftness, and I saw Jim's shoulders dropping a trifle, saw the haggard, spent look on his face, when he turned to face my side of the grandstand momentarily, and I knew.

He was sick, that was it. He was sick and frightened. He was suffering pain out there in front of the thousands. He was afraid to go all the way out, afraid to extend himself to the limit. But he was even more afraid that the crowd would see it.

He was caught, hog-tied, and it played hob with his game of tennis. You can't be worried half out of your mind by a doctor's warning to take things easy or else, and still play heads-up tennis.

Jacques didn't know what was wrong. He was an opportunist though. He rampaged through Jim's crippled defenses for a 6-3 verdict. He didn't respond to the crowd's wild adulation, as they paused for the short recess, though. He stared at Jim as they moved to the bench, and his black eyes were puzzled.

As for me, I'd had enough of the damned silly nonsense. I went down there and planted myself in front of Jim, and growled like a Dutch uncle. I said, "I've seen enough, Jim. You've got to cut out this—"

Jim's face was gaunt. His gray eyes looked stricken, but quick anger flared in them. "Stop it, Chuck. You'll spoil everything with your—"

"But you're sick, man! You'll—"

"*Stop it!*" Jim roared. Lord, he was sore. It was all still a case of sparing the Frenchman, I realized. Jim Kendal could play till he dropped dead on the court, but we *must* spare Jacques' feelings.

I couldn't very well knock him down and drag him away, could I? I slunk away miserably, and went back to my seat. If the Frenchman had had eyes in his head, he'd have known. But he was too excited, too full of the crowd, the glory, the lovely sensation of his own wonderful comeback.

That last set was murder. I mean it. They hacked away at each other like a pair of wolves out there. It was the old seesaw stuff, each man holding service. Jim was trying. Lord, he was trying, but somehow he just didn't seem able to get through the Frenchman's airtight defense, for some reason. It was inspired play, both sides of the net, and I thought, "Gosh, maybe there *is* something in that Indian sign stuff. Maybe that little gee does have Jim's number!"

It went 5-5 in games, 6-6, and on upward, seesawing. Games piled on games, and with each stubborn battle completed, Jim's face was more

haggard, his shoulders drooped perceptibly lower.

And then Jacques passed Jim's service, making it 9-8 in the Frenchman's favor. The crowd jabbered tensely, for if Jacques could hold his own service now, it was his set, and his match.

I felt like bawling, looking down on that court. The sun was blazing from straight overhead now, and Jim was a wreck, drenched head to heels with glistening perspiration. He was exhausted. Actually, he was close to prostration, but he just wouldn't admit it. He stood limply on his baseline, waiting for Jacques to send the ball over toward him.

It came, sizzling. Jim stepped around and blocked with his backhand. Jacques raced in to the net and angled one. Jim almost broke his long frame in half in a futile attempt to run to it. Fifteen-love, the Frenchman's favor.

JACQUES smelled blood. He aced Jim, on the next one. He came right back with a blistering succession of hard forehand drives, to make it forty-love against Jim, and then the crowd went almost berserk. Because there it was, set point and match point now. Jacques would have three straight chances, if needed, to win the one more point that'd sew up the match for him, kit and kaboodle.

You could never count Jim Kendal out though. Not till the last shot had been fired. He fought like a demon. He slammed Jacques' next serve down the Frenchman's throat for a brilliant pass. He blocked the next one, then staggered drunkenly in to the net, and smashed Jacques' soft return down alongside of the alley.

Jacques was sweating. It was still his advantage, though. He was very deliberate, making service. He put the ball in, then retreated to the center of his own baseline, determined to patball Jim out of this final point, to outstare the big fellow.

Jim was ready to fall, but he accepted the challenge. They stood well back, that pair of ridiculous—but slightly superb—tennis immortals, and rallied for almost three full

minutes. I got a kink in my neck, trying to follow the flight of the pellet as it moved methodically from one side of the net to the other.

Never, before or since, have I seen such a rally. It seemed like perpetual motion, like a stubborn death struggle. And watching Jim Kendal was simply pure hell. He wound down in the course of those final three minutes, like a clock runs down, slowly but surely.

It was the damnedest, most gut-wrenching sight I've ever looked on. I wanted to run down there and catch him; I was that sure he'd keel over any second.

Finally, he sent a soft one, deep, over at Jacques, and the Frenchman teased a short return just over the net. It had backspin on it.

Jim lurched in as fast as his rickety legs would take him. But he was done. It just wasn't there. There was nothing left within him to fight with. He got within two yards of the ball, stretched out grotesquely, making a valiant scoop of his racquet. Then he collapsed, completely, and plunged headlong into the net, his great arms falling dead-weight beneath him.

There was a shocked gasp from the crowd, a tense buzz of voices. I leaped the cement parapet that bordered the lower end of the grandstand, and ran over to where Jim was lying, his great head propped in the lap of the sobbing, sweat-drenched Frenchman. "Jeem... Jeem..." Jacques kept saying. He wore a stunned, unbelieving expression.

I growled, "Dammit, loosen his belt! And cut out that caterwauling!" I was in bad shape myself. Jim's eyes flickered. I saw that familiar gentle smile curve his wan features. "How's this for copy, Chuck?" he whispered, and turned that sweet smile of his on the Frenchman. "So the Indian sign still held, eh, Jacques? Congratulations."

That little Frenchman was blubbering like an emotional school girl. "No!" he cried. "Jeem...no!..." I think he must have seen death, in the war. For he instinctively recognized the signs in the wan face of

the man whom he had just defeated at tennis. "Jeem... Jeem! I didn't want it that much. Not if it's going to take y—"

But Jim's smiling lips stiffened then, and the Frenchman's words froze in his throat. Jim's eyes found mine, and deep within the glazing gray depths, I saw a faint final flicker of the quiet amusement that had always been the best of Jim Kendal. I leaned down close and heard his faint whisper.

"Looks like the jalop's finally busted an axle, Chuck. So lon—" The thin trace of his whisper faded, and his eyes stared up at the blue sky, unmoving.

"Too good for his own good:" was Jacques' epitaph to him. I bumped into Jacques four months later, in Paris—He was playing an exhibition, and looked much more prosperous than he had in Le Havre—and I mentioned it to him. "How d'ya mean: too good for his own good?"

JACQUES was staring amazedly at me. "You don't know. You didn't realize?"

"Realize what?"

"Jeem gave that match to me. Almost from the very beginning. I could not hope to beat that man fairly, if he tied one arm back! He learned too much all those years. And I—" the little man shrugged—"I stagnate."

"But—holy—it looked like a stale-mate!"

"That was Jeem's wonderful acting. He did not want one soul to suspect that thing. That is why he tried to keep the score so close between us. That is why he killed himself, trying to drag out that last set." The little man's eyes saddened. "I knew, and I could do nothing to stop him. It was a sad thing, it was brutal. I will never forget it."

I looked at Jacques Lavigne and knew that he meant what he said. It was not just words with him. I knew he had killed Jim Kendal, but I still couldn't hate him. I said gently. "You're doin' good now; you keep it up, pal. That's what Jim died for."

And I put a hand on his back, and went on, "You're okay, Jacques," for I understood, now, the epitaph the Frenchman had fashioned.

THE END

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACTS OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AND MARCH 3, 1933

Of Super Sports, published five times a year at Holyoke, Mass., for October 1, 1946.
State of New York
County of New York

Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Louis H. Silberkleit, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the publisher of the Super Sports and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the Act of March 3, 1933, embodied in section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are:

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5. That the average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the twelve months preceding the date shown above is:— (This information is required from daily publications only.)

LOUIS H. SILBERKLEIT

(Signature of Publisher.)

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 20th day of September, 1946. Maurice Coyne. (My commission expires March 30, 1949.) (SEAL)



The Scientific Age

By ROBERT DENSMORE

"I could have boxed the ears off Jack Britton, thirty pounds ago; I couldn't box a compass now." Then came the accident that put Benny Bains' protege out at a crucial moment, and Benny had to take his place—or see everything he, the kid, and the kid's mother owned go down the drain!

BENNY BAINS, the scientific warrior, pushed a meaty fist through the graying hairs upon his scalp. Like an overweight cat, he arose and padded across the floor. Over a period of sixteen years he had outpointed five former champions of the world—yet had never held a title himself. He had been slugged somewhat by Father Time, but the lack of young manpower on the home front had kept Benny bravely before the eyes of the fight public.

Benny had gone without haircuts in his day; had refused tempting monetary offers to take dives for anyone—which was one reason why he had not been able, until a year ago, to bank any money for his old age. He would spar anytime for \$40,

but he wouldn't take a swoon for \$40,000, he didn't function that way. Moreover, because of his mastery of the art of boxing, few present day fighters cared to have anything to do with him inside a ring. Tarzan Bulger had been the exception. From the age of nineteen to thirty-five, Benny had grown from a welterweight to a lighthheavy. By stuffing himself with bananas and milk he had managed to scale in the heavyweight class last year against the champion, and earn his first big purse—\$25,000.

"I could have boxed the ears off Jack Britton, thirty pounds ago," Benny said. "I couldn't box a compass now. I'm a pail of lard, I'm through with boxing. Fortunately I have that moola in the bank." He

bent from what was formerly his waist as he smiled at the lady behind the desk.

"You'd make a wonderful barber, Benny," Maggie Counihan said. "You exaggerate so. You're so gracefully scientific."

"A barber? Me?" Benny's smile turned upside down.

"Why not?" Maggie enthused. "Hairdressing and barbering go together. I've always wanted to build a barber shop annex to my salon."

"I'm a man of means," Benny affirmed. "I'm retired."

"When you retire, Benny, you have nothing to do—and the worst part about doing nothing is that you can't stop and rest."

"I have too much money to become a barber," Benny insisted.

"Well, then, there's my son, Michael. He thinks he's an Irish Max Baer. He's a fool just as his father was—a wonderful fool. My late husband died from wounds received at Belleau Wood, Benny. Michael Jr. has been medically discharged from this war, minus the hearing he left on Tarawa. If he must continue fighting, Benny, I'd rather he was managed by you than by Charlie Graf."

"After your Mike fights Tarzan Bulger for the heavyweight championship of the world, it won't matter whose hands he's in, Maggie—unless it's doctor's hands."

Washington Carver "Tarzan" Bulger, of the United States Navy, was scheduled within seven weeks, for the benefit of the American Red Cross, to defend his title against the most logical contender, "Tarawa White" Counihan formerly of the United States Marines. This was partly because Mike Counihan had been a heavyweight fighter for five years from the age of eighteen, and partly because—as a deafened war hero—he rated higher in public esteem than did Benny Bains. Part of this public were unkind enough to suggest that Benny was afraid of the champ.

It was true, that in getting himself knocked out in round five by the immense negro, Benny Bains had

fought the most miserable fight of his career. "I don't think I quit against Bulger," Benny reasoned with himself. "I boxed three hundred men before that fight and never quit to any of them. I think it was because the champ is too good and that I had no right then, or any other time, to be in the same ring with him."

BENNY turned his eyes upwards. "Mike has youth and talent," he thought, "but, nevertheless, Charlie Graf is rushing him too fast. Maggie has a good idea in me taking over Mike—but would Graf sell his contract? I doubt it. Since returning home Mike has been wading relentlessly through what opposition there's been between himself and the throne, but personally, I don't envy him his prospects. Fighting Japs with simple shellfire is going to prove more attractive, I'm sure, than crossing gloves with Tarzan Bulger will ever be."

"I expect Michael any minute now," Maggie announced.

Maggie Counihan's desk was neat—as was everything she owned. She didn't look six years older than Benny, she appeared all of six years younger. Her blonde hair might have been synthetic—but her character wasn't. Her eyes were blue and steady with understanding as she looked at Benny.

"You're clever with your hands," she said firmly. "You have good eyesight. You'd make a fine barber—and not be wasting your time."

"Huh?" Benny hadn't heard. He had been looking through the plate-glass office door into the hairdressing salon. "Heavens, what women withstand to get their hair fixed!"

A customer, in the salon, was seated with an over-sized helmet over her head. Another was reading a magazine, apparently not at all alarmed by the numerous wires clamped to the hairs upon her skull.

"Like they were being tortured by Himmler," Benny said. "How can you leave them like that?"

"Everything is all right, Benny. I've been a hairdresser more years than you've been a fighter. I know

my business. Relax."

"Rather than go through that," Benny looked at the two customers with some horror, "I'd—well, I'd almost be willing to fight Bulger again. How can they stand it? Why do you do it?"

Maggie shrugged. "Little woman left with fatherless child.... Why have you indulged in the sport of modified murder for sixteen years?"

"I had to eat."

"And so did we. I think I've fed Michael quite well, up through the years."

Benny looked at the picture of Mike upon his mother's desk. "It would have been cheaper to feed a Great Dane. Heavens, what an appetite that big kid must have!"

She looked at Benny, trying to keep her heart out of her eyes. "Just like yours," she thought. But because she had no right to say that, she said aloud, "Just like his father." She arose and opened the plate-glass door. "I'll be right back, Benny."

Benny watched Maggie walk toward the helmeted customer. He had known Maggie a year now—ever since that night after the fight with Bulger, when, walking bruised and cut and swollen through the rain toward his hotel, she had given him a lift in her little coupe. "Are you hurt badly?" she had inquired. "How did it happen? Do you want to go to a hospital?" She had been very kind and Benny would never forget. "She's all right," he said.

"Who's all right?"

Benny spun around.

Charlie Graf and Mike Counihan were standing inside the street door. The little black button—with wire attached—of an electrical hearing device was stuck in Mike's right ear. Somehow it made Benny sad. He said:

"You sure you're in the right place, Charlie? This ain't no pool-room."

"You should remark, slacker," piped Charlie. "You should have been in France with the boys, hearing the French pheasants singing the Mayonnaise!" Graf was a scraw-

ny little birdlike man, with a protruding stomach that jiggled under his vest like a wrinkled grapefruit.

Mike Counihan was not one to evade an issue even before he became a Marine and won the Purple Heart. He stood, thin faced, hat in oversized hand, and looked tough. He loomed above Graf like a bear above a rabbit; he opened his mouth as if he hated to speak so:

"Look, Charlie, there was no need of you coming here. I won't run away. I came back to you when the Marines discharged me, didn't I? All the time I was with them, I kept thinking about boxing and how I'd like to fight again. That's sentimental, huh? Well, you don't know what it means when a Marine dies—and I can't—won't—tell you, now. I kept thinking of pounding the heavy bag with my fists inside the wine-red gloves—afraid I might not be able to do it again, if—" His voice was very low, as if he were talking into the hearing-aid receiver attached to his sweater. "You're bad, Charlie," Mike continued. "In the Marines you learn to tell. You're my manager, but go easy on the vituperative—Benny's my pal."

"How does it feel to be a complete heel, Charlie?" Benny asked.

"I got you for nothing, Irisher," Graf told Mike. "And for nothing you are worth, almost. If you weren't matched with Bulger I would tear up your contract and let you go."

"I'll buy my contract from you," Mike said.

"With two grand?"

"You should hide your moola, Mike," Benny explained. "Charlie has counted it." His eyes were sharp and knowing as they ran over Mike's bulk. Then turning to Graf, he announced, "I'll give you \$25,000 for the contract—cash."

"That'll be my cut from the Bulger fight—and I'll still have Mike—make it fifty grand—thirty down, the rest in thirty days."

"I ain't got thirty gees," Benny said. "Twenty-five's all I got—and I mean all."

"You got twenty-seven, chum," and so saying, Mike hauled out his

roll and counted it—\$2,000, which he handed to Benny.

Graf's mouth watered, but still he insisted, "Thirty down."

"Here's three thousand, and the difference, Benny. Take the contract—Michael will earn it all back for us, in time."

BENNY turned around and nearly bumped his nose against the check in Maggie's outstretched hand. The debate with Graf had been so heated that Maggie had come in, listened, sat down at her desk and written out the check. Benny knew she couldn't afford a check of this amount, that it left her with little, if anything, in her bank balance. "Well," he thought, "this is the way things happen."

Without intent, by the natural process of life, and the living of it, stranger things have happened. This, Benny could not have dreamed of, but it had happened. After awhile Benny knew his life savings had to go. He sat down and wrote out a check for \$25,000; gave the two checks and Mike dollars to Charlie, saying:

"The remaining twenty gees will have to come from Mike's purse; so you'll get that after the fight."

Graf took the \$30,000. "Right," he said. "Now gimme a note for twenty grand, payable within thirty days."

"Let's have that contract, first," Benny growled.

"Sure, sure." Charlie reached into a pocket, removed a paper, handed it across. "Don't get at'letic, Benny, don't get physical."

Benny wrote out the \$20,000 note, and handing it over, said meaningly, "Goodbye, now."

"Goodbye, Bennah," Graf said, pocketing his loot. "Goodbye, sucker." He went out.

Mike said, "We'll pay you back. Benny—mother and I."

Maggie said, "You're fine, Benny. I feel better with Michael in your hands."

Benny put his long arms around them both. They were like a family of his own. They made him feel very warm and happy, inside. "This way

it is fine," he said. "Nothing to worry about at all...Mike has got what it takes—he'll make us all rich—but in the interim I'll have to become a barber, I guess."

* * *

FOR A FORTNIGHT, now, Benny had been training Mike mornings, and afternoons, attending a barber college in Newark. He was getting off the usual 6:45 pyem trolley into Bloomfield, when he saw Maggie standing on the curb waving frantically.

"All right," he said. "Take it easy. What's the trouble? Tell Benny."

Maggie began to talk, but it didn't make much sense: it was too smothered.

Benny said, "Stop crying, please. Stop it! The which happened to what? I can't follow you, Maggie."

"That awful man," said Maggie, forsaking her tears, "did it on purpose, I'm sure."

"Who did what?"

"Charlie. Charlie Graf shut the door of his car on Michael's wrist. Michael's wrist is broken. He will not be able to fight Bulger, we will not be able to pay you—and you'll forfeit all your savings."

Benny lit a cigarette. "The fight's for the Red Cross and Madison Square Garden's all sold out. They'll have to hold the fight. They'll have to get a last-minute substitute for Mike. Who is the next logical contender, now?" he asked himself. A small voice from within said, "You, Benny." Benny stepped backwards. The cigarette dropped from his lips. He lit another, but gave it to Maggie. "Me?" he said.

"You what?" Maggie asked.

"I'm learning to become a barber. I've hung up the gloves, and anyway, the public thinks I quit to Bulger last time. They won't want me."

Maggie threw her cigarette away and blew her nose.

"But I didn't quit to Bulger," Benny told himself. "I lost to him. He's the champ and a better man than me. I couldn't lick one side of the guy. I'm not scared of him—but I'm not

going to have him knock loose the brains I have left."

* * *

MIKE COUNIHAN sat in his mother's swivel chair and drummed the fingers of his left hand upon the desk. His right arm, from thumb to elbow, was swathed like an Egyptian mummy. He seemed tremendous, with shoulders wider than the chair-top behind his neck.

"You met Charlie?" Benny asked.

"Outside. He honked his car horn and I went out."

"He slammed the door on your wrist."

Mike was a nice kid. He tried not to be prejudiced, tried to answer honestly. Misery at losing his chance at the championship was plain upon his face. He said, "It may have been accidental, Benny. The door was open and I was standing there talking to him until time came for him to go. He said, 'So long, Mike.' Then, pow, the door slammed against my wrist."

"I see." But Benny wasn't sure he saw at all.

* * *

CHARLIE GRAF maintained an imposing edifice in Newark, which contained a gymnasium, pool-room and bowling alleys downstairs; upstairs was a sumptuous office in which, if you were known to Charlie, you could bet anything from the bobby-socks in a Sinatra audience to the date of the signing of the peace treaties—provided Charlie got a small hold on the odds. It was rather late in the evening when, alone, Benny Bains opened the door to his office, ignored the "Private—Do Not Enter" sign, and strode in.

"What you doing walking in here?" Charlie said. "Can't you read?"

"I can read the signs—and they don't read so good." Benny turned to a bald man with ill-fitting teeth and an unravelled cigar, who was sitting at the far end of Graf's desk. "Kip," Benny said. "Kip Valenti!"

"In person." Valenti was the New

York promoter who was handling the big fight for the Red Cross. "I didn't think a telegram or phone call would get much out of Charlie."

Graf Rubin arose. "What signs were you referring to, boy?" he asked. This building, which he owned, was full of large, flat-footed, aldermanic, broken-winded hulks who would, he believed, protect him from bodily harm. So he was deliberate and sure of himself. "What's eatin' you, Bennah?"

"What's eatin' me most times, is a restless conscience. Siddown, Charlie. Nothing physical can happen to you here, can it? It's too bad what happened to Mike's wrist, isn't it?"

"That's luck for you, Benny. Mike had his heart set on that title—and I think his chances were better than good."

"The betting was nearly even money. That didn't give you much chance to grab any odds, did it, Charlie?"

The man rubbed his stomach slowly. "An honest dollar is an honest dollar, Bennah."

"And so is a dishonest one. Especially since you sold Mike's contract to me."

"Money is my business." Graf frowned. "At'letics is yours. What do you think, Kip?"

"I think you shoulda told me about selling Mike's contract to Benny." Kip Valenti chewed his unlighted cigar. "I think you are dishonest enough to injure Mike on purpose—so you could profit. You know with Mike out that Benny is the only one left I can use on short notice. Mike against Bulger was at least a gamble. Benny against Bulger is, I presume you figure, anything but. You figure, I am sure, money on Bulger, no matter what the odds, is money in the bank for you, Charlie."

"No man can be that bad," Benny said. "Tell me it ain't so, Charlie."

"I'll tell you to get out, bum!" Graf arose and stretched an arm for a button on his desk.

Benny said, "Naughty, naughty," and pushed Charlie upon the chest. Graf sat in his chair so hard that he and chair toppled to the floor. "That's for Mike," Benny said.

"Come on, Kip... I don't think Charlie will call either his gorillas or the police."

Out in the street Benny agreed, "Okay, I'll fight Bulger for you, Kip. I been training with Mike for two weeks, which will help. I'll do the best I can for the Red Cross and all concerned."

"The door mats of fistiana," Valenti recited, "sometimes rise wrathfully to administer an old-fashioned woodshed walloping to the rug beater. The cow has been known to slaughter the butcher. Strange things can and do happen when the planets are in hasty juxtaposition, and there's always hope, however, bleak, that the underdog may come through... So keep faith in yourself, Benny."

"Don't be foolish, Kip. I've got a licking coming. I know that—but there's no other way out. I need the twenty grand purse—else Charlie will get Mike back and keep the other dough I gave him. And that isn't all... It's no disgrace to lose to the champion of the world—but it's a disgrace to have people believe I quit to him. I would like to be able to walk down the street without meeting people who think I'm afraid of Bulger... Perhaps after this fight I can."

* * *

BENNY HAD five weeks to condition himself. He felt like a fraud, but he put his nose to the grindstone and stuck it out. He made the light bag resound like a riveting machine for the edification of the public who came to watch him and pay the Red Cross ticket-taker at the gate. He sparred and skipped rope. He looked fine, as usual, in the gym—but when, alone, jogging along the Henry Hudson Parkway, his legs always got tired too quickly. After a time, he began to forget his troubles in the work he really loved. He toiled diligently each day, and each night he slept too soundly to have nightmares.

* * *

MIKE COUNIHAN rode in a cab with Benny up Broadway. The cast was off Mike's wrist. He fingered the black button stuck in his ear. The service doctors had done fine by Mike. He seemed as normally re-adjusted to his war-won handicap as a human being can be. In a dressing room, deep within the Garden's catacombs, Mike wound the bandages about Benny's fists. They talked in low voices, but they were unafraid. "Well," Benny thought, "this is it." Wintergreen and sweat and new leather blended in Benny's nostrils: it was like old times. He arose from the bench, went to his locker to retrieve a handkerchief, which he placed upon the floor. He then stood upon the handkerchief and said:

"Throw some punches at me, Mike. See if you can hit me while I stand on this one spot. Come on, don't hold back—I want to know if I have any of the old skill left."

So Mike put up his hands and threw them, while Benny bobbed and weaved like a duck dodging flies. Mike failed to hit him with a solid punch. "You're still a master of the profession," Mike said, letting his hands drop. "Lord, it will take a machine gun to hit you within the spacious areas of a ring."

Benny's name was called; his mouth was dry, his soul at peace, as he climbed the stairs into the Garden and walked with Mike to the ringlights far ahead. The cheers vied with the boos—and it made Benny feel as though he were home again.

Benny was in one corner of the ring with Mike, when Tarzan Bulger, the man who had punched Benny's brains out a year before, climbed through the ropes.

The champion was a Grecian statue in copper—a "Tarzan" who had come up through the Golden Gloves.

Benny liked Bulger and respected him, but the sight of the man across the ring again, left an involuntary coldness in Benny's stomach. A searchlight up in the rafters, where a huge red cross hung suspended above the crowd, shone pitilessly upon the frozen, false grin that wrinkled Benny's stubble-bearded jowls, as he arose, when his turn came, and

mitted the mob. He hoped these ceremonies wouldn't last forever. "Good Lord," he muttered, "Let's get started."

* * *

THE BELL TURNED Benny around. He walked out to face the champ. He drew his head away from a quick right and flicked a light left to the champ's nose. He told himself this was just another fight—the 302nd of his career, he must stay relaxed and smart in here.

But Benny knew this wasn't just another fight, when the unemotional Bulger, his face as calm as a saucepan over the lumps that were his leathered fists, brought the left around with the same speed and power of unhappy memory.

Benny rolled with the punch, snapping his own left in there, drawing blood from Bulger's nose. He weaved and took the champ's wine-red gloves, one-two-three, upon a shoulder. They moved around rapidly. There was a spreading purple welt on Benny's left shoulder. He took another left hook on the protecting shoulder, and the welt grew larger, but he got a sharp left to the champ's sore nose. He heard the champ snort, though it meant nothing. The champ was only getting warm. The crowd seemed pleased with what it had already seen.

Benny could hear some fan of his with a very high, excited voice, "Come oonnn, Benny! Show 'im your Irish, darlin'!"

"I showed it to 'im a year ago," Benny muttered, still filghting, "and he showed me something better." Then the bell—and three of the forty-five minutes were over.

"Mike—how did I do?"

Mike might have said, "Nice, chum," but he was a wise man in a corner. He said, "Save your breath, Benny, you'll need it."

Bong! Benny danced out, but not so fancy or so far, for the champ was upon him a little faster than before. The champ, too ring-wise to fight at the chosen pace of another, was leaning on the lighter man, raising the tempo of his in-fighting—

and raising angry welts under Benny's heart. Benny ducked his head and swung back. He had no other choice. His fists flew with speedy, wild abandon, and did some damage. But Benny knew this couldn't last, so he hugged Bulger greedily and with his chin resting on a dark, glistening shoulder, gulped the smoke-laden air. The referee broke them apart.

Carefully, cautiously, Benny backed away, wiping blood from his mouth. The champ, his killer instinct aroused, pressed savagely in, but unthoughtfully swung a too circuitous left toward Benny's jaw. Benny stepped inside and beat the champ about the head with a flurry of crackling rapid-fire blows that slowly toppled Bulger to the floor. Then Benny leaned against the ropes and watched with disbelieving eyes as the referee counted.

The champion arose at three, hustling forward as he did so. Benny assumed, logically enough, that this was as good a time as any to shoot the works. He bounced off the ropes at the champ. Bulger stood and punched. How beserk the crowd was, Benny didn't know. He was too absorbed in his task. He felt the champ give, finally, under the trip-hammer speed of his blows. He brought his fists up from the corrugated stomach and struck the smooth face three times, rapidly. The champ went down.

Benny put an arm on the ropes, his hairy chest heaving. He watched with the searching eyes of an experienced warrior as the man pushed his hands against the canvas at "Four!" and gamely climbed erect at "Six!"

The referee wiped the resin from the champ's gloves as Bulger said, "Ah'm okay, suh. Les' get goin' ag'in." And "goin' ag'in" they were, when the bell ended the round.

In ring terminology Benny was known as a "Fancy-Dan"; but he could punch hard enough, once he forsook his science long enough to come down off his toes and punch from the balls of his feet. The trouble was, coming down off his toes and punching with the champ had

nearly exhausted Benny. He tried to walk to his corner now, without showing his distress. But Mike knew, and Mike all but drowned him by emptying a pail of water over Benny's head. Benny sat upon the stool, jiggling under Mike's massaging hands, steaming under the hot lights over the ring.

BENNY tried again in the third, to knock Bulger out of the fight. He fought from flat feet, but the champ was too strong. When Benny was winded, when his effort had been made and the champ was bruised and bleeding, severely punished, when Benny could no longer lift his arms—the champ had enough left to bury his gloves wrist-deep into Benny's stomach.

Those punches hurt. "I could ride my bicycle and try to back away," Benny thought, "but then, when I walk down the street after this fight there will be people to point at me and say I was scared stiff of Bulger." So Benny hung on doggedly while the punishment accrued. He began to feel his seams let out, as, backed into a corner, he covered up as best he could and took it.

"Well," he thought, "Nobody can say I'm quitting to the champ. Now I know how a punching bag feels. I was a fool, maybe, to get in here with this guy a second time—but whatever happens, I've gotta stay here longer than last time, if I can."

And he did. At times he stumbled and swayed before the storm. At times he bounced up and down like a trick ashtray. Once he felt he had been knocked down by the champ and moved his hands around like a blind man, but couldn't find the floor. He thought he heard the referee counting, but it was only Mike he heard. He felt Mike's gentle hands upon him. He felt the smelling salts up his nose and the bottle against his sore lips. "You've knocked Bulger down three times, so far," Mike said, "but he's tough. He's cut you into hamburger, Benny. Can you keep going?"

"Like an eight-day clock," Benny said. "I never run down. Just show me where the bum is." He didn't

mean "bum;" it was simply that it eased his mind to be disrespectful.

"It's the fourteenth round coming up," Mike said.

"The fourteenth? Heavens, where've I been?"

He heard the bell and walked out, tugging at his trunks. He saw that the champ's chest was going up and down, knew that Bulger was tired, too; also bruised and bleeding—as if he, too, had had his ups and downs.

Benny took a left hook above the belt. He didn't seem to mind much. He pushed the champ around a little, got him set up nicely and patted him a few.

"Raaaaay, show 'im your Irish, Benny boy!"

Benny grinned around the fist in his mouth. "I've still got a fan on the premises," he thought. "Maybe it's one who remembers me from far, far back. I'll show 'im a little scientific work."

So Benny began to box again, really to box. It might not do any better than his slugging had, but here it was. He reached back into the bag of tricks he had learned through the years. He fought from a crouch, befuddling Bulger, bluffing, waltzing around like the Queen of the May, really resting and getting his second wind. Then he rushed the champ, and they were both sprawled on the floor at the bell.

They battled with all they had through the fifteenth and last. Benny was boss inside those ropes because the champ was worn out. Benny fired away and Bulger stumbled against a ring-post. Benny pushed him against the ropes and the champ tripped over his own feet and sat down. He regained his feet in sections. "All right," the referee said, "go ahead."

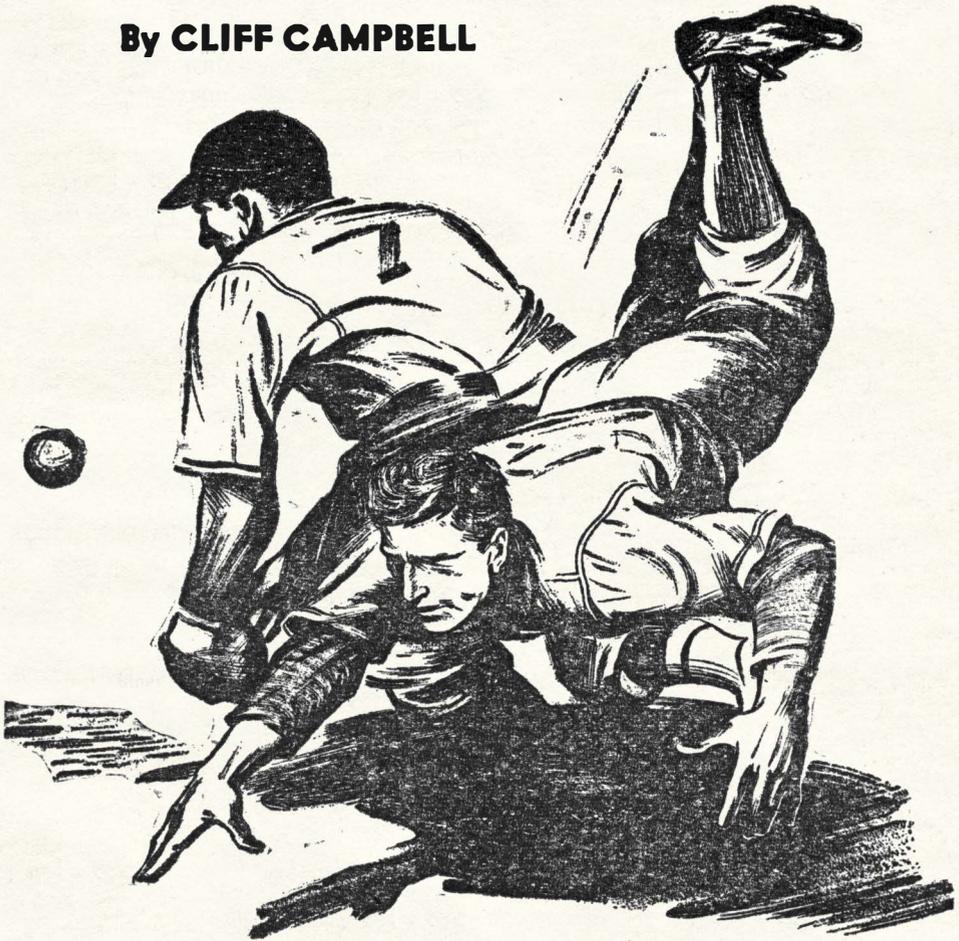
"Poor Bulger," Benny mumbled. "Getting pushed around by an old gaffer like me."

Poor Bulger came across the ring and smote Benny upon the beak. Benny's mouthpiece flew from between his lips as he fell against the ropes. Benny rebounded from the

(Continued On Page 55)

The Promoter

By **CLIFF CAMPBELL**



The write-ups on this bird Hatlin were almost unbelievable—but Hatlin himself was more so!

IT WAS ONE of those fly-buzzing, listless mid-summer afternoons with the rumble of the press making the *Sentinel* building pulsate. And it pulsated inside Managing Editor Joe Gillis' skull too because he always got a headache when he had to read proof. Then the stocky fellow was standing before his desk with some typewritten copy in his hand. Gillis grunted that he was busy then and gave him the two-ton stare.

Only it seemed to bounce right back at Gillis.

"Write-up of Sunday's ball game at Richfield, Mr. Gillis. I thought maybe you could use it," the visitor said unhurriedly. "Free."

Deebo the head pressman called from the back doorway about that Continental Features mat. Gillis set him right and looked back around and the stocky guy was gone. Gillis glanced at the head on the copy,

"Richfield Tigers Tame Chicks," started it toward the waistbasket, then hesitated. Richfield was a mill town five miles up the line. They'd been trying to build some new advertising accounts over there. Story about their ball club might appeal to local pride. Provided the story didn't stink out loud, of course.

This didn't. "In a ten-inning mound duel this afternoon, southpaw Red Vinson of the Tigers bested Ceruto of the league-leading Chicks. Though subject to fits of wildness, Vinson was pulled out of trouble repeatedly by the great work of his receiver, Lou Hatlin..."

And that was only the first he would hear about Catcher Lou Hatlin, Gillis soon discovered. Further on, he read, "In the fourth, Hatlin pounced on a sacrifice bunt and made a brilliant play to third to break the back of the Chick rally. On the next page it said, "In the sixth, the peppery Tiger receiver, Hatlin, knotted up the score with a terrific double with one aboard." Hatlin was referred to as "the indefatigable backstop", the "inspired receiver," and the "sparkplug of the Tigers."

"One-man ball club, this Hatlin, huh." Then Gillis called over Grant and told him to polish it and cut to eight inches. It might be good policy to run it....

RETURNING from lunch Thursday, he found an account of the Tigers' Wednesday game. Again Hatlin appeared to be the star of the proceedings, driving in two runs and twice saving the game, according to the write-up. Saturday morning Gillis emerged from the press room as the fellow from Richfield left an account of Friday's twilight contest. He merely nodded when Gillis asked if he were the manager. Gillis noticed he had crisp black hair tight against his skull and eyes a shade off blue. Gillis also noticed that in the two opening paragraphs, Hatlin's name leaped out at him five times.

"Manager, eh..." Gillis waited in vain for a reply scowling. That usually made people fidget, made them open up and talk against the silence.

This pilot of the Tigers did neither. He had a load of poise as if he'd been around more than a few places. Something about him hinted that he was used to being the boss, to taking charge. He had a certain air of command.

"Play yourself?" It was Gillis who broke the silence.

"A little." The guy's eyes twinkled briefly. "I try hard, you know how it is."

Joe Gillis put another credit against the guy's record. He was no blowhard, anyway. "This Hatlin," Gillis tapped the copy, "he as good as you say?"

"Better, probably. He's still coming. Learned his ball in the Service," the fellow from Richfield said. "He's headed places for sure."

Gillis gave him a sardonic smile that was nasty. The sandlots and the semi-pro diamonds with their rickety crates of grandstands were filled with kids who were going places in the national pastime. But when the shouting and turmoil was over, most of them were forgotten, having withered on the vine some place on the way up. Joe Gillis knew. In his youth he'd had major league aspirations, had knocked around in the minors himself. He'd seen plenty of kid-wonders who could knock down fences in the C-League circuits. But when they got up near the top, they turned out to be just another guy named Joe at the plate. Gillis knew. His own weakness had been an inability to master curve-ball pitching. He said:

"If he's got a good job on the side, better tell him to stick to it."

The Tiger manager's eyes seemed to go hard and stony. But his voice was controlled, very sure of itself as he answered. "Some day this Hatlin will be behind the bat for a major league club. And that club will be lucky to have him." Then he nodded curtly and left like a guy who'd just gotten off a surefire prediction....

PERHAPS it was because his ulcers didn't bother him after that chicken dinner at the boarding house. Anyway, Sunday afternoon, Joe Gillis tooled his pre-war sedan over to Richfield and got to the ball park

just as the third inning opened. The scoreboard said it was the Tyler-ville Blues against the Tigers. He settled into a seat behind first base, facing the home club dugout across the field and asked his neighbor how things were going.

"That's Newby throwing for the Tigers," the man said. "Ace of the staff. But he ain't got his stuff today. No-sir. They're touchin' him up plenty. But maybe that Hatlin can pull him through. If anybody can, that Hatlin can! Yes-sir."

Newby was rapped for a single. Failed to find the plate with his first two pitches against the next hitter. Joe Gillis watched Catcher Hatlin go out for a confab. He must have said something effective. Because Newby worked a corner for a strike, got the hitter to foul one into the stand behind third, then made him lunge for a change-up pitch on the outside and send a slow roller down to the shortstop. But the short couldn't find the handle on the ball. By the time he came up with it, the runners were safe at first and second. And Newby was kicking the rosin bag all around the mound. The crowd booed the shortstop and the second sacker tossed his glove in the air. It was one of those moments when a ball club could go to pieces completely.

Then Hatlin was out from behind the plate, waving a clenched hand. Joe Gillis shifted his gaze to the dugout to see what that manager, who brought in the write-ups of the games, might be doing. He couldn't pick out the man. And Hatlin's voice snapped out like crackling flame running over the field.

"All right, all right! That play's over! Get on your toes out there, everybody! Everybody in it! E-very-body, now!" It was the voice of a man who just naturally took command of a situation.

And it did pull them together. The keystone man pounced on a shot through the box to initiate a sharp double play. And on the first pitch to the next hitter, this Hatlin took a daring gamble and snapped the ball down to third. It worked as he caught the man off by two feet. Joe

Gillis lighted up a cigar and sat back with a sigh. He was going to enjoy this game. And he knew something about baseball, he only had eyes for Hatlin after that.

The man dominated the field, both with his play and his personality. You could feel his influence in the stands. He had pepper, jabbering a lot, soothing them when they got shaky with that voice that possessed the note of command. He held up the wavering Newby beautifully. In the fifth he got him out of the hole with a sensational pickoff of a runner on second. In the home half of the same inning, he boomed a double off the left field wall but was left to expire on base. Twice he backed up first on wild throws, going down with the runner and preventing him from getting an extra base.

But in the eighth Newby got himself in a real jam when he walked two men with two down. Hatlin went out and had a conference with him.

And then Joe Gillis witnessed a strange thing. With the count one and one on the batter, Newby wild-pitched into the dirt. Hatlin threw himself to his right, hit his knees, blocked the ball. Then he snatched it off his chest protector on the carom and whipped to third. The base runner retreated hurriedly to second. The crowd applauded heartily. And then the chant started.

"Come on Hatlin! Come on, Hatlin! Come on, Hatlin!" You'd think *he* was doing the pitching instead of Newby, Gillis told himself. The crowd was pleading with him to do something.

Again the backstop went halfway out for a confab, Newby coming down from the hill. Hatlin did not call time. Just a few quick words, a slap on the pitcher's shoulder, and he was trotting back behind the bat. into his crouch. Gangling Newby walked around the edge of the mound, waving his throwing arm as if it had stiffened, glove held against his chest.

And then, like the proverbial bolt from the blue, the ball arrowed—from Hatlin at the plate up to first to catch the runner off by a full yard

for the third out. It was the shop-worn hidden ball trick, but pulled by the catcher this time. Joe Gillis lost his cigar as he jumped to his feet screaming like a wild man with the rest.

It was an anti-climax to him when this Hatlin stepped up there in the last of the ninth with two on and salted away the ball game with another of those explosive doubles. Joe Gillis left the ball park talking to himself about the brand of heads-up dynamic catching he had just witnessed. On the way home he stopped at the telegraph office and filed a wire to Bobo Pease, scout for the N. Y. Moguls. Years ago back in the Appalachian League, Bobo had played shortstop next to him at second. "Hatlin greatest prospect I have ever seen," he concluded the wire...

IT WAS A RAINY Friday afternoon almost two weeks later that Bobo Pease marched into the *Sentinel* office, older, pot-bellied, but still with that lopsided grin. He and Joe Gillis slapped backs and called each other insulting names. And then Bobo told him he'd signed that Hatlin.

"Saw him work, Joe, and everything you said was the Bible-truth. A coupla seasons in our farm system and he'll be ready. I'll buy the drinks, Joe."

Gillis reached for his raincoat and then saw the black-haired manager

of the Tigers who wrote all about Hatlin standing just behind big Bobo. The guy probably had a story about the latest game. Then Gillis remembered Cathorn in the classified advertising department was quitting and got an idea. He could hire this fellow from Richfield and offer him space rates on his baseball stuff. The guy showed promise as a sports writer.

"Say, you, how'd you like a job?" Gillis asked him.

The guy cocked a puzzled eyebrow. Old Bob gaped at Joe. "Hey, have you gone nuts?" Bobo roared. "I just told you I'd signed Hatlin for the Mogul farm chain. Well, *this is him!*"

Joe Gillis just stood there for a spell, raincoat half off, feeling the rumble of the press through the whole building. Then he shouted, angry, feeling like a dupe. "Hey! You're the bird who wrote all that stuff about what a great guy you were then!"

Hatlin nodded. "Seems like I did." Left it there.

Gillis swallowed and felt he had to say something. "I see....You were in the Service, eh? What'd you do?"

Hatlin said, "I was attached to the Psychological Warfare Branch...I guess you'd call it propaganda...."

THE END



BUY



VICTORY



BONDS



Singin' Birdies



By **THEODORE J. ROEMER**

Jay Burnett had more than a golf tourney to win; his brother's respect was the important thing...

HE STOPPED the car, reached around for his clubs. He grew still. Ed was coming up the walk.

He watched his brother approaching and thoughts went swiftly—Randolph Field four years ago, bitter quarreling words, then the war...

He hadn't seen or heard from Ed since the accident and his quitting the Air Force, although he knew what Ed was doing. The headlines were full of it: "Burnett downs Four Japs... Burnett Escapes Jungle... Burnett wins Silver Star..." Every bit was Ed all right, proud fierce Ed

who wanted the Burnetts to be the aces of the outfit. And then Jay had had a crack-up and quit cold.

Ed couldn't stomach that.

The thoughts ran out. On impulse Jay stepped from the car "Hello, Ed." He kind of grinned, hopeful.

Ed Burnett halted. Jay could almost hear the click of smart air force heels. He still saw "officer" all over Ed, in spite of the polo shirt and grey golfing slacks.

There was no flicker of recognition in Ed's dark eyes. He looked at his younger brother just as he had the past three days of the Mulford Open

when they'd battled up to this play-off this afternoon tied 284. "What is is?" he said curtly.

"I—uh—well, I just wish you luck this afternoon, Ed."

"You'll need all the luck," the other snapped. He whipped past and went up the clubhouse steps.

Jay started to shout, "Wait—" then choked back the command. Words wouldn't do the explaining now—he should have told Ed right after the accident instead of losing his temper also. Now it would take feeling, an inner feeling straight from Ed's heart to heal the breach, and Jay didn't know how to go about it. It was funny how a little minor omission in their pre-flight medical could become such an important thing.

His thoughts rolled back through the four years he'd been a grease monkey to the bombers, to that afternoon on Randolph Field. Jay had just come down for the in-coming lane. He'd missed the yellow lane. Another trainee was coming down on his side. Jay saw his error—too late. He swerved.

When he walked out of the hospital later where they'd taken the instructor who had been in the plane with him, he'd found out what had caused the accident. He'd marched to the Field Commander and resigned. He was shaking like a leaf, for he'd almost killed a man.

Then Ed had come to the barracks—proud, fierce Ed. Jay didn't want to think anymore. He entered the clubrooms forcing the bitter memories from his mind.

The rich carpets were like greens under his feet. The air was soft and washed. Jay looked at the paneled room with the great field-rock fireplace. They certainly did things big at Mulford here. And a queer thought hit him. Who'd ever think the Burnett brothers of Poplar street of fifteen years ago would be fighting it out at Mulford. *Mulford!*

HE PAUSED at the board. His and Ed's name were up there, on top. 284! It was a blistering pace on that damned rock-pile he thought,

and he wondered now how he'd ever done it.

But in his heart, he knew. Ed was in this. He wanted to hang to Ed. He wanted to get next to Ed. He didn't want to beat him—he didn't think he could, anyway—but there was a tiny germ of hope that if they did meet and play against each other, something would happen.

"Jumpy, kid?" Willie Jarish, the little pro he'd beat out in the final round, was there.

Jay shook his head. "Not particularly so." He grinned a little self-effacing grin and moved toward the locker room stairs. This was his first big tournament. He'd been lucky.

Fellows stopped him and gripped his hand. Well-upholstered gentlemen with pretty daughters hanging to their arms stopped him and smiled and wished him luck. The mainstays of Mulford, they were. The girls smiled at Jay Burnett's lean, brown face and the nice expression about his eyes, but Jay didn't smile back. He was beyond his depth here and he knew it. He and Ed were from Poplar street where the kids had pennies to spend—sometimes—not dollars; where they got bloody noses fighting and kept on fighting. It was his and Ed's street—or was it now? Was it Ed's? Ed had stepped up.

The thought hurt him as he changed clothes in the roomfull of excitedly-talking men—officials, stewards, reporters. Everyone was excited but him. And that was funny, he decided. He laced his right golf shoe.

Yes, Ed had moved out of the street. He was up-stairs stuff now. Officer, hero, big-time pro. Ed had taken the Mississippi Open, been runner-up at Pinehurst. Ed would maybe take this Mulford also.

No longer would Ed put his arm around him after a fight and say, "Don't bawl, Jay. You gave him a good scrap." Ed always was fiercely proud of him even though he couldn't fight very well, being skinny and small. Ed always said the Burnetts stick together. "You got the guts,

anyway, kid. You gave him a good scrap."

That was why it had hurt Ed so when he'd quit the Air Force.

Jay finished lacing his shoes. His caddy was there and a million guys willing to do things but just getting in your way. He grinned his grin and moved to the door.

He was outside. The crowd had grown tremendously. Somebody shouted his name and faces turned. Stewards had to push a way open for him to the tee-off. Jay wet his lips. In two minutes they'd begin. He and Ed. The thing he'd battled for. *This was it!*

He saw Ed there waiting and for the first time a tinge of grimness crept into him.

One of the marshals looked at his wristwatch and said, "It is your honor." Jay took the driver from his caddy.

His drive had whip. It was sweet as a poem and it had distance. He felt satisfaction as he stepped back.

But Ed matched it and put ten yards to it. Jay said nothing and stepped forward to retrieve the tee he'd forgotten.

Ed's voice came harshly, "That's mine," and with a flip of his driver he knocked Jay's yellow tee forward and picked up his green one. Jay flushed. Ed could have been a little more civil about it.

HE STROKED grimly on his lie. and undercut. Ed came up smooth as syrup and was on. Jay felt himself tightening, then caught himself. He winked at his caddy. "Watch this one," he said loud enough for the crowd to hear. He chipped with his iron and the white ball bounced to the carpet, trundled past Ed's, and marched into the hole.

Ed took the birdie also, but his large face was dark.

He led the way to the second and carved a nice par on the long hole. He parred the third. And suddenly Jay found himself in the position of a kid who'd hitched his wagon to a fire truck—he couldn't let go.

Par, par, par dripped from Ed Burnett's flashing clubs. Woods and

irons were beautifully obedient extensions of his mind. He said nothing, watched his younger brother hanging to him, and stroked on. And Jay stroked with him.

On the dogleg seventh Ed played for over the tongue of birch trees. He cleared. It was a mighty shot. Jay felt his shoulder muscles tightening as he stepped into the tee-off box. Then again he caught himself. He grinned at his tense-faced caddy.

But this time it didn't work. His screaming drive didn't have the lift. The ball arced into the birch and the crowd grew silent in sympathy.

The caddy found the ball. It was clear of wood but in four-inch grass. Ed Burnett stood at the edge of the birch to watch.

Jay forced a grin. He said to the white-faced caddy, "The number six, kid. Then bring me an ax."

He didn't need the ax. He came out clean and sweet between the white birch. But he went one down on the hole.

They rounded the ninth. Jay was two under par; Ed three.

Ed drove for the tenth. It was nice. Jay took a pull at the towel and wrapped his brown fingers around his driver. He whipped out a lacy drive. He bent, from habit, to retrieve his tee. He stopped. Ed's was still there.

He picked up both, looked at them carefully, then tossed Ed's to his brother. "Habit of yours, leavin' tees?"

Ed who was watching him shrugged and the caddy picked up the fallen tee.

They went on down the line.

They parred the first three incoming holes, then Ed birdied the thirteenth. Jay was two down. His jaw tightened. He saw Ed watching him. He fought off the tenseness. He put all his skill in stroking the waterholed 14th. A lovely lofting shot, a chip, then a breath-taking putt that wouldn't lie down. He gained back one stroke.

Even on the fourteenth, the fifteenth. Both brothers were fighting silently. Word had gone back to the clubhouse and even the help had come out. A cathedral-like hush accompa-

nied every shot. The Burnett brothers were stroking.

They traversed the sixteenth in a par. Ed got a birdie on the seventeenth; Jay had a fifteen-foot putt to get it. He stroked with care, the white pill walked to the cup, looked in and refused to drop. The gallery groaned and Jay, with a grin, touched it in.

The grin hid a lot of things. Two down. One hole to go. It was turning out as he had expected. He had given a good fight, tried to show Ed—

ED WAS stepping off the tee-box. He had driven cleanly down the narrow fairway. Jay looked at the carpet hanging to the cliff across a wooded gully. The eighteenth of Mulford was the murder-hole; they called it the Black Hole of Calcutta. To play it safe down the fairway, five-iron it around the hill's shoulder was the right way. No narrow apron and nasty traps. One could drive a wagon into the cup that way—and he had five to do it in. But across—

Jay grinned at his caddy. "You got good eyes, sonny?" And he faced at right angles across the gully.

An audible gasp came from the packed gallery. Jay took two waggies and went smoothly, with all the power he could muster, into his drive.

The sun played tricks with that ball. It was gone. I came again into sight. Then it was lost once more. A shout from people strung through the woods in the gully. It told him the story. He'd gone over.

Ed looked at him queerly. Then he said, "My tee." Jay bent, tossed Ed's to him, and picked up his own. His heart was singing. Anywhere over there, with luck—

Ed played his ball up and around and dropped it six feet from the pin in four. It was a certain five. Jay moved up with the course stewards, looking for his caddy.

The little kid was standing *on the carpet* and he had a grin like Santa Claus.

Jay looked at the ball on the edge of the long rolling green that somehow looked like an air strip and he

said, "Let's have that old pea-shooter, sonny." He took the putter, stood behind the ball and plotted his course down that uneven airstrip. He was in a trainer now no yellow strip, no red-painted poles just that little round cup at the end of the field.

He bent over his ball. His fingers wrapped around brown leather like string beans. He sighted and that cup looked big as a washtub. Everything to win, nothing to— He stroked.

The book says, no. A golfer can't make two unbelievable shots in one lifetime. The book was wrong. This time the ball walked up to the cup, looked in, walked around and dropped.

There wasn't much one could say about what happened to the crowd after that. But Jay lifted his eyes and there was Ed. There was something funny about Ed's eyes, a sort of shine, then Jay felt Ed's arm go around his shoulders.

"Kid,"—Ed's voice was soft with huskiness—"That was one helluva nice fight."

Jay blinked. "Ed—I—" Ed's arm tightened around his shoulder.

"Why didn't I guess it before. Why didn't you *tell* me?"

Jay jerked around. "You know?"

"A chunk of the sky fell on me back there when you got mixed up on those yellow and green tees a second time. Shucks, kid, it's no crime to be color blind even though it washes you out as a pilot. Me an' my big mouth an' temper—"

But Jay wasn't listening. Ed's arm was around his shoulder. His brother was proud of him, it was a good fight.

THE END

**BUY
BONDS**



*Consternation reigned
as Roscoe made another
of his incredible home-run hits.*

Roscoe And The Magic Bat

By **ARTHUR MANN**

*Wherein, believe it or not, a perfectly honest Manager wants to
throw out a perfectly honest winner!*

CONTRARY to popular belief, Larry Phelan, president of the New York Sox baseball empire, was inspired by unmitigated chagrin and jealousy when his recent and typical harangue included the following critique:

"Roscoe Deeter has the heart and soul of a self-made orphan!"

Poor Roscoe committed the unforgivable crime of conceiving a good baseball idea before Phelan could think of it and, by so doing, proved that the man who makes a better mousetrap usually gets his finger caught in it.

As you doubtless know, Larry Phelan is notorious as a specialist in

baseball novelty. But he is so proud of his chronic and successful innovations (the phosphorescent ball, two-faced mitt for ambidextrous catchers, white-lie detectors for umpires, etc.), that he hit the ceiling with the force of fission when Roscoe Deeter, a mere baseball player, came up with a priceless item like the magic bat and conked Phelan over his red head.

The bat wasn't magic, of course, but its results were. And not only did Phelan fail to think of it first, but he was impaled upon its pointed ramifications, so to speak, when the astute originator did some long-distance scheming. Roscoe's prime purpose, however, was not to hurt Phe-



Ed. W. ...

lan or baseball, but to hasten his impending marriage to beautiful Gloria Mundy, whose left hand had sparkled three years for Roscoe while he prowled the Pacific battle areas. As though fashioning a delicate mosaic, Roscoe fitted the pieces of his daring plan with utmost care. Then with wealth and fame and Gloria within his grasp—

“Well,” he explains today with a shrug and a sigh, “I guess you’d say that Phelan just flew the coup.”

Grim and tight-lipped, Roscoe wouldn’t reveal how or where he conceived his magic bat. Phelan cruelly intimated that the idea was stolen, but the public simply couldn’t believe such a thing about Roscoe. Only when Gloria’s happiness was at stake would he discuss the magic bat for publication. Of course he had to speak when Phelan prevailed upon the customs officials to apprehend him for smuggling. Roscoe calmly admitted that he had obtained the valuable and special wood in the East Indies; that he had imported the

pieces on the homeward-bound troopship; and that, as legitimate “souvenirs” of his war experiences, they were duty-free.

Eventually Roscoe reckoned that the cost of the bats exceeded fifty dollars apiece, including fees for legal advice, services of notaries public and reliable witnesses to depose that the bats conformed to well-known baseball standards, i. e., entirely of hard wood, in one piece and well within maximum measurements. Later, of course, when Phelan tried to bribe the old wood-turner who had lathed the bats, Roscoe had to pay out more money for secrecy.

BY TELLING individuals no more than odd pieces of necessary information, Roscoe managed to keep the plan a secret until he confided it to Gloria Mundy at Springfield. Phelan had optioned him there immediately after his discharge to play center field for the Triplets, a Class A link in New York’s vast chain of minor-league affiliates. Huddled at a

corner table in the hotel cafeteria, Roscoe's eyes glistened like embedded licorice drops as he disclosed his short cut to matrimonial paradise. His arched brows hit a new high and his dark brush-cut hair seemed to rise like hackles. Concentration affected him that way.

"This may surprise you, Gloria," he whispered, "but I'm going to be the greatest batter that ever lived."

"I've always known that, darling," she replied with a sigh, and her pretty face melted with wholesale belief. Down deep she didn't know whether Roscoe could hit an inside fast ball to the left or not at all. He was back from the war at last and nothing else mattered.

"I've got a new bat... a sort of secret weapon," he went on, peering to either side as though every one in the cafeteria wore a walkie-talkie. "I'll be a greater batter than Babe Ruth and Ted Williams, or even Joe Jackson. I'll be baseball's first five-hundred hitter."

"Five hundred!" Gloria's blue eyes widened. "Isn't five hundred above ceiling, or something?"

"Sh-h-h..." he cautioned, and added casually. "Maybe I'll hit six hundred, or even seven hundred. It all depends."

"But how?" Gloria puzzled. Her hand wandered mechanically to a pile of yellow braids coiled atop her pert head. "Only yesterday you told me how the manager here, Lefty Gromak, spent a dozen years with the New York Sox and never batted zero-nine-nine, which was the size of his hat, you said—"

"Lefty used to wave the bat up and down like he was killing a snake—"

"But if they couldn't teach a great player like Lefty to hit a hundred in twelve years, darling, how can you—"

"Lefty was a pitcher," Roscoe explained with just a smidgen of impatience. "But don't worry, honey; the bat will work. I've tried it. It's terrific—just like rubber. But I'll need your help and cooperation all the time. You'll have to sit next to our dugout in every game and guard the bats. They're our future, Gloria, and once the secret is out, everybo-

dy'll try to steal 'em. Not here necessarily, but in New York—"

"New York!" Gloria gasped. "Oh, darling, really?"

"Why not?" Roscoe asked. "This league is Class A in everything but salary. After I get a new contract, we'll have enough to get married on. I'll hit a million anywhere, and Phelan couldn't afford to keep me in the minor leagues. Before I use the bat for the first time in a game tomorrow, I'll phone Phelan, an tell him I'm going to wallop the daylights out of the Westwood pitchers, and that if I do, he's got to transfer me right away to Oakland!"

"But that's not New York," she reminded.

Roscoe's eyes twinkled deviously as he smiled. "I'll only be a few days in Oakland," he whispered, and patted her sparkling left hand. "So you can go on to New York. Get a nice quiet hotel room for yourself. Every pitcher'll be my cousin, and maybe you haven't seen it in the papers, but Tony Adagio is in the worst slump of his life."

"Isn't that a shame," Gloria murmured, reeking with sympathy. "Who is Tony Adagio?"

"He's the Sox center fielder, honey, and it's not a shame," Roscoe corrected sternly. "If Tony keeps on slumping, Phelan'll just have to bring me up to play with the Sox. And that's all I've been dreaming of, Gloria, ever since I first thought about the magic bat." As her lips parted in dismay, he quickly added, "When I wasn't dreaming of you, that is."

INTRODUCTION of Rosco's magic bat was as subtle as a kick in the face, yet some 4000 Springfield fans, as well as the playing personnel of both teams, failed to distinguish it from an ordinary bat. Gloria sat in a nearby box seat clutching the priceless supply, but to avert suspicion, Roscoe gambled to the extent of tossing one in the bat tray among the regulation sticks. It was a light brown, rather syrup-colored, and shaped exactly like the others. You assumed the trade mark was on the

under side, but it bore no marking whatever.

But it sure was different when Roscoe swung it left-handed with fantastic success against three Westwood pitchers, the very best in the league. To the Springfield fans it was the usual dismal day for the Triplets, with Roscoe a lucky exception. Westwood would have scored their usual runaway victory instead of taking a ninth-inning defeat, but for Roscoe's five tremendous hits, all for extra bases, including the thrilling bunt in the ninth.

That bunt was the big news, bigger than Roscoe's first-inning homer, and the 500-foot fence-clearing wallop that tied the score in the fifth. Sports writers and broadcasters declared that Roscoe was the first player in baseball history ever to bunt over the third-baseman's head for a double. And not even the oldest statistician could recall a ninth-inning squeeze play to score a winning run from first on a two-base bunt!

Little wonder that Roscoe and his heart of hearts were near hysterical joy as the train sped southward after the game. Phelan, a sly fellow ordinarily, had fallen for the trap, never dreaming that mortal ball player could make such a boast good against those Westwood pitchers. The phone call had convinced him that Roscoe was enjoying either liquor or idiocy, but the startling result at Springfield forced him to keep his unfortunate promise and authorize the transfer to Oakland.

"I'll do twice as much damage with these Acorns," Roscoe promised. "The fielders'll go crazy trying to play me right. Gee, Gloria, I might even be enshrined in Cooperstown."

"Oh, no," she pouted indignantly. "If Phelan tries to send you anywhere but New York, you ought to accept that offer from the Pasteur brothers in Mexico."

Three days and fourteen hits later—all consecutive—Roscoe's batting coup was hitting on all cylinders. He had torn the Atlantic League pitching into shreds. With five wallops at Springfield and fourteen in a row at Oakland, he was holder of a new minor-league record for consecutive

base hits. He had smashed the longest home run ball ever seen (and never found) in Oakland. One defensive outfielder was in the hospital, due to running with his eye exclusively on Roscoe's drive and none on the brick wall in center field. The undeniable sensation was ordered to New York forthwith.

PACING the carpeted swank of his Fifth Avenue office, Phelan's face had turned a shade redder than his rumpled hair. His booming voice caromed off the paneled walls like flying shrapnel and seemed just as devastating. But not to Roscoe Deeter. He had faced and survived barges far worse than this, though never with more at stake, because the precious bat had become more valuable than life. It was Gloria's life now, and he refused to be intimidated by mere vocal volume.

"Whoever heard of a hundred-thousand-dollar salary for a minor-league player?" Phelan roared, returning to his desk.

"Nobody ever heard of a five-hundred hitter either," Roscoe countered. He curled the brim of his new straw hat. "I can hit four hundred easy, Mr. Phelan, but I'll toss that in like an undersized fish. If I can't hit five hundred, I'll be satisfied with a regular New York contract for whatever you say. That's fair."

Phelan gulped down some chilled water from the thermos pitcher and made a wry face. He pounded the desk vigorously.

"But these screwy conditions and figures!" He thundered, and waved Roscoe's statistics wildly. "The Commissioner'll think I'm nuts. You want a hundred thousand dollars if you maintain a five-hundred batting average."

"Reckoned on a weekly basis," Roscoe added. "To allow for fluctuation. And a box seat right next to our dugout at every game for Gloria Mundy, my future first wife."

"Nobody can push me around!" Phelan roared anew. He slammed the paper to the desk. "Nobody ever *could* push me around."

Roscoe's gimlet-eyes blinked. From the inside pocket of his jacket he

produced a large, colorful folder that pictured the beauty and glory of travel in sunny Mexico. "See Popocatepett in the moonlight with a hot tamale in one hand and a heart-warming seniorita in the other..." Phelan's crimson face paled to a pink.

"Okay, wise guy, you win!" he muttered and recovered the statistics. He read aloud as he inserted them at the bottom of page two on a uniform player-contract. "...two-hundred-thousand dollars for a six-hundred average, three-hundred-thousand for seven-hundred, and a half-million dollars for an eight-hundred average." He looked up with an angry glare. His face had regained its normal rose madder hue. "Confound it, Roscoe, you're crazy! No batter can hit for such averages!"

A pixey-grin bathed Roscoe's sunburned features, emphasizing the alabaster white of his unburned forehead.

"If it can't be done, Mr. Phelan," he murmured, "what are you so excited about?"

The pressure of circumstances moved the red-head's hand across the contracts in a hasty scrawl. He tossed them at Roscoe for signatures and muttered plans for a press conference as soon as the New York writers and itinerant Boston scribe-writers could be assembled.

The document was screwy enough to be framed as a Cooperstown curio, but Phelan was sorely in need of something to turn public attention from the prolonged slump of his big centerfield star, Tony Adagio. Trusting this brazen screwball into Tony's third-place spot in the lineup would serve a double purpose. It would cool off public indignation and the rookie's absurd hitting streak as well.

No one could continue hitting at such a pace, Phelan reasoned quite logically, because no one ever had. The law of averages was overwhelmingly in the club's favor. Nineteen straight hits could mean only nineteen or more disappointments and perhaps consecutively. That's baseball ore and statistical law. While Phelan hoped the brash and rangy spectacle .300-plus, it was plenty to

one that he'd never maintain even a .400 average, because no rookie ever had. Why, he couldn't even pull his hits, perennial hallmark of the New York slugging system.

Roscoe was calm and coherent before the dour and scrutinizing baseball writers. He laughed off questions about the Pacific Islands, and volunteered praise of his girl, Gloria, whom he would marry as soon as possible. Phelan was a model of composure until the Sox manager, Dicky Williams fashioned a statement of welcome that ended the conference with startling suddenness.

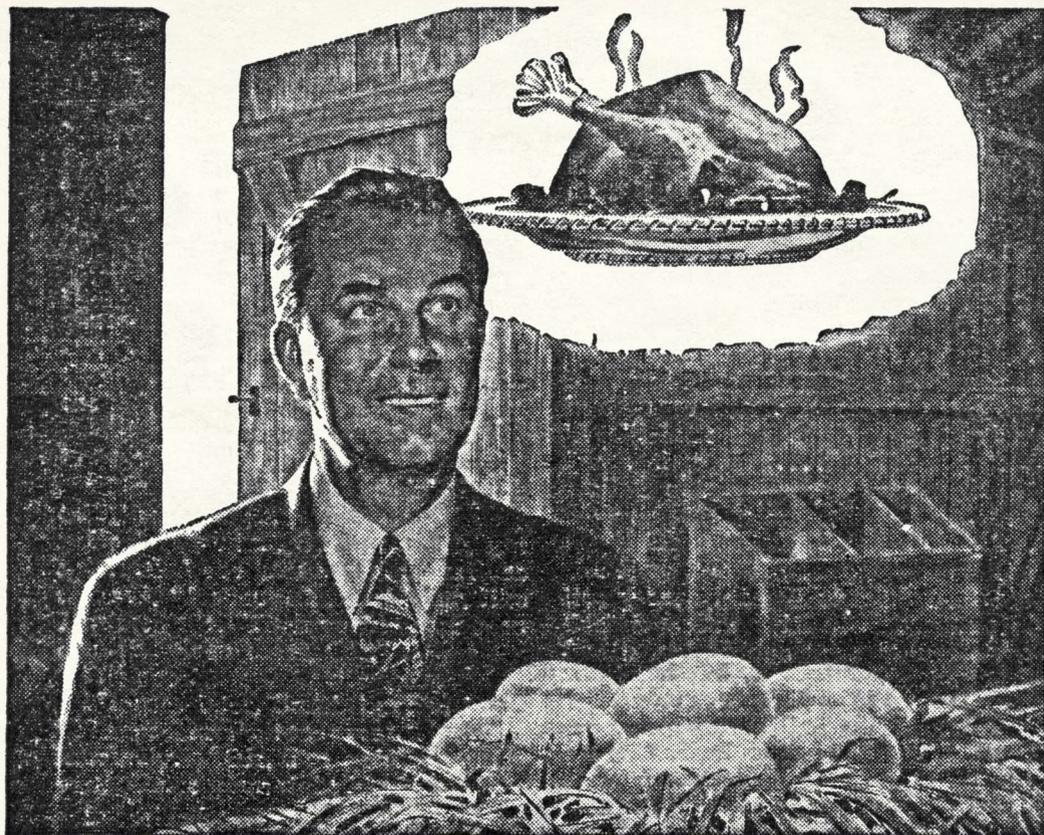
"I feel certain," he declared with an arm draped over Roscoe's wide shoulders, "that Deeter will continue his terrific hitting streak."

With that expression of confidence, Larry Phelan slumped in his swivel chair and uttered a weak cry for "something stronger than that damnable water!"

TO ALL appearances, Roscoe Deeter's presence in the Sox line-up against the Boston Bruins next day was no more than a prodigious chain-store rookie percolating to the top. Newspapers and radio gave it customary mid-season space and color along with close-up shots of the girl friend's happy, blue eyes and a hairdo that resembled neatly-coiled hawser. Her announced intention to occupy a box seat close to the dugout every day was viewed as public declaration of her affection for Roscoe. When she mentioned the supply of "lucky bats" to be carried by her personally, Roscoe winced apprehensively, but the public swallowed it all as ballyhooy to be expected of a Phelan promotion, and they promptly forgot Tony Adagio's slump.

After an uneventful half-inning, big Sam Seglitz took the mound for Boston. Throwing an effective slider that sank near the plate, he retired the first two New York batters on weak grounders. Roscoe, third up, touched his cap lightly in response to the generous applause and stepped into the batter's box on the first-base side of the plate. The Bos-

(Continued On Page 80)



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Continued From Page 78

ton outfielders shifted automatically toward right field, for all left-handed produce of the New York Sox farm clubs must learn to pull a ball into deep right, or else. Roscoe swung on the first pitch, but late, and the result was catastrophic, to him almost as much as to Boston.

Motionless, he watched the ball streak down the left-field foul line with bullet-like speed, and far beyond reach of any fielder. But it didn't go over the fence, thereby creating a problem. As Roscoe looked at his bat, the first-base coach screamed for him to run out the hit. But Roscoe thought only of the bat. There wasn't time to give it to Gloria. He could only streak for first, carrying the precious bludgeon.

"Drop your bat!" the coach yelled. "Keep goin'... drop the bat!"

Roscoe obeyed part of the order, streaking for second, but he refused to shed the priceless burden. He hadn't hit the ball hard—just a good snapping push, but it had sizzled over the infielder's head in frightening flight. The third base coach was pin-wheeling his right arm for Roscoe to keep going. The long legs ground out speed, and then he saw the coach's hands go down... *slide!*

His feet lifted, and so did his arms. Waving the bat, he resembled a berserk windmill flying through the air. He hit the dirt and reached the bag in a cloud of dust, but safe. He rose, still clutching his bludgeon, which the coach demanded with outstretched hands.

"There's no rule against carryin' a bat, I looked it up." Roscoe panted. He brushed his white uniform with the free hand. His ears stung from the bedlam of cheering.

"It's part of his personality," the Boston third-baseman sneered, and tossed the ball to Steglitz.

The pitcher, still puzzled over what had happened to his slider, risked another to the fourth New York batter, who topped the ball weakly and was retired easily at first. With that, Roscoe raced over and delivered his precious bat to Gloria.

NOW, ALL this was dismissed as understandable color by the crowd and the players. Publicized rookies will do anything these days to develop personality, commensurate with an inflated ego. The crowd applauded Rosco, even if his hit was the result of a late swing and an outfield caught "out of position."

But three innings later, with the score still 0—0 and one out, the magic bat hit New York with maximum impact. After a waste-pitch for ball one, Steglitz came through with the slider again, low he later claimed. Roscoe swung and the pipes of pandemonium took over. Both ball clubs added to the din, Boston with rage and New York with joy. But the biggest howl, they say, was emitted by a New York baseball writer, Dan Denial, who had been plagued for years by constant readers repetitiously writing in to ask if Babe Ruth or anybody else ever hit a fair ball out of the New York Sox park. Regardless of how many times he printed a sneering "No!" in reply, the same question would arrive week after week. Now his troubles would end with the new answer, "Yes!"

For Roscoe Deeter had hit the first fair ball far and away out of Sox park. It sailed high over the big neon-clock behind the center field bleachers and smashed the window of a cafeteria across the street. The drive traveled all of 750 feet, easily the longest in all recorded big-league history.

The combined efforts of special policemen, ushers and umpires cleared the field of wild spectators and wilder Boston Bruins, as Roscoe completed the circuit. Most ferocious of all, however, was Larry Phelan, who resembled an animated stop-light as he raced to the plate in apoleptic rage, screaming incoherently of foul and clutching his groins to indicate a low blow.

"It wasn't foul," shouted the plate umpire, Bill Winters. "It was fair!" "Lively bat!" Phelan shrieked. "That dirty Deeter's using a lively bat. Foul...foul...foul! Lively bat!"

Umpire Winters was frankly astonished to hear a club-owner pro-

testing a home run by his own player. Suddenly he was conscious of Roscoe Deeter at his side with a sheaf of papers.

"I'm certain, Mr. Winters," Roscoe said, riffling the papers, "that your sense of jurisprudence will acknowledge the precedential nature of these attestations and depositions. They are written and legal proof that the bat I use conforms to regulations—"

"I can tell more by one look at the bat," the umpire said.

Roscoe went to the box seat and returned with the bat responsible for baseball's longest home run. Both teams crowded around with high expectations of finding it made of pure gutta percha.

"What kind of wood is this?" Winters asked.

"Hard wood," Roscoe replied.

"He said what kind!" Phelan shouted.

"The rules call for hard wood," Roscoe said. "That's hard wood, it is also in one piece."

"Does it contain metal?" the umpire continued. "Has it been treated with any foreign substance?"

"It's like these affidavits say," Roscoe declared earnestly, waving the papers. "It's a single piece of hard wood, tooled down to regulation size and specifications."

Winters shushed Phelan's attempted outburst. All breath was bated as he rapped the magic bat against an ordinary weapon and vice versa. The woody sounds were vibrant but quite similar.

"Looks okay and it sounds okay to me," the official declared. "I protest!" Phelan shouted. "I'll protest the game!"

"That's up to you, but Deeter can use the bat," Winters said, waving all hands away. "Play ball!"

"Deeter, your benched!" Phelan screamed. "Out of the game, pending further investigation of this palpable fraud. Quick! Somebody grab the girl and the rest of those bats!"

THREE ANXIOUS days passed as New York baseball fans seethed with indignation over Phelan's fan-

tastic benching of Roscoe Deeter. The Sox president, most indignant of all, had hoped to find the bats in Roscoe's hotel, but Roscoe wasn't quite that simple about a valuable property. Being under suspension, he had no need for homeric results. He used ordinary bats for pre-game practice, and Manager Dickey Williams reported him quite mortal as a hitter.

"That settles it!" Phelan roared, and whip-lashed the crew of amateur sleuths already on the trail of Gloria Mundy.

The fourth day brought Phelan face to face with the worried young lady in her hotel room which was far from quiet when Phelan cut loose with a tirade of abuse.

"You're engaged to marry a crook!" he stormed, pacing the chamber. "Roscoe Deeter's a mountebank and a charlatan. Where are the bats?"

"In your belfry, if you think I'll give them up!" she returned, and the blue eyes carried unmistakable proof of devotion to the cause.

"Do you want to spend your life with a felon?" he roared.

"I much prefer felon to Phelan!" she exclaimed.

With this, the club executive retreated to form new and stronger lines. His angered gaze wandered about the room for some sign of the troublesome bats, and softened as he prepared the new attack. Facing her again, he had donned a mask of paternal concern.

"Gloria, let's be sensible," he said. "You came here to marry Roscoe and be happy. How can you be happy with a dishonest man?"

"Roscoe couldn't be dishonest!" she protested.

"Ah, but he is, my dear." Phelan moved close. He leaned forward and his voice took on a throaty persuasion. "Roscoe used a bat that's illegal. It must be illegal for two reasons: he won't let anybody examine it carefully, and he won't let any other player use it. That's not only unfair, Gloria, but dishonest. He is cheating in the game of baseball."

"No...no," she protested, and her blue eyes overflowed. "Roscoe

couldn't cheat anybody. All he wants to do is marry me!"

"But don't you see, dear, it just doesn't stop with cheating. Roscoe becomes subject to punishment for the transgression. Do you know about the Black Sox?"

GLORIA'S puzzled head moved from side to side. "I didn't know you hired any in New York," she murmured.

"I mean the Black Sox of nineteen-nineteen, Gloria," Phelan said, wincing. "They cheated. They were disgraced and barred from baseball forever. Roscoe *might* be barred from baseball for life. Why, he might even be barred from Mexican baseball."

"Oh, no, Mr. Phelan!" she gasped. "We couldn't be married then!"

"That would be tragic, my dear," Phelan said, turning on the parental syrup. "But you'll never be happy as long as Roscoe has those bats. I don't want you to be unhappy. In fact, I want just the opposite. I really do."

Here he produced a small piece of paper from his pocket.

"This *could* be your happiness, Gloria," he whispered, and extended the check. "It's not much. . . just ten thousand dollars."

"Ten thousand. . . ." she whispered and seemed to collapse slightly. "Roscoe could buy a house!"

"A certified check. . . a fine start toward happiness. It's yours and Roscoe's. Just give me all the bats you have. I'm buying them at a good price."

"But. . . what will Roscoe say?" she stammered, thoroughly bewildered.

"What will Roscoe say," Phelan demanded sternly, "when you are held as an accessory before and after this baseball crime? As an accomplice, like a gun moll who stands by while thugs and crooks hold up a bank—"

"No-no-no, I'm not!" she exclaimed between two large sobs.

"Atlanta. . . Leavenworth. . . *Alcatraz*, maybe," Phelan said with a shrug. He folded the check conspicuously and sighed, "Both of you so young!"

With that Gloria rushed into the bathroom. From under an old-fashioned bath tub she produced the leather bat-bag. Sobbing deeply, she opened the padlock and drew out four, glistening gems of wood-turning art. Phelan reached with trembling hands. Gloria drew back.

"I. . . I'm selling them," she reminded tearfully, "to save Roscoe."

Phelan handed her the check.

"And. . . will you let him play ball again?" she asked.

"Does he have any more bats?"

"No. He told me these were all he had."

Phelan looked at his watch. He lifted the telephone from its cradle and called his office, happy for the first time in days.

"Call the newspapers and radio stations," he ordered, "and announce that Roscoe Deeter will be in center field tomorrow against Chicago!"

Roscoe read the glad tidings in the late editions of the afternoon papers. He telephoned Gloria and was delighted to hear that she already knew. They met in a restaurant where she handed him the certified check and explained the triumph. But the color seemed to drain from his face as he fought against a rising tide of indignation and temper.

"Ten thousand," he whispered and stared at her in horror. "Gloria. . . that's peanuts. The bats are worth millions. Don't you see that if I remain suspended for only a week, I still have a batting average of a thousand. That's over eight hundred, and Phelan has to pay me more than forty-five thousand dollars."

"B-b-but he said you'd go to Alcatraz!" she exclaimed.

"He's crazy!"

"He said we'd both go," she sobbed. "And Alcatraz is a prison just for men. Oh, Roscoe, I just couldn't stand us being in separate prisons!"

Roscoe slammed the certified check to the table and stalked from the restaurant.

LARRY PHELAN was pacing the carpeted floor of his Fifth Avenue office again the next afternoon, stymied once more by the fabulous

ROSCOE AND THE MAGIC BAT

bats. Four of them lay on his desk. A small, bespectacled man bent over them, his bald head glistening with beads of sweat. He looked up and with an affirmative shake of his head, pronounced them both beautiful and clever.

"I didn't bring you here to admire them!" Phelan stormed. "You're supposed to be a wood expert."

"I told you, Mr. Phelan," the little man said, "they are pure teakwood, extremely well-seasoned, and old. The tectona grandis is indigenous to the far east—"

"I know all about that!" Phelan lifted one of the bats menacingly. "But if you don't tell me why and how it acts like rubber against a baseball, I'll bounce this bat—"

The threat was interrupted by the telephone. He answered the summons and listened.

"So you located the wood-turner!" Phelan shouted, nodding. "A Swede....New Jersey....very clever.... Well, listen here, Riordan, *you're* not very clever if you couldn't buy off the guy...What?...I don't care if Roscoe offered him a million bucks last night. It was up to you to offer him two million to talk. Go back there and get the low down on what he did to this teakwood to make it like rubber!"

Phelan slammed the telephone to the desk and paced the floor again. He was ready to bash in the skull of the little wood expert who insisted upon admiring the bats.

"Like rubber," the little man mused. "That's strange."

"Look, Mr. Grack," Phelan muttered, holding up trembling fists. "I just paid a lot of money for those bats. If I don't find something wrong with them, I'll lose my ball club. But for the sake of Judas, will you *please* stop admiring them!"

"I can't help it," Grack sighed. "Fine wood does that to me. Old teak...solid...historic. By the way, do you have a hack-saw?"

"For what?"

"I'd like to examine the rings. This is undoubtedly not heartwood. It may be treated...and it may be not. If you could telephone the building su-

(Continued On Page 84)

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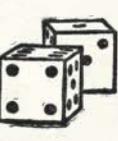
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SUPER SPORTS

(Continued From Page 83)

perintendent, and get me a hack-saw from the plumber, we might then take the wood under a microscope—"

TEN MINUTES later the mystery had deepened. Mr. Grack was admiring the handle-end of the bisected bat, while Phelan peered in amazement at the larger end.

"Can you tell me, Mr. Grack, how in hell anybody could make a baseball bat hollow?"

"I certainly can't," Grack replied with a sigh. "But that Swede must be unusually clever to make it hollow without leaving a surface hole!"

Phelan cried in anguish Mr. Grack's complete demolition at this point was forestalled by loud commotion in the hallway. The door burst open and practically the entire office staff tried to enter at once. A feminine secretary managed to make herself heard.

"He did it again!" she exclaimed. "The first inning—"

"Who?" Phelan shouted.

"Deeter!" the staff chorused. The secretary went on. "He hit a home run...the ball traveled eighty feet over the center field fence and landed on the roof of the Concourse Hotel a block away from the ball park!"

"That's impossible!" Phelan screamed. He pointed to the desk. "I...I got all his bats. Every one!"

"The radio announcer says he used a shiny black one...as black as ebony—"

"That's it!" Mr. Grack exclaimed. "Ebony! It's even harder than teakwood."

"He must've got it from that wood-turner last night!" Phelan stormed, waving back the staff. "Get in touch with Williams at the ball park. Tell him to bench Deeter this minute before he owns the damned ball club!"

LARRY PHELAN required two days, considerable legal skill and dexterous publicity to prevent a city-wide boycott of his ball park by indignant baseball fans who refused to see a player penalized for hitting record-breaking home runs. The astute club-owner, refusing to believe the impossible, finally located the

(Continued On Page 86)

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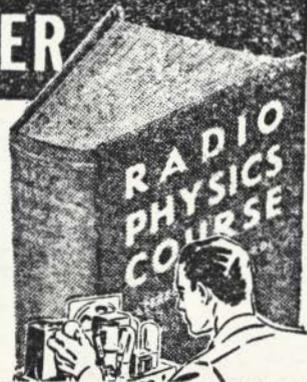
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SUPER SPORTS

(Continued From Page 84)

slimmest of technical loopholes and crawled through to temporary relief.

He lost no time repairing the shaky situation by summoning Roscoe and Gloria to his office for a fatherly talk. The two lovers, victims of circumstance and near-tragedy, sat close on the divan in Phelan's air-conditioned office, their hands clasped tightly, and still wondering what this determined man would conjure next.

"Now, Roscoe, you must admit you were licked," Phelan said softly, and managed a fairly pleasant smile. "I'll grant it was a technicality, but closing up the small hole at the end of the bat with a tight mixture of wood and glue constituted a violation."

Roscoe sighed. "I thought it was one piece," he said. "It was plugged with the same wood from the same piece."

"But sawdust or shavings," Phelan reminded, "however tightly packed, cannot be one piece. So the bat was illegal, and, like I told Gloria, you could have been barred from baseball. But I'm not a vindictive man, and I want to see you happy. Of course, you're not legally entitled to forty-five thousand dollars for the week on the basis of a perfect batting average. But how's this: you can keep the money I paid for the bats. That's a wedding present. And I'll draw a regular New York contract for twenty-five thousand a year."

Roscoe looked at Gloria. Her head was already nodding. Phelan proffered two contracts containing his signature. Roscoe signed them.

"That'll be all right, thanks," he said. Gloria sighed. "But could I have an advance of maybe five thousand or so? We need it to get married with."

"Wait a minute!" Phelan stormed with a fine display of normal indignation. "You just got ten grand... it was a certified check. What happened to that?"

Roscoe's grin was one of extreme guilt. "It's already been spent, Mr. Phelan. I ordered more teakwood."

"Teakwood!" Phelan roared. "Oh, no! No, you don't. You can't do it. That bat is illegal, it's fraudulent. And

(Continued On Page 88)

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SUPER SPORTS

(Continued From Page 84)

so are you if you bring one more hollow bat—"

"But Mr. Phelan," Roscoe protested, and the two edged toward the safety of the door. "That was with the hole plugged. With the drill hole left open, the hollow bat is still legal. Course, it sounds hollow and it whistles when you swing it, but it's all in one piece, of hard wood and—"

The door slammed behind them as they reached the hall. Roscoe's ears burned from the sting of oaths and epithets which continued right up until Phelan got the league president on the phone. He looked at Gloria and grinned.

"Let's get married now anyway," he whispered. "The way things are going, we may never have any money."

"That idea, Roscoe," she said, leading the way, "is worth more than your old magic bat."

THE END



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Dope From the Dugout

By WILCEY EARLE

HE SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER

Ever since Bill Dickey picked up the managerial reins of the New York Yankees, this reporter has been of the firm conviction that as a manager, Dickey WAS a great catcher.

Bill didn't fill the bill as a Yankee mentor in our book because of the many faux pas he pulled at critical moments. Larry MacPhail also thought so. That's why he gave Bill the axe.

One such glaring boner that cost the Yankees a ball game stands out in our memory. It happened at the Yankee Stadium in full view of 30,000 horsehide devotees, on the afternoon of August 27, 1946. The Yankees were crossing bats with the Detroit Tigers. Detroit, on the short end of a 4 to 3 score, knotted the count in the ninth inning.

With fire in their eyes and the blazing desire to start a base-hit conflagration that would result in the winning run tallying, the Yankees came to bat for their ninth inning lick.

Johnson singled. Henrich and Johnson were both safe, when Richards, the Detroit backstop, thought Henrich's bunt was a gong and started kicking it around.

The stands were in an uproar. Waving a menacing mace at the plate was jolting DiMaggio who, in five previous at bats, had walked, tripled and smashed two line singles.

Detroit's chances of pulling this one out of the fire looked blacker than Hitler's heart.

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DOPE FROM THE DUGOUT

Charley Keller, who had singled twice and walloped a terrific homer.

As Stubby Overmire wound up to pitch, a tremendous hush settled over the crowd. DiMaggio, the mighty DiMaggio, suddenly choked his bat and yes, you guess it, laid down a bunt advancing the runners to second and third.

Keller was purposely passed, Robinson and Souchok, batting for Eiten, grounded out, retiring the side without a run.

Detroit scored three runs in the tenth inning, to win the game 7 to 4.

Now, to get back to Mr. Dickey: With men on first and second and none out in the ninth inning, and the cream of the Yankee slugging crew coming to bat, the odds were better than 50 to 1 that one of the TNT Trio would unleash a base hit to score the runner from second and win the contest.

So what did Mr. Dickey do? Nothing serious, mind you, nothing—except to pull the teeth out of the Yankees' attack by doing DiMaggio and Keller out of the chance to hit.

Any kid knows that after DiMaggio successfully sacrificed the runners to second and third and with Keller at bat and first base unoccupied, Keller would get a free ticket to the initial hassock.

Didn't Dickey know that? If he didn't, the boos of the fans should have made him acutely aware of the situation.

Perhaps he learned a lesson by such a silly move, but the manager of the New York Yankees by this time should have completed his learning and been out there teaching his boys how to win ball games—not learning by bitter experience.

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(Continued On Page 92)

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SUPER SPORTS

(Continued From Page 91)

vividly engendered than at a recent sports affair.

Bob Montgomery, who sports the New York and Pennsylvania versions of the lightweight championship, was awaiting his turn to mount the dais when the old Manassa Mauler and your Remington Romeo ran smack-dab into him.

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"I'm fine and I hope you are the same," replied Bob—"and the baseball team is doing swell."

"Glad to hear it," said Jack. "By the way, Bob, what position do you play on it?"

"I'm the pitcher," beamed Bob.

"Thank God," sighed the former heavyweight title-holder, "you didn't say—'catcher'—it's no good for a boxer—to be a 'catcher.'"

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(Continued On Page 94)

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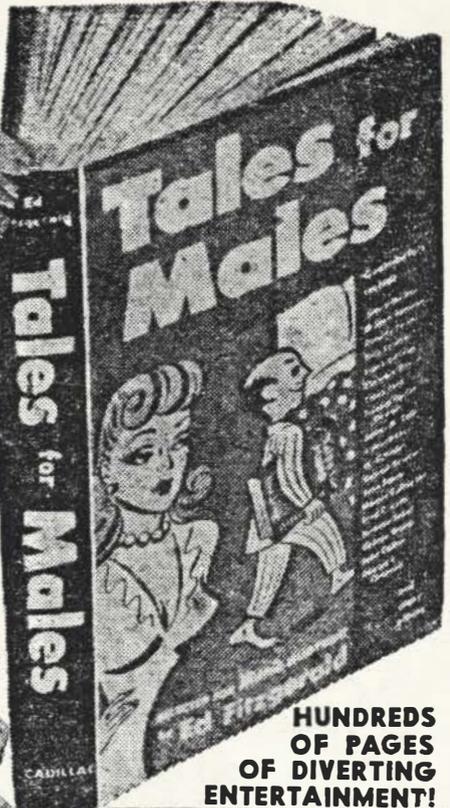
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(Continued From Page 93)

cial delivery, air mail, self-addressed envelopes to sportscribes throughout the United States whose work he likes, and asks them to send him their columns, which they feel honored to do... In England, believe it or not, the referee sits outside the squared battlepit and barks his commands to the gladiators to "break" when they are in a clinch, and they do so pronto, because they are subject to suspension if they do not... Movie villian Vincent Price and Clint Frank, former All-America football guard at Yale, are cousins... And Sid Gordon, the New York Giants' belting outfielder, found the Boston Braves pitching staff cousins. Sid batted .450 against the Braves' hurlers in 1946... Flash, Flash, Flash: We have just learned that Adolf Hitler was quite an athlete when he went to the University of Munich. He played on the tug-of-war team. He was the third jerk on the right.

JUST LIKE A WOMAN

Lefty Gomez yarns are legion, but you may not have heard the one concerning the time the one-time great Yankee southpaw star was slated to pitch at the Stadium, with his bride-to-be watching him for the first time. Miss June O'Dea knew her way around the musical comedy stage, but never before had seen a ball game.

Lefty pitched a fine game, but was beaten by Washington 2 to 1 in extra-innings.

In an effort to console her hero after the game, June said—"Never mind, honey, you'll beat 'em tomorrow!"

"TOMORROW!", screamed the outraged Gomez—"you must have me mixed up with Iron-Man McGinnity!"

THE END



THE SCIENTIFIC AGE

(Continued From Page 65)

ropes and was trying to find an opening as the bell sounded, ending the fight. They hugged each other, so that neither would fall down before the decision came.

"Toughest—fella—ah ever—done—met," Bulger panted.

"Thanks," Benny said. "You ain't so bad yourself."

The referee collected his slips and walked to the microphone very quickly. He said:

"These ree-sult is—a draw!"

* * *

VERY LATE that night, Benny followed Mike into his house where he could hear a high, feminine voice trying to imitate Lily Pons. "la-la-la-la!" the voice trilled. Mike sat down and began removing his shoes, while Benny walked to the door marked "Office": went inside. Maggie looked at him.

"Yaaaay, Benny," she said. "Fight 'em, fight 'em, fight 'em!"

"So you were the fan in the ring-side seat?"

"I'm the fan, Benny."

"I've been working hard," said Benny, "and I'm starved. How about a piece of pie and a glass of milk, Maggie? If you're afraid, we can have Mike chaperone us."

"Mike just went to bed," she said. "Come on out to the kitchen."

"Just like a dream," Benny thought, following Maggie. "Kind of like having your brains addled with punches."

THE END

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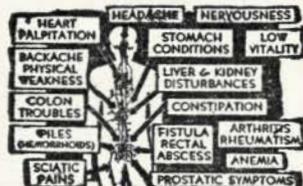
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THE SPOILER

(Continued From Page 59)

laughed. "I'll knock his brains out, if he has any."

"That's the way I figure," Amada said with a shrug. "After you do, don't forget that I recommended the idea."

"I won't," Eddie promised. "I never forget anything, Amada. Especially the rest of my dough tonight. My friends here," he nodded at the two cops, "will see me to the station. Thanks for everything, and I'll give your regards to Pop Alderman."

THE END

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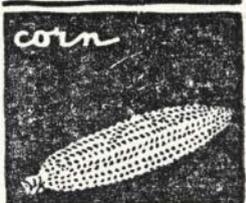
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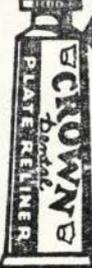
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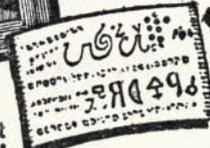


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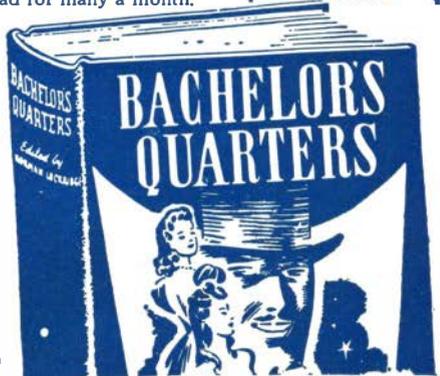
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- Surprise
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