

# TEN • STORY SPORTS

Formerly **SPORTS WINNERS**

**132**  
PAGES

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25¢

## DUSK ON THE DIAMOND

by **Roe Richmond**

## TURF OF TERROR

by **Robert Turner**

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# TEN • STORY SPORTS

★ formerly SPORTS WINNERS ★

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Robert W. Lowndes, Editor

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The ABCs of SERVICING

How to Be a Success in RADIO-TELEVISION



# Dope From The DUGOUT

A Department of Facts and Fun

by Wilcey Earle

## WAHOPPEN?

What happens if a batter steps across the batter's box and hits a home run?

Is it allowed? Is it disallowed and is he out for stepping across the batter's box? Is it a dead ball?

Don't ask us—we're asking you.

Glenn Davis, former Army star, now gallivanting around the gridiron in great fashion for the pro Los Angeles Rams team.

At the height of his career with Army, someone asked Steve how Davis could be stopped.

"The only thing that can stop him," observed Owen, "is graduation!"

## STEVE SAID A MOUTHFUL

Steve Owen, coach of the New York Football Giants, is a great admirer of

## A GOOD QUESTION

On sportcaster Sam Taub's "Hour  
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**SEND NO MONEY!**

Of Champions" program, over WMGM, Harry Sperber, who publicized the six-day bike race, appeared with the two winners.

Sperber apologized and said, "Pardon me and the two riders for appearing sleepy; we had a tough week."

Taub chastised, "What are you complaining about? Look at all the money you made!"

Sperber said, "Yeah, but what can you do with it when you are asleep?"

Ted had a banner day and slugged two homers, two doubles, and a single—in five trips to the dish.

Our friend turned to his gal and asked, "Well, what do you think of Williams?"

"What's to think about him?" she snapped. "The man is greatly overpaid. For hitting a ball with a bat—he gets \$85,000!"

### HE'S A FUTURE STAR

In the field, Jim Fridley, rookie outfielder of the Cleveland Indians, is not a polished fielder. But he's fast, has good hands and a real good arm; above all, he's got the stomach to try for everything. As one Cleveland scribe remarked after watching him make a great diving catch one day, "He's got the drive of a light tank."

And there is more truth than simile in that remark, for Jim carries a small piece of steel in one of his legs. Working in a tank-factory in Dayton during the off-season, an accident sent the piece into one of his legs—and it's still there.

"I'm getting a big break!" says Jim, quietly. "I didn't expect it, and I appreciate the confidence manager Al Lopez has in me."

### OUR "IT'S-JUST-LIKE-A-WO-MAN" DEPARTMENT

Midway during the 1949 season, when Ted Williams was whacking the ball with his accustomed vigor, the Red Sox played the Yankees at the Yankee Stadium.

A friend of ours took his gal to the New Yorkers' ball orchard to see her first game. He pointed out Ted Williams to her and said, "He gets \$85,000 a year."

### THE LAD WASN'T SO DUMB

One of the most hilarious fight cracks made by a scrapper, in dead earnest, was relayed to this space by Izzy Blank, the well-known fight handler, the other day. It was made by a fisticuffer who fought an eight-round go in a New Jersey ring recently.

For the first four rounds of the scrap, he took a licking, which got progressively worse as the rounds elapsed.

However, each time he returned to his corner, he was soothed by his manager with such remarks as, "You're doing swell, kid! He ain't layin' a glove on ya. You're out-boxing him by a mile, etc."

At the end of the fourth heat, when the poor mug was hit by his opponent with everything but the referee, he staggered back to his corner. His manager rubbed him down briskly and said, "You've won the first four rounds by a mile!"

The bangster cupped his chin in his gloves and opined, "That's swell, I've won the first four rounds. How about me going to my dressing room now? You can give the other four rounds to my opponent, and we'll call the fight a draw!"

### SURPRISE—SURPRISE

Aside to Don Johnson, hurler for  
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*The catcher stood wide, as if this were an intentional pass, then suddenly stepped back as a perfect strike came over.*

# Feature Novel of a Diamond Fan's Secret Hopes



The Badgers were the dead-end of the league, the bums deserted even by their own hometown fans. So what had they to lose when Joe Frost, baseball fan, was thrust on them as manager? Sure, Joe had a lot of ideas — but what did he know about the inside? But, the way Joe figured it, there was only one direction in which the Badgers could move, if they tried at all — and he had the authority to make them try!



# THE BIG WIN

by Seven  
Anderton



JOE FROST and Addie Miller were two of those millions of ordinary people who work hard, take a lot of pushing around by life, complain little and make the best of their lot. Real salt of earth, these. But who gets

excited about salt?

Addie was a passing pretty little thing, brunette and shapely, but not startling; Joe was a tall, lean, red headed lad who walked with a swinging limp. A knee, injured in childhood, had become permanently stiff. For years, Joe and Addie had been planning to marry—someday. But Joe was the sole support of his mother and invalid father; he earned forty-five dollars a week at the complaint window in the office of the gas company. Addie, an orphan, earned thirty-six dollars in forty hours a week as a typist at the State Employment Office. Joe lived with his parents in a small apartment in a cheap neighborhood, and Addie shared a slightly better one

with a girl who worked in a dime-store. In order to keep putting a little money by towards the someday wedding, both shunned all extravagances and all but one luxury—which they enjoyed together.

Joe and Addie were baseball fans of the most rabid variety, so each year they bought two season tickets for box seats along the first-base line at Badger Park.

In order to afford the seats Joe and Addie really skimped. They forewent movies and any other recreation or entertainment that cost money. Neither smoked; both walked to and from work and skipped lunches. In all other things they were frugal with a capital F; but they were early in their seats for every Saturday, Sunday and night game when the Badgers were at home.

That is where Joe and Addie were on a beautiful early spring Sunday, when the Badgers entertained the Bruins in a doubleheader. They wanted the Badgers to take both contests, and they were noisy in expressing their desire. Joe called advice, or criticism, or approval on every play; Addie was his shrill and vehement echo. This

seemed to have little effect on the Badgers, but their earnest, frantic—and at times almost prayerful—rooting afforded adjacent customers more entertainment than did the lopsided ball game.

"He ought to get out there and play," a burly man in an adjoining box declared.

"They should put him on the payroll as a coach," another commented.

"They should muzzle him," a little bright-eyed old lady suggested, "so a body could hear the announcer."

"Maybe they should hire him to manage these stumblebums," observed a big, well-dressed man who sat two rows behind Joe and Addie.

Joe and Addie couldn't help hearing the remarks. It was by no means a new experience and they ignored the banter until the last remark. Then Addie put her arm across Joe's back and turned to glare at the well-dressed man. "He would be a better manager than they have in the league," she declared hotly.

"That could be, sister," the big man replied around a fat and expensive cigar.

This brought laughter and Joe Frost's face reddened. He nudged Addie with his elbow and they returned their attention to the game, ignoring the now-increased banter. Despite the fine day and the twin bill, there were fewer than four thousand paying spectators in the huge stands. This was not unusual—and there was a reason; the Badgers were perennial cellar-dwellers and already in their accustomed place, five games behind the seventh-place Eagles and fourteen games behind the front-running Moguls. Only the most rabid fans will pay to see games where the result is in so little doubt. It was no secret that the Badgers were for sale—and that nobody wanted to buy them. Only a good farm-system kept the Badgers operating, and that was done by selling to the highest bidder any exceptional talent developed.

Nobody even tried to remember when the Badgers had won a pennant;

the club was known in the league as the port of forgotten players—last stop before the bushes or oblivion. Sportswriters used the club for comedy relief.

Other clubs complained that the Badgers were a liability to the league; not only did they fail to draw at home, but customers stayed away in large crowds from Badger games elsewhere. They wanted to see competition, not merely watch slaughter.

But Joe Frost and Addie Miller stuck with the tailenders. River City was their town and the Badgers were their team. They hoped, prayed and encouraged. Sportswriters had frequently commented on their loyalty, and Badger players had grown used to them and commented on their infrequent absences from the home games.

On this bright and fateful Sunday, the Badgers lost both games and Joe and Addie, hoarse from shouting, departed from the park. They sat on a bench in a little park near Addie's apartment and mourned the day's disaster before turning to another frequently discussed subject—Joe's big chance. Both clung to an indestructible belief that the latter would come any day. Of course Joe's physical handicap didn't help, but his big chance must come. Addie watched for it at the employment office; they combed the want-ad sections daily. Meanwhile the grind, the slow saving and the fanning of the flame of hope.

They sat talking in the park until time for Joe to get home for supper. As he limped homeward through the soft dusk, Joe wondered how long it would be until his home could be where Addie was.

**T**HE TELEPHONE call came soon after Joe returned to his window at the gas company, after lunching on a hot dog and a glass of milk. President Millard Thayer of the River City Bank and Trust Company wished Joe to come to the bank immediately on a matter of importance. Joe and Addie kept their joint savings account in that bank.

"Is it about my account?" Joe asked anxiously.

"No," Thayer's secretary replied, "but the matter is important and most urgent."

Joe got relief at the complaint window and hastened to the bank. President Thayer, big and impressive, regarded Joe across a massive and almost bare desk. Joe fidgeted.

"Young man," the banker said, "a client who does not wish to be known has purchased the property known as the Badger Baseball organization. I am instructed to employ you as manager of the River City Badgers."



Joe Frost sat stunned, doubting his ears. He finally recovered his voice to gasp, "Mr. Thayer, is this a gag?"

The banker looked like he might smile, but he didn't. "From such knowledge as I have," he said dryly, "I would be inclined to place it in that category; however, the offer is bona fide."

Joe was dazed. "Me," he marvelled, "manage the Badgers?"

"That is the owner's wish," Thayer replied, "provided you agree to the terms."

"Terms?" Joe asked. But it wasn't a question; Joe was barely aware he had said it.

"Your salary," the banker explained, "will be two hundred dollars per week, plus all expenses away from River City, and it will be paid in any case for all remaining weeks of the season. The new owner has made an arrangement with the present manager. The executive setup will otherwise remain unchanged, except that you may engage your own secretary at fifty dollars per week with the same arrangement on traveling expenses. You will have an absolutely free hand with the players, including those in the farm

system. You may trade or interchange them, and anything you do may be countermanded only by the owner—through me. Whether you remain in the post after the present season will depend entirely upon the performance of the Badgers under your management. Those are the terms in a contract already drawn; my client wishes your answer at once and wishes you to take over tomorrow morning."

Joe gulped. His head was spinning. "Mr. Thayer," he asked huskily, "can—may I use your telephone?"

The banker pushed the instrument across the desk and Joe called the State Employment Office. There was considerable conversation before Addie Miller wrapped it up.

"Grab it, Joe," she ordered. "It's your big chance; you are on your way! Go back to that old gas office and tell them they need another boy. Then meet me at five o'clock."

Joe wondered just where he was on his way to, but he put down the phone and said, "I'll take the job, Mr. Thayer."

The banker smiled faintly. "I thought you would. And I have a check for one thousand dollars—an advance against your salary—which I will give you as soon as the contract is signed."

Joe, still wondering when he was going to wake up, signed the papers and pocketed his copy of the contract—also the check.

"The business manager of the Badgers," the banker said, "will be at your disposal any time you wish further information. And you may expect to be visited by reporters soon. I am to release the news to the press immediately, now that you have signed as manager."

JOE FROST left the bank in a rosy mental fog that had turned into near funk by the time he met Addie at five o'clock. Addie was elated; she wouldn't have been surprised if Joe had been appointed to the U.S. Senate. Long and constant faith in a dream had prepared her for any realization,

and she never batted an eye when Joe showed her the check.

"I knew your big chance would come," she said; "let's go and eat chop suey to celebrate."

So they ate chop suey in Louie Fong's while frantic reporters combed the town for Joe. The evening papers had gone to press with the rest of the story, but no interview with the new Badger manager. After saying goodbye to his job at the gas company, Joe had just wandered about the streets until time to meet Addie. No searching reporter would have recognized him if they had bumped into each other.

Despite his red hair, Joe Frost was for the most part a rather mild and patient young man, who had been bossed by somebody all his life. Increasing realization of his new status was having the inevitable effect. "Addie, I'm scared," he confessed over the food; "how will I go at it?"

"Just make the Badgers do what you've been telling them to do for years." It was that simple to Addie.

"But suppose they don't do it?"

"Listen," Addie put down her fork and grew severe. "This is your big chance; you're the boss. You can fine them, bench them, suspend them, trade them or send them to the bushes. You've told me a million times that there's no sense in the Badgers staying in the cellar. Now tell the Badgers—and make it stick. Do your folks know about this?"

"I'm even afraid to go home," Joe said, and told her what the banker had said about reporters. "What'll I tell them?" he finished.

"Tell them that the Badgers are going to climb out of the basement," she replied. "I can think of plenty—"

Joe suddenly remembered something else that he had not told Addie. "Listen," he cut her off, "I can hire a secretary at fifty bucks a week and traveling expenses. That's you; *you* tell the reporters."

Addie blinked. "Joe Frost," she said, "how much more haven't you told me?"

"I guess that's all," Joe replied.

"It better be," she snapped. Then her eyes widened with realization. "Joe! A thousand dollars a month between us! Now your folks can go to the resort hotel at Crystal Lake for the summer. Finish eating, then let's go and tell them. Of course, the reporters are already there and waiting; you should have told your folks first."

"You'll talk to the reporters," Joe dug up a faint grin. "What am I paying you for?"

"I'll tell you what to tell them," Addie snapped. "What's the matter with you, Joe? Here you are manager of the Badgers, and—"

"And I'm trying to figure out how come," Joe interrupted.

"Poof," Addie said. "That's easy. Remember that man who agreed with me at the game that you might be a better manager than they have in the league? He was a millionaire and he bought the Badgers—"



"He didn't sound to me like he was exactly agreeing with you," Joe put in. "And how do you know—"

"Who cares?" Addie took over. "You're manager of the Badgers and I'm your secretary. Let's go to your place; on the way, I'll tell you what to tell the reporters."

But it worked out that Addie did most of the telling. The reporters grew gleeful as she talked; the story was already front page news. The Badgers had a new mystery owner, hiding behind a bank. A young man who had, until now, had contact with baseball only as fan and spectator had been hired as pilot. And now Addie, speaking for the new manager, was giving them material for a heyday.

Joe Frost was going to yank the Badgers out of the cellar. He would certainly make any necessary changes,

but he had none in mind as yet. What was wrong with the Badgers? Nothing that Joe couldn't remedy. Would they win the pennant? That was the main idea, wasn't it? And this was a free country. All this and much more of the like, Addie told the reporters. The morning papers used it all—with plenty of pictures and copious added comment.

Joe and Addie sat talking in the small Frost living room until three o'clock on Tuesday morning, outlining Joe's plan of campaign.

## 2



MONDAY had been an open date. The Tuesday game was to be under lights, against the Moguls who were in River City for a three-game series. The Moguls were already leading the loop by six full games and proclaimed as a shoo-in for the flag. They were riding a nine-game winning streak and anticipated stretching it to twelve at the expense of the lowly Badgers.

The former manager had disappeared completely, leaving Joe Frost to tackle the job cold, so Joe got a little sleep and was out bright and early on Tuesday morning. He got the grumpy business-manager out of bed by telephone and found out how to go about calling a conference with all the Badger players and coaches at one o'clock that afternoon.

On his way to the conference, Joe kept remembering what Addie had said: "Go in swinging, Joe. You have always said the Badgers need firm handling; handle them."

The conference went badly, at first. The players had read the morning papers, and their attitude towards the johnnie-come-lately grandstand manager was a mingling of amusement and hostility. A few stinging quips were made during the short speech of greet-

ing Joe tried to make. Suddenly Joe's red hair asserted itself. He abandoned the speech and swept the gathering with an angry glance. "Wouldn't you fellows like to win the pennant and some World Series money?" he snapped.

"Who wouldn't?" big centerfielder George (Grouch) Gerdes sneered. "And you're going to show us how, it says in the papers."

"I'm going to try," Joe retorted. "But let's get this straight. I'd *rather* we could be friends, but if you fellows are going to hate me, you might as well get started. So I'll tell you what I'm going to do if you don't start winning games in short order. We have a Class A team out west that is already leading its league; those young fellows are playing baseball. You fellows are going to begin doing the same—or I'll switch teams, lock, stock and barrel. I'll give that club a shot at your jobs and see whether you fellows are good enough to hold the lead they have out there. I can do that—and now I'm going out and walk around for ten minutes. You talk it over; when I come back, you be ready to work with me—my way—or say you don't want to. If you don't want to, I'll order the switch by plane right after tonight's games."

Joe was out of the room before anybody could find words. The Badger crew exchanged startled and puzzled glances.

"That monkey," first string catcher Ben Schofield broke the silence, "ain't foolin'. And accordin' to what it says in the papers, he can give us that plane ride."

"I wish to hell," Grouch growled, "I knew who the new owner is."

WHEN JOE FROST returned, the atmosphere in the room had changed; the Badgers were quiet and somewhat apprehensive.

"Well?" Joe asked quietly.

Second baseman and team captain, Bert Morgan replied, "We decided that the only way we can do worse is to lose the games by bigger scores, so

we might as well try anything you say."

Joe nodded. "That's a start. Now I'll finish what I tried to say at first. You know I've never played any baseball, but I've studied it all my life; I've watched almost every home game you fellows have played. I *think* I know how you can do better—and you certainly can't do much worse. As I said, I hope we can all be friends, but I'm manager—and you are going to play ball my way. I'll listen to any suggestions, but no arguments. I'll be as fair with you as you are with me; now, shall we get down to business?"

There was a moment of silence, then Joe went on, "This club is through being a joke. It is neither the dumping-ground nor the garbage-can of the league. All of you have played on other clubs—and played good ball. Why not play some here? I think most of the trouble is psychological. As soon as a man lands on this team, he gets a cast-off complex. He—"

"'Abandon hope, all ye who enter here'," shortstop Skippy Hale quoted, grinning.

"Exactly!" Joe snapped. "And we are going to shed that attitude."

"How?" Grouch Gerdes asked.

"This way," Joe replied. "Remember that you are big-league players. You may not be the best in the world, but a good man doing his damndest is better than a whiz who is coasting on his reputation. And most of the whizzes are coasting a lot of the time; you fellows are going to do your damndest all the time—or I'll bring up kids from the sticks who will. And we are going to add something to this game."

"Such as?" Horace (Jungle) Jones, lanky first baseman asked.

"Originality," Joe answered. "Baseball has become too cut and dried. Certain things are supposed to be done under certain conditions—and they are almost always done or tried. Like bunting when there is a man on first and nobody out; like taking the next pitch when the count is three balls and no strikes; **like** pitchers

trying to get the batter to bite on a bad one when the count is two strikes and no balls. We are quitting all that orthodox stuff."

"You mean," Pitcher Pete (Thunder) Thor asked, "that we pitch no balls?"

"Not intentionally," Joe said, "and *never* the fourth one; remember that."

"A man is bound to have some off-days with control," Thor grumbled.

"No arguments, remember?" Joe snapped. "All you pitchers get this. There are eight other men on the team who can do something about it if a ball is hit, but they are helpless against walks. As of now, Badger pitchers walk nobody. If you throw three balls, the rest go smack down the middle. A pitcher who can't do that doesn't belong in the majors. Throw the ball with nothing on it if you have to, but get it over. If it's hit out of the park, okay.

"This is a standing order. Nobody walks—but nobody. And if you get two strikes on a batter and no balls, heave the next one right across the middle. I may change that order any time, but it goes for tonight's game. That's all now for the pitchers.

"Now about batting. Beginning at once, I want every batter to swing the first two times like he intended to demolish the ball. Swing from the heels and with all your might—and be looking at the ball when you swing. You may not hit the ball so often, but I want it to go somewhere when you do. If you miss with your first two swings, then bunt—and don't miss. Opposing pitchers are through fattening their strikeout records at the expense of this club. Is there a man here who couldn't stick out his hand and touch the ball if it came within reach?"

**J**OE WAITED for an answer, but there was none.

"So stick out your hand with the bat in front of it on your third strike and bunt the ball fair. You may pop out or roll out, but nobody strikes out. *Nobody*. Now about a runner on third and nobody out. From now on, the



man on third is going to score—always.”

“How?” It was Grouch Gerdes again.

“The batter swings twice with all his might the first two times,” Joe explained. “If he connects, the runner comes in on the hit or the caught fly. If the batter misses with the two hard swings, the runner takes off from third with the pitcher’s next motion, because he will know that the batter is going to bunt—and not miss.”

“The catchers will call for pitch-outs,” Catcher Bart Cottle objected.

“Not for a while,” Joe said, “and we’ll worry about that when they begin to do it. That’s all for the batters, now—and I want the instructions carried out in tonight’s game. I’ve got some base-running innovations in mind, but we’ll practice them—as well as swinging hard and bunting—on the field. I’ll see you out there in thirty minutes.”



Joe left the room and the players sat looking at each other.

“Cocky gent,” Skippy Hale broke the silence.

“Innovations!” Mel Corbin, left fielder, snorted. “Complexes! Cut-and-dried baseball. Hooey!”

The frown on the face of Grouch Gerdes turned slowly to a wicked grin. “Listen, you guys,” he said. “It occurs to me that the quickest way to get rid of this rooster is to do *exactly* as he says.”

Some grins were born as the Badgers thought that over; some of the grins became chuckles as the Badgers headed for the dressing room.

After two hours on the field, Joe Frost called the team about him.

“You were swinging pretty well,” he told them, “but I think you could still get more vim into it. Your bunting looked good. Keep it that way—and make it better. One more thing, before we knock off. About the strike zone: don’t take it too seriously. Hit or strike at anything you can reach; let nothing pass that could possibly be called a srike. Look at George Kell and Yogi Berra: they hit that way. And remember, when you run, go like the seat of your pants was on fire and you were headed for water. You are not cripples; the oldest man on the club is only thirty-six. If any of you are not in shape, you’d better get that way in a hurry. Tonight this team starts upstairs. That’s all.”

Joe walked away towards the field office and the players headed for the showers. In the dressingroom, Grouch Gerdes said, “Remember, gents. Swing like hell twice at anything, then bunt and run like crazy. Will we be a mess! The Moguls will murder us.”

“Wouldn’t they have, anyhow?” Skippy Hale asked. “And I’m hitting if I can; I’ve got a batting average to keep up. It might get me out of this garbage can.”

“That’s an idea, too,” Bart Cottle said thoughtfully.

**R**ADIO AND newspaper reports and comment had aroused interest. Not in many moons had so many customers clicked the turnstiles at Badger Park. Joe Frost was in a Badger uniform; Addie Miller and her roommate were in the paid box seats. A session with the business manager had convinced Addie that her job was no sinecure—but she didn’t seem worried.

The mighty Moguls were warming up on the field when Joe Frost left a conference with his coaches and came over with his swinging limp to where Addie sat. Photographers had been waiting for this. Romance, too; this story was certainly an answer to journalistic prayer.

“It *would* be the Moguls tonight,”

Addie leaned forward to say softly to Joe. "And look at all the people. The Badgers have just *got* to win tonight. Will they?"

"I've told them what to do," Joe said. "If they do it, we may win. I don't think they care much for my innovations. I've shaken up the line-up and told them the batting order will be changed continually, according to batting averages. And you'll see some different base-running tonight, I hope; keep your fingers crossed."

Bing Kildare, a big right-handed youngster up from the minors for his first season, was starting on the mound for the Badgers.

"Don't throw anything but strikes tonight, Bing," Joe instructed him, "except by accident—and let's have very few accidents. Don't throw anything you're not sure you can keep in the strike zone. They are hitters, so they'll hit. Don't you worry about anything but getting the ball in the strike zone; let your support worry about what happens to it after that."

The Mogul leadoff man was Harry Bingham, a wiry little veteran who nearly always led the league in bases on balls.

Kildare wound up and Bingham took the first pitch. That was a mistake; the ball shot right down the middle, with nothing on it but speed. The next pitch was a medium-paced curve that came over just at the letters. Bingham cut and fouled it into the net. Two strikes and no balls.

**N**OW WAS the time for the pitcher to try to sucker the batter with a bad one. Kildare cranked and Bingham took the pitch with bat on shoulder. It split the plate, thigh high. Bingham slammed his bat on the ground in disgust.

The next Mogul stepped up and slammed the first pitch hard down the middle. Bert Morgan gobbled it up behind second and rifled it to Jungle Jones for the second out. The third Mogul watched a curve cut the

platter just above his knees for a strike, then belted the next offering deep into center where Grouch Gerdes backed up and caught it. The Badgers came trotting in.

"Nice going, gang," Joe said when they were in the dugout, "and *very* nice pitching, Bing. I want to call attention to the fact that you only threw six pitches; at that rate it can't wear you out in nine innings."

None of the Badgers commented. Skippy Hale was stepping in to lead off for the Badgers. He was high Badger with a .314 batting average, and had been cleanup man. Skippy was not a long-ball hitter, but he had a keen eye and placed his shots for clean singles and a double now and then.



With scant respect for the push-over Badgers, the Moguls had also started a rookie pitcher. Joe liked that; he watched Skippy dig in at the plate and prayed that the wiry shortstop would swing as ordered.

Skippy did. A curve came in letter-high and Skippy swung from the heels and with might and main. This was not Skippy's accustomed way and he missed. The force of his prodigious swing spun him around, tangled his feet and landed him on the seat of his pants. The crowd howled with delight as Skippy got up and dusted himself.

"Skip's gonna knock it out of the park," a Badger faithful bellowed.

"Lose it, Skip," another begged.

"More vim, Skip," Grouch Gerdes called derisively from the dugout; "lot's harder."

"But louder," Joe Frost called.

That got a few grins from the Badger bench. Gerdes scowled. Skippy was back in there. A fast-ball came smoking at the outside corner. Skippy

whaled away; this time he got the bottom half of the ball with a crack like a pistol shot. Up went the ball and up and up. It was too high to have a chance of reaching the fence, but Skippy took off. That, too, was orders. Run everything out to the bitter end—and run. The ball was still a white speck far above center field and just starting to fall as Skippy turned first—and he was really moving.

"Faster, Skip," Grouch Gerdes jeered loudly. "Run yourself to death."

Skippy tore on. The fans were yelling—for no good reason, because the Mogul fielder was circling under the falling ball about halfway between second base and the fence.

But Hale had started to run his best until somebody stopped him; he had just turned second and did not see the fielder make a desperate last minute grab and drop the ball. A roar went up from the crowd. The fielder leaped after the ball, snatched it up and fired it towards the plate. The third-base coach was wildly waving Skippy down at that bag. Probably the most surprised man in the park, Skippy stood panting on third while the customers whooped and hollered.

"Bull-headed luck," Grouch Gerdes growled.

"A man on third," Joe said, "and none out."

Bart Cottle stepped to the plate. The big catcher, batting .302, was the only other man on the team above .300. He didn't even glance towards the dugout. The first pitch to him was almost into the dirt for ball one; the next was very high and a little wide for ball two.

"You coulda reached that one, Bart," Grouch Gerdes yelled.

The third pitch to Cottle was a sharp-breaking curve at the letters. Bart swung even harder than Skippy had—and missed. The huge fellow kept his feet, but spun and stumbled four good strides towards first before he recovered. The customers

were delighted. Bart got back in the box and the pitcher fired in a blazing sinker about belt high. Bart's swing was terrific; he topped the ball and drove it to the packed earth six feet in front of the plate so hard that it bounced nearly a hundred feet into the air.

### 3



HE MOGUL short-stop could do nothing but get under it and wait. When the ball finally landed in his glove, Skippy Hale was crossing home plate and lumbering Bart Cottle beat the quick throw to first by a stride. Cheers shook the stands.

In the dugout, Joe said, "See what I mean; if he had hit that less hard, it would have been an easy bouncer."

Grouch Gerdes snorted. "If he hadn't swung so hard he would likely have hit it on the nose and we'd have had two scores now."

Joe Frost didn't even look towards Grouch. Right fielder Dan Holden was up to bat. By established precedent, this was the spot for a sacrifice bunt; the Moguls got set for it. The pitcher sent one shoulder high and Holden took a mighty swipe at it and missed, going to his knees. The Mogul infield backed up a little and the fans cheered. Again Holden swung with all his might, this time missing a fast sinker. He came back and dug in and the Moguls moved back into double-play position. The pitcher delivered a slider that came over the inside. Holden fell away and dumped a bunt between first and the mound. Bart Cottle had started for second with the pitch. The pitcher got the ball and had to make the play to first. Holden was out, but Cooper stood on second.

Bert Morgan came to bat. He swung savagely on the first pitch and fouled it sky high. The Mogul

catcher caught it just in front of the screen; two out.

Left fielder Mel Corbin stepped in with his lumber and the fans begged lustily for a hit. Mel took one very bad pitch for a ball, then missed two swings that were fully as lusty as any that had gone before.

"It only takes one, Mel," a rooter encouraged, "slough that old apple."

Mel squared off and Bart Cottle on third moved off a step, then pounded for third with the pitcher's motion. Accepted baseball procedure took a beating that threw the Moguls off-balance. Not only did Mel Corbin bunt on the third strike with two out, but he did it with slow-running Cottle on second. Also, Cottle had been going with the pitch when the count was not full on the batter. It might be baseball, but it wasn't Art; and, since the pitcher had pulled the string on a change-up pitch, it was child's play for Mel Corbin to dump a roller well inside the third base line. The pitcher dived for it and came up with it. He might have got Corbin at first, but he seemed to be fuddled by the unexpected. He saw the lumbering Cottle pounding into third and threw quickly to the third baseman. At that, he might have nipped Cottle if he had not thrown wild in his haste. The ball went into the Mogul dugout and Cottle scored while Corbin raced into second; there was riot in the stands.

"See what a little originality can do?" Joe asked his bench.

Grouch Gerdes heard it, but said nothing as he stalked to the circle to fellow Jungle Jones, who had moved into the batter's box. The delighted fans were demanding another score. Jungle's swing on the first pitch missed and laid him flat on his back as his bat flew halfway to third base. He got up and belted the next offering high and deep to left field for the third out. The Badgers took the field leading 2-0.

**T**HE JUBILATION in the stands was somewhat subdued when the Mogul cleanupper slapped Bing Kildare's first pitch far into the right field stands for a homer. The next Mogul also connected with the first pitch and sent a whistling liner straight at the head of Bert Morgan. The keystoneer caught it without moving his feet. Kildare's first pitch to the next batter made the Mogul hit the dirt. Kildare looked towards the dugout as the ball was returned to him; Joe shook his head.

Kildare went to the resin bag, then sent a sweeping curve which the batter turned into a grass-cutter towards Skippy Hale. Skippy bobbed it just long enough for the runner to beat his throw. Kildare shot down a fast ball just at the knees of the next batter, but the Mogul manager had put on the hit-and-run sign; as the runner took off from first, the batter swung and slashed a low liner which Jungle Jones caught at his shoetops. He took three steps to double the other runner and retire the Moguls. The fans cheered.

"They must know I'm trying to put everything over," young Kildare said to Joe Frost as he came to the bench, "the way they are going for the first pitches."

"You did all right," Joe told him. "You only pitched five times. Eleven pitches to seven batters; what's wrong with that?"

Grouch Gerdes was first Badger up. He swung with the ordered vigor at the first two pitches and missed by a foot both times. The second pitch had been wide and low. The next was shoulder-high and Grouch dumped a bunt straight at the pitcher and was out by fifty feet.

Joe Frost came out of the dugout and met Gerdes near the base path. "Gerdes," he said, too softly to be heard by anybody else, "one more exhibition like that, and you start west tomorrow. I'm not fooling. And no argument; I saw what you did. The others have all tried. Anybody who doesn't give my way an honest

and hard try is going to be leaving here."

Joe turned back to the dugout before the scowling Gerdes could reply. Third sacker Pete Daly was up to bat. Pete was as good a hot-corner guardian as any in the league, but had always been a weak hitter; that was why he had landed on the Badger team. He had finished with a 142 average the preceeding season. He hit the dirt to escape the first high inside pitch. The next was a slider, that came just barely wide at the waist. Pete swung with every pound and every muscle; he caught it squarely, a few inches from the end of the bat, and the ball sailed into the bleachers in right center.

The bat boy picked up Pete's bat and stood staring at the handle which had cracked. "Jeez," he exclaimed, "a homer with a busted bat!"

The crowd poured its benediction upon Daly as he rounded the sacks. He was grinning as he came to the dugout. "I finally hit a home run," he marveled. It was his first in seven years with the majors.

"Anything can happen," Joe Frost smiled at him, "if you try hard enough."

The Badgers had the two-run lead back and had the mighty Moguls wondering. But it was too good to last; the Moguls were not bushers.

The Badgers kept swinging with a gusto that thrilled the fans and produced some weird plays and some comical ones. But the Moguls also did some of the slugging for which they were noted; they got on to the third strike bunt and crowded in to smother it. On his second trip to the plate, Grouch Gerdes pasted the first offering with a savage wallop. His long high fly was caught, but Joe Frost felt a glow of satisfaction. The fans remained happy. They were seeing real entertainment, and the Badgers were trying all the time, even though they fell behind in the score. They had always been a better-than-average fielding team, and

they ran to form in that department. They scored twice more while the Moguls were scoring five. The game moved into the last of the ninth inning with the Moguls leading by two runs and Grouch Gerdes leading off for the tail end of the batting order.



"YOU FELLOWS have done better than I expected tonight," Joe Frost told them in the dugout. "You've made the Moguls work for it. I'm making one change in this frame. They are now on to the third strike bunt—so bunt it, but don't loosen up on the bat—and push it a little. Try to dump the ball over behind them when they swarm in. No pinch-hitters; you've played like hell so far. Keep it up. That'll be good enough—for this game."

Grouch Gerdes went to the plate looking grim. He cut mightly at the first pitch and the ball went screaming straight at the ankles of the Mogul shortstop. It went through him, and almost took his glove with it, leaving him flat on the grass.

The Mogul third baseman grabbed the deflected ball and threw, but Gerdes, really picking them up and laying them down beat the throw by a stride. The fans started yelling for the rally. In the box seat Addie Miller was on her feet and jumping up and down. It wasn't exactly the attitude of prayer, but Addie was praying.

Pete Daly came to bat and the customers began pleading for another homer. Pete tried hard, but only lifted a towering fly that the second baseman backed up and took, holding Gerdes on first. There were some groans, and some verbal protests from the stands, as Bing Kildare stepped to the plate. Surely

this was the spot for a pinch-hitter! But Joe Frost ignored the tumult.

Kildare took one ball and two robust strikes. Then the Mogul pitcher delivered a letter-high slow curve and the infield came racing in. Kildare squared off to bunt and Grouch took off for second base. With a tight grip on his bat, Kildare struck it out, met the ball and pushed. The dinky fly passed five feet above the reach of the Mogul shortstop and went rolling out to a charging fielder. Two on, one down, and Skippy Hale at bat. The fans roared. Addie Miller screamed and waved her arms.

Skippy dug in and took two bad pitches for balls. He whaled away at the next pitch and fouled it back out of the park. Then the Mogul pitcher lost one in the dirt. Three balls and one strike. The pitcher tried a slider and Skippy actually jumped at it as he swung; ball and bat met with a resounding crack, and despite connecting with his target Skippy fell flat.



"Good bye!" a fan bellowed from the stands.

Addie Miller collapsed into the seat beside her room mate. "Oh Lordy," she gasped. "We did it!"

The ball was still high in the air, but there was no doubt about where it was going. Skippy Hale scrambled to his feet and started around the sacks, but there was no hurry. The ball had departed from the park well above the left field stands. In a slight daze, the Badgers poured from the dugout to meet Skippy at the plate—all but Joe Frost. He was too weak, suddenly, to move. Not only had the Badgers defeated the Moguls, they had made history; the only two Badgers who had never be-

fore hit a major league homer had done so in this game.

"FELLOWS," Joe told the players later in the dressing-room, "I'm not going to say, 'I told you so'—because I hadn't really expected to win this one. But you did it; what's to stop you from doing it again?"

There was no answer for a long minute, then Bert Morgan said, "It won't cost us anything to try."

"That's it," Joe said. "Try. Try like the devil all the time; that's all I ask. You do that, and I'll try to think up new stunts to worry the other side—like we did tonight. We are going to go someplace in this league this season."

Joe got no comment on that, but he noticed that the players were looking thoughtful. He dressed quickly and left after calling another meeting for the next afternoon.

"Maybe that rooster knows something," Bart Cottle observed after Joe was gone.

"He learned me something," Bing Kildare said. "I threw about six times to an inning. I ain't even tired; I could pitch again tomorrow."

"But you worked hell out of us," Grouch Gerdes growled.

"I don't see no tongues hangin' out," Kildare retorted.

Addie Miller was waiting for Joe in the field office. She grabbed him as he entered and kissed him soundly. "You did it Joe," she cried, "you did it!"

"The team did it," Joe corrected her. "I only showed them how. I never really believed they'd play exactly the way I asked them to in this first game."

Addie and Joe stayed in the field office until well past midnight, talking to reporters, doing up the paper work and scanning and discussing past records of the team.

The morning papers went to town on the story. The Clarion with a bold headline across the front page of the sports section which read:

**MOGULS FROSTBITTEN**

*Badgers explode in initial game under management of Cinderella pilot*

*For once, one columnist commented, a large crowd went to Badger Park to see a ball game—and was not disappointed. If the credit for last night's welcome upset belongs to young Joe Frost, we can only ask on what strange meat is this our Caesar fed—and where has he been so long?*

When the conference assembled the next day, the Badgers appeared much less hostile to their new pilot. The morning sport pages had been pleasant reading. Joe Frost was feeling good, too. "All we are going to do this afternoon is put in a couple of hours at batting practice," he said. "Swinging and bunting."

"But not just swinging?" Pete Daly spoke. "If we get good at that, we won't need to bunt."

That got 'Homerun Daly' some ribbing. Then Joe said, "There is one thing I must tell you, I should have thought of it myself, but our family doctor called my attention to it. He saw the game last night. In swinging with all your might you may strain or injure yourselves—especially when you miss—unless you relax completely at the finish of your swing and remain that way when you fall—or until you recover your balance."

Sudden laughter, after a moment of silence, followed that. Joe looked puzzled.

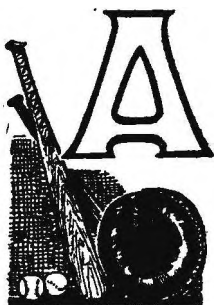
"What do you think," Grouch Gerdes asked, "is the first thing a coach tells a rookie when he starts on batting?"

Joe's face was red. "Oh," he said, then grinned. "Well, I expected to learn some things myself."

They all laughed at that and Bert Morgan asked, "Have you got any more of these innovations to spring on us?"

"Not before batting practice," Joe replied. "I'll have some suggestions about base-running after that. And we'll fix up some signals to cross the other side up on the bunting."

**4**



STILL larger crowd poured into Badger Park for the Wednesday game. Some were just curious, but the faithful were praying for lightning to strike twice in the same place. It did. The Moguls got off to a two-run lead in the first stanza, but the Badgers had a hitting fit in the last of the third and tallied six times. They were never overtaken, and finished with a 9-6 win over the league leaders. The customers liked that immensely; but still more, they liked the unabating determination to win which the Badgers displayed. They shook the stands with their approval of the totally unorthodox baseball displayed by the home team. They cheered as loudly when a Badger missed a prodigious swing and went rolling in the dust as they did when the ball was hit.

Badger runners suddenly began to attempt to steal everything in sight. Most of their attempts failed, but the fans cheered the efforts. And there was that third inning in which the foolhardiness paid off.

With the bases full and nobody out, all three runners had taken off on the return throw to the pitcher. Bert Morgan was in the batter's box and he stayed there. Since only madmen would have tried a triple

steal under the circumstances, the Mogul catcher had stood and lobbed the ball back to the mound. But there was Skippy Hale suddenly steaming towards the plate and the other runners on the go. The astonished pitcher snapped the ball back to the catcher. Morgan swung at it with all his might, missed and fell flat. Skippy, running for dear life, fell over Morgan and hit the Mogul catcher like a ton of brick. The rolling pair knocked the umpire's feet from under him and he became part of the pile. The ball trickled away towards the backstop.

Bart Cottle, pounding towards the plate was hurdling Bert Morgan just as Morgan started to get up. Cottle tripped over Morgan rolled across the plate and brought the rising umpire to earth again. When the mess was unscrambled, two Badger runs were in, Dan Holden was on third and the customers were in a state of hysteria. They would have been, even if nobody had scored.

It was that sort of game all the way and the crowd went home happy, if somewhat exhausted. Reporters mobbed Joe Frost when the game ended.

"Sure we had luck," Joe told them, "but you'll have to admit that we invited it. Did you notice any Badger who wasn't trying?"

In the dressing room, the Badgers were happy—if somewhat dazzled at their own performance. "These shenanigans I like," Skippy Hale declared. "I hope we can keep them up."

Nobody disagreed.

It was nearly midnight when Joe and Addie left the field office and went to eat chop suey. "Joe," Addie cried, "it was wonderful. They can win—and you'll keep them doing it. They have gained two games on the leaders in two games; they can win the pennant yet. Then next year you'll be an established manager—

at a real manager's salary, and—"

"Whoa," Joe stopped her. "Let's not go counting unhatched chickens."

"They *will* hatch," Addie said firmly; "you'll make them hatch."



The blow-by-blow account of the remainder of the season is a matter of record, and need not be recorded here. The Badgers in their new role furnished reams of grist for the mills of sports-columnists. Here was an aggregation of castoffs from other clubs suddenly giving everybody a bad time. They had become wildmen on the basepaths; they swung murderous bats and bunted with calm precision that maddened pitchers trying to fatten strikeout records. Their furious and unaccountable efforts kept the opposing teams more or less bewildered. The fans were delighted with the metamorphosis of the erstwhile doormat team. They swept the series with the Moguls and won seven of their remaining home games before heading for Chicago on a swing around the loop.

On the day before the Badgers arrived in the windy city, the banner on the sports page of the Tribune read like a weather forecast:

#### FROST TOMORROW!

And the Badgers took three of four at Chicago. All the games were wild and wooly—to the delight of the fans. The Badgers, to a man, had lost all reluctance to get into the act. Win or lose, they had the customers screaming, and the opposing players talking to themselves through every game. On the basepaths they were like a flea circus in a hot skillet. Their lusty wallops were connecting more and more frequently with practice. They climbed rapidly into fifth place in the standings. And there they stuck.

There were reasons; the principal one was that it had become a



feather in the cap of any team to beat the Badgers.

**J**ULY CAME and found the Badgers still in fifth place, although playing better than five hundred baseball. There was this: the Badgers had not lost a game to the Moguls since Joe Frost became pilot. One sports writer commented that the only reason the Moguls still led the league was that they did not meet the Badgers more often. Joe and Addie Miller schemed and worried. Time was flying and the Badgers were still stuck in the second division; Joe wasn't making good on his big chance, and he lost sleep and weight.

"There has to be a way," Joe fumed and Addie agreed. But all the ways they tried failed. Addie was in the stands for every game and she and Joe held post mortems afterward.

"It beats me," Joe moaned. "They are trying just as hard, all the time, as they did back there when we won nineteen games out of twenty-two. The record shows that they are hitting even better. But we don't move up. I may be jerked off the job any day. I wish I knew the owner, so I could talk to him. We have lost sixteen games by one-run margins; if those games had only gone the other way, we would be right up there. Maybe—but there is no way to talk to the owner. Even the newspapers can't find out who he is. Thayer is a darned sphinx. All that he will say to me is that he has had no complaints so far."

"Could the Badgers play just a little harder and win those lose games?" Addie asked.

Joe shook his head. "They are straining to the hilt on every game; I have to give them that. Even the sportswriters do."

"Surely," Addie urged, "we can think of *something*."

"We try all the new tricks we can think up," Joe told her, "and work in some old ones when they aren't looking for them. The papers call us the

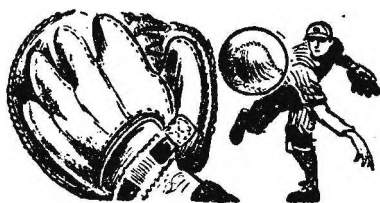
most unpredictable team in baseball. 'Mogul Assassins', they call us. If we could only clobber a few of the other clubs the way we do the Moguls."

"We give all of them real battles, at least," Addie said.

"I *could* call up some players from the farm teams," Joe said, "but I hate to do that when these fellows are trying so hard. They do everything I ask them to the best they can—and they come to me with good ideas of their own. All they need to be right up there at the top is another winning streak like they had when I first came on the job."

"It will come," Addie declared. "It's *got* to."

But it didn't. The Badgers gave all they had in every game and then found more for the next. Other teams dreaded meeting the wild men from River City—and went into the encounters on edge. Anticipation of what the Badgers would pull next was impossible, even to the Badgers.



**F**OR INSTANCE, radio listeners to a nationwide broadcast of the August 7th game between the Badgers and the Moguls heard this: "Gentle people, forgive me if I was slightly incoherent for a moment. Remember, this is a Badger game I am trying to picture for you. Just when you think these River City wonders have used up all the tricks, they pop up with a new one. There is tumult here; rule-books are being consulted, and while the dust settles I will try to describe what just happened.

"In the last half of the sixth, with

the Moguls leading 8-7, Mogul runners on second and third and two out, big Walt Horlick strode to the plate with his lethal lumber. Thunder Thor, hurling for the Badgers, went to work with great care and finally ran the count on the mighty slugger to two strikes and three balls. With the count full, Thor either had to chuck one in there or walk Horlick and load the bases to bring up Mike Lomax—only slightly less dangerous than Horlick. At this point, pilot, Joe Frost signalled from the Badger dug-out and catcher Bart Cottle moved out to take an intentional wide pitch. Mogul fans booed, but evidently Frost had ordered the first intentional walk since he became Badger manager.

“Walt Horlick stood with bat on shoulder and grinned with contempt as he waited for the pitchout to put him on. Then, as Thor’s arm came around, Cottle jumped back behind the plate and caught the ball which came streaking straight down the middle. Horlick was caught flatfooted for the third strike which retired the side. That caused the uproar you heard; you might call it the hidden-pitch trick. What the Moguls are calling it down there on the diamond you will have to imagine. But the hassel is over. The Moguls are out of there and the Badgers are coming to bat for the first half of the seventh. I will try to give you the details of what happens next, but I guarantee nothing. You have been repeatedly reminded that anything can happen in a Badger game, so hang onto your ears.

“Here is pitcher Thunder Thor leading off for the Badgers in the seventh inning. He has been up twice today without a hit—but he’s still a Badger.

“Here’s the windup and here comes the pitch. It’s hit right back to the—Oh no! Oh, mamma! Oh you’ll never believe this! Thor swung from away back yonder with intent to ruin a baseball. He hit under it and just got a little bit of it. The ball popped out

there and landed about ten feet in front of the pitcher. Then as the pitcher reached to pick it up, it started rolling right back towards the plate. The pitcher fell to his knees reaching for it, then kept crawling after it as the ball kept coming towards the plate. The catcher finally got it, but too late. Thor is on first. Now we’ve seen everything! Reverse english on a baseball. Oh me, oh my!



“All right, what next? Here is Skippy Hale at the plate with Thor on first and the Badgers one run behind. By all the canons of baseball Skippy should bunt. But canons mean nothing to—here comes the pitch, and there goes Thor. And it’s a hot grounder to short. I’ll say *hot!* Dick Beel bobbled it, but it won’t be an error. Nobody could have held that thing—the way it was hit. So here we go. Badgers on first and second and up to bat comes Bart Cottle. The windup. The pitch. And there it goes—but the center fielder is getting under it away back by the wall. Oh, oh. Here’s more Badger hokus-pokus, and it’s working. Thor and Hale never moved off the bases. Cottle ran down nearly to first and stopped. When the fielder caught the ball, Thor and Hale both ran. Now they are on second and third with one out. Somebody thought fast on that one—probably Joe Frost.

“The batter is now Dan Holden. Here comes the pitch and—oh, gentle people!

“Believe it or not, folks, Holden

bunted, between first and the mound. The runners were both going. The pitcher got the ball and they have Thor in a rundown. He's sliding for the plate. He's out. But Hale took third and Holden got all the way to second during the festivities. Mel Corbin is in there with the lumber. Two are out; maybe the Moguls are going to stop the razzmatazz after all.

"Here comes the pitch. A ball. And they *have* to be bad if these Badgers don't go for them. The pitcher winds. The pitch. A Baltimore chop and bouncing over the head of the second baseman. Man, did Corbin swing on that. Here comes Hale to score; Holden is being waved in. Here comes the fielder's throw to the plate. Wide and late. Holden scores—and Corbin is trying for third as the catcher drops the ball. There's a quick peg and Corbin is—out! The side is retired, but the Badgers are on top by a run. Are they going to humble the leaders again? Don't bet they won't. It has become a habit."

**T**HE BADGERS went on to the win and the victory put them in fourth place by half a game at the end of the day. It was their first peep into the first division—and Joe and Addie celebrated. But the season wore on and the Badgers got no farther. Once they held third place for two days; twice they fell back to fifth for short stays. Joe and Addie worried, planned and prayed. The team helped with the planning and played like every game was for the world series crown. Even oldtimers couldn't remember when a team had hustled as hard. They had become the darlings of the fans all around the loop. Sentimental favorites, the sportswriters dubbed them.

Even the customers who were rooting for the opposition to win cheered the Badgers' sturdy effort and applauded the fantastic plays with which they were continually coming up. They continued to swing at any

pitch they could possibly reach—and how they swung. Any lusty cut at the ball came to be described as a 'Badger swing'. Badger bunting had become a nightmare to the other clubs.

As one manager snarled, "Even if we manage to beat that bunch of jumping-jacks, we come out of it so frazzled that we lose the next game or two. A pitcher has to throw the ball completely away to keep those monkeys from swinging at it—and the damndest things happen when they hit it. I've ordered all my pitchers not to pitch low to Badgers. The way they swing, if they hit a low one it lands out in the field somewhere on the first bounce. They have turned into a blasted mental hazard."

Nevertheless, the fact remained that August came and the Badgers were still fighting to stay in fourth place. But they *were* fighting and in late August their persistence finally pushed them into the third slot with a four game lead over the fourth-place Eagles. But there they stuck again. Joe Frost and Addie Miller had all but told each other that the Badgers must break loose again—and they must find a way. But time was running out.

It ran out. The Badgers went into a three-game series with the second-place Hawks to wind up the season. The Hawks were two and a half games ahead of the Badgers. The Moguls had cinched the flag by beating everybody but the Badgers during the final weeks.

"**W**E HAVE muffed it," Joe Frost mourned to Addie Miller. "It wouldn't be quite so bad if we could sweep this series and wind up in second place. If we can do that, I might get a chance to try again next year. Damn it, Addie, I should have brought up some of the best players from the farm teams, before time ran out. But I just couldn't do it; I'm a hell of a manager."

"I know," Addie comforted him. "You couldn't send any of these players down while they were play-

ing their hearts out for you. I'm glad you didn't. And, even if you lose out, we have done something. Your folks have had the summer in the country; your father has had his operations; and is going to be able to walk. And we have more money in the bank than we did when we started on this job. We'll be all right, Joe. And we'll be married—no matter what happens."

Joe nodded. "Just the same, we've got to win these last three games. I wish we were playing them against the Moguls."

The Badgers, by tremendous effort and baseball that transcended the fantastic, took the first two games from the Hawks by narrow margins. They were playing in Hawk Stadium, but the overflow crowds had cheered every Badger play as lustily as those of the home team.



"One more win," Joe told Addie, "and we finish in second place. If we do that, surely the owner will give me a chance next year; maybe he'll even talk to me. Mr. Thayer burns me up. All he will say is that he has had no complaints from the owner."

"Joe," Addie said, "maybe Mr. Thayer is the owner."

"No," Joe said. "Remember he told the newspapers that he wasn't; he said he wouldn't have accepted the Badgers as a gift and had strongly advised his client against buying them."

"Well," Addie said, "no matter who the owner is, he should remember that you took the Badgers when they were fourteen games behind in May. You have done wonders with them and—"

"Maybe he will," Joe cut in, "if we can wind up in second place. I'm going to talk it over with the team in the morning. They have ideas, too; we've got to win tomorrow."

5



PEOPLE fought to get into the stadium for the final game on the following day. They came to see a ball game—and they were not disappointed. Fur flew from the opening pitch, which Skippy Hale hit so hard on a line to the Hawk shortstop that he went flat on his back, but held the ball. Eight innings found the customers hoarse and exhausted and the score 5-3 in favor of the Hawks.

The Badgers came up for their last chance with Bart Cottle leading off. Hop Adams, ace southpaw of the Hawks was on the mound. With a two-run cushion, he should have been unworried; but he wasn't. These were the Badgers. Adams fired down two that were not too good but Cottle swung mightily at both—as Adams had hoped he would. Two strikes and no balls. Now Cottle would bunt; it was a matter of record that only eleven of the Badgers had struck out since Joe Frost had been pilot. But Cottle might dump one down—or he might turn the bunt into a wrist hit over the charging field. The Hawks got set for that. The outfield moved

in very short. They were on their toes for a short fly

Adams got resin and looked around at his support. Then he toed the rubber and wound. He intended the pitch to be high and hard. With his motion, the infield charged and the outfield started moving up. Adams hurled—and the pitch got away. It was high; it was three feet above Cottle's head. At the last moment Cottle waved his bat at it and went pounding for first. The Hawk catcher leaped in vain. The ball went on to the screen and Cottle was safe on first. Mental hazard was right!

Any other manager would have put in a pinch-runner for the huge and cumbersome catcher. Not Joe Frost. Dan Holden came to bat. He took a terrific cut at the first pitch—and missed. Cottle remained standing on first. Adams cranked up and blazed a slider over the inside corner at the letters. Holden bunted. With slow Bart Cottle on first, that was crazy—even for the Badgers, under the circumstances. One run would do them no good. But a signal had passed and Cottle was in motion with the pitch. The Hawk infield was back in double play position.

Holden dumped his bunt just inside the third base line. The Hawk third baseman charged and snatched the ball. It was too late to get Cottle, so he rifled it to first and Holden, who could move, beat it by a hair. Two on, nobody out and Bert Morgan the batter.

There was a conference on the mound. The Hawk manager was out there. The huddle broke up, and Adams got ready to pitch; he wound and pulled the string. The ball came floating in lazily at the letters—looking like a pumpkin.

Morgan held for a moment, then took a murderous swing. He connected for a long high fly to deep right field. The Badgers had this one down pat. Cottle and Holden remained waiting on second and first. Morgan sped

down to near first and stopped. When the right fielder caught the ball, Cottle and Holden took off. Cottle made third easily. Holden was safe at second in a cloud of dust. Two runs in scoring position and one out. Mel Corbin at bat. The crowd was having hysterics.

**A**DAMS WAS in a spot. He faced Corbin and sent down a sweeping curve. Corbin lashed with might and main. The result was a towering foul which the Hawk first baseman backed up and took for the second out. Jungle Jones stepped to the plate. Jones had been having a hitting-streak.

Adams conferred with his catcher. They decided that if Jones hit one it was going to be a bad one. Jones walked on four pitches to load the bases. That brought up Grouch Gerdes.

This was it. The stands grew tense. The Badgers yelled encouragement from the dugout. They begged Gerdes to bust one. Grouch dug in, glared defiance at the pitcher and waited. The first pitch was a thigh-high curve that broke slightly outside. Gerdes put everything he had into the swing.

*Crack!* There went the ball.

The stands broke into an uproar. In her box seat, Addie Miller all but threw a fit. The ball was going high, but it was also going far. The Hawk center fielder was racing back. At the wall he turned, leaped—and caught the ball! The game was over. The Hawks remained in second place.

Addie Miller bawled. Her eyes were still red when Joe Frost met her after the game. They were rushing to catch a train back to River City. Joe was lower than a snake's belly. They found their seats in the Badgers' special car.

Grouch Gerdes was the saddest man in the outfit. "Just another ounce in that swing," he mourned. "Just another ounce."

"I was watching, Grouch," Addie spoke up. "You didn't have another ounce. It was that deep center field; to right or left that hit would have gone over the fence. You hit it like hell!"

That brought laughter. It was as near swearing as Addie ever came.

"Anyhow," Bert Morgan said, "we gave them a battle for it. Next year—" he let it trail off.

Nobody took it up. Next year. They would all be a year older—and they were not youngsters.



At the first stop of the train a telegram was delivered to Joe Frost. He opened it and he and Addie read together: *SEE ME AT TEN O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING.*

*Millard Thayer*

Joe put the telegram in his pocket. Nobody was going to sleep. It was a short jump and they would reach River City soon after midnight. And when they entered the station, the morning papers were out. Mel Corbin was first to see the front page story. A few minutes later everybody was reading it.

The story announced that an organization called Badger Boosters had prepared a banquet in honor of the team. It was to be held at the City Auditorium that evening, and all personnel of the Badger organization were invited, including the front office—and especially the mysterious owner of the club.

There was speculation concerning the probability that the coy owner might accept and make himself known. Ceaseless effort on the part of the press during the entire summer had failed to get past banker Millard Thayer in quest of the elusive magnate.

"Do you suppose he will come to the banquet?" Addie asked.

Joe shook his head. "I'm more worried about what Mr. Thayer is going

to say in the morning. I do hope the owner doesn't fire me without even talking to me. And we had better get some sleep. You are going with me to see Mr. Thayer."

JOE AND Addie were admitted to Millard Thayer's private office promptly at ten the next morning. The banker greeted them cordially.

"I shall not keep you long," Thayer said when they were seated. He extended a large envelope to Joe Frost. "First, Mr. Frost, the check and papers in this envelope terminate the arrangement between you and myself; please look them over."

Joe did so, passing each paper to Addie. One was formal notice of the expiration of Joe's contract as Badger pilot. To Joe and Addie, that was the only one that really mattered. They both looked sober as Addie passed the packet back.

"They are all right, sir," Joe said.

Thayer was holding another slip of paper in his hand. "Good," he said. "Any further dealings concerning baseball will be between you and the owner of the Badgers. I have here the address at which you are to call as soon as you leave; it is the home of the owner. You are to make sure that you are not followed there by newspapermen. The owner wishes you to be very sure about that." He handed the slip to Joe and Addie leaned close as they both read.

"Mrs. Susan Margate," Joe exclaimed. "A woman!"

The banker smiled. "And quite a remarkable woman. I think you will enjoy meeting her. By the way, have you received your personal invitations to this evening's banquet? They were to be in the morning mail."

Joe and Addie had left their homes too early. "I will be there," Thayer said with a twinkle in his eye, "but I am afraid I will be eating crow. Would you care to be taken to the home of the owner in my car? My chauffeur



may be depended upon to see that you are not followed?"

Joe accepted the offer. The home of Mrs. Susan Margate on a boulevard in one of the city's better residence sections was one of those huge houses which still manage to look like a home. The door was opened to Joe's ring by a little, bright eyed and simply dressed old lady. She gave them a bright smile as she opened the door wide.

"Come in," she invited. "Anna is busy in the kitchen. I'm Mrs. Margate, the old fool who bought the Badgers. Do you young folks remember me?" She was leading them into a large, old fashioned and comfortable livingroom.

"I don't believe I do, Mrs. Margate," Joe said and looked at Addie.

"No," Addie said. "Should we remember you?"

"I guess not," the old lady replied as she indicated chairs and they all sat down. "I was in the stands that day when you," she looked at Addie, "told that fellow that Joe would be a better manager than any in the league. I remember saying that he should be muzzled so a body could hear the announcer. I've always liked baseball myself, and I liked the way you two rooted. So I took a fool notion to find out just how good a manager you would be, young fellow. Millard Thayer told me I was crazy."

JOE SQUIRMED. "Mrs. Margate," he said. "I know now that I made mistakes, and I know what they were. I was too soft, for one thing; I should have brought up some good young players from the farm teams," he shrugged. "But the fellows were trying so hard. If I could manage the team again, I guess I would do different. I would just make myself get tough about bringing in young blood and—" he shrugged again. "Anyhow, I flopped; so I don't blame you for changing managers."

"Who said I was changing managers?" Mrs. Margate asked.

Joe blinked. Addie leaned forward, looking eager.

"The—the notice Mr. Thayer gave me," Joe said.

"That was your old contract," the old lady said. "The next one is going to be a lot different—if there is one."

Joe jumped at the hope. "Mrs. Margate," he declared, "if you'll just let me manage the Badgers again, I'll agree to any terms—and I promise I won't flop again. I'll—"

"Young man," Mrs. Margate cut him off. "Suppose you just let me talk for a while. I like to talk. First place, about flopping, as you call it. I remember some lines from an old poem in my scrapbook. Corny, folks nowadays call it. But it says, '*It isn't the fact you lost that counts, but only how hard did you try.*'"

"Young man, I never saw such trying in all my life, and I've never had as much fun as I had this summer. I've followed the team all over the country and cut up like a giddy old idiot. And I had lots of company. I never thought so many folks could have so much fun. There was my team out there doing exactly what the folks that go to see ball games want ball-players to do. I've figured out why that was. They were being managed by a baseball bug, just like one of the folks that paid to watch.

"And speaking of the folks who paid—do you know that since the first of June there have been folks standing up at every game the Badgers played in River City—and everywhere else? And you call that a flop! The Badgers have made more money this season than any other club in the league. Not that I care a fig about the money, but it did me more good than you can shake a stick at. Let me tell you about that.

"I'm a rich old woman. When my husband died fifteen years ago, he left me a lot of oil property and bonds and such along with this house. We never had any children and the boy we adopted was killed in the war. After that, the money just kept piling up and Millard Thayer just kept putting it into bonds and securities. But money doesn't keep you from being lonely when you get old. About the only fun I had was going to ball-games; I never was one for society fuss and bother. I gave a lot to charities, just to keep it away from this crazy government. I never had much fun with it until now.

"I WISH YOU could have seen Millard Thayer when I told him to buy the Badgers at the asking price—and right away, if not sooner. He almost busted his stuffed shirt. But it was my money. Thayer argued until I got mad, then he almost bawled as he got out all those fancy bonds and securities and had me sign them over.



He was bound I was going to lose my shirt and I had to point out that I didn't wear shirts and that I couldn't take the money with me. Young man, I had a hell of a good time than—and thanks to you, I've been having it ever since. So have a lot of other people. So you are going to manage the Badgers next year if you want to."

"I want to," Joe declared quickly. "And I'll win the pennant next year if I have to change—"

"Young man," Mrs. Margate stopped him, "keep listening. I don't care a damn whether you win the pennant or not. And you are not going to change anything; those Badgers are my boys, and you keep that in mind."

Joe sighed with relief. "Then you want to keep all our present players?"

The old lady grinned. "As long as they can hobble onto the field and try as hard as they've been trying. I want to sign everyone of them up tonight, with a raise in pay. And, by golly, I'm going to kiss every one of them I can catch at that barbecue tonight."

Addie Miller popped out of her chair and while Joe blinked she threw her arms about the old lady and kissed her soundly. "I got the first one," Addie said.

Mrs. Margate's bright eyes were moist. "You may want to take it back," she said. "Because you don't get your job next year unless you agree to certain conditions. First you and this young man have to get married—save me the price of one hotel room on the road."

"We were going to do that, anyway," Addie replied.



"Second," the old woman went on, "the wedding is going to be on me and here in this house. Third, you two are going to live here in the east wing. You can have it redecorated to suit yourselves. I'll keep out of your way, only I hope you'll come in and visit me once in a while."

Addie and Joe gaped at each other in wonder. "If we can afford—" Joe began.

"I'll see that you afford," Mrs. Margate cut him off. "I may be an old sinner, but I'm going to see that all of it doesn't go to buy mink coats for tax collectors' women. Do you know, I never had a mink coat in my life? I think I'll buy one."

Addie Miller laughed. "I don't see what anybody who owns the Badgers wants of a mink coat," she said.

"Come to think of it," Mrs. Margate smiled, "I don't either. But are you two going to agree to my conditions?"

"Yes," Addie replied promptly.

"Then that's settled," the old lady

said. "Now you young folks are going to stay to dinner. I'm old fashioned. Dinner is at noon. There will just be us and a couple I have hired to live in this part of the house with me as companions. They are old folks, too—and we get along fine. I want you to meet them." She glanced towards a half open door at the rear of the room and said, "Come on in, folks."

Joe's mother and father came in. Joe's father was walking with a cane. The meeting was happy, despite some tears shed by Addie and Joe's mother. When they were settled down, Mrs. Margate said, "Dinner is going to be light, because we are all going to that banquet tonight. And are we going to make whoopee! Joe, do you think all the Badgers will sign the contracts?"

"I guarantee it," Joe said. "And they will all kiss the boss."

Mrs. Margate grinned. "M-m-m," she said.



**3 Powerhouse Feature Novels 3**

**OLD THREE HUNDRED (Baseball)** ..... **Wadsworth Nealey**  
Timilty needs just a few more wins to hit the three-hundred mark, but he can't seem to go the route any more!

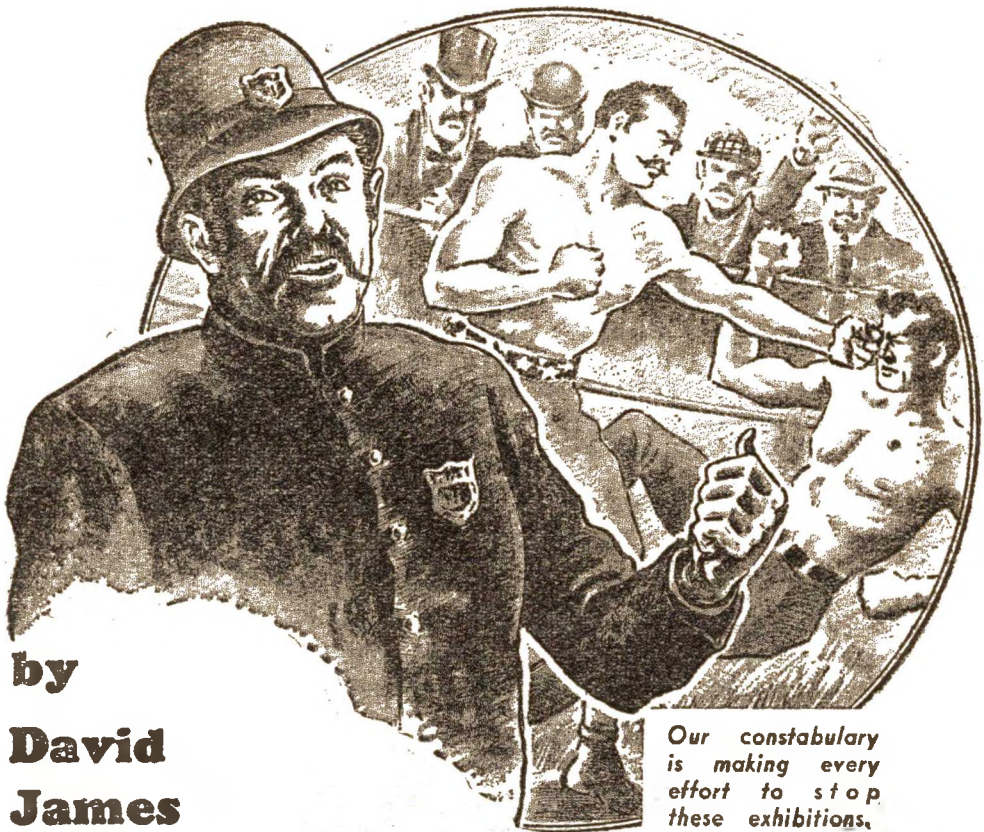
**SIXTY-MINUTE GUY (Football)** ..... **Seven Anderton**  
Bob Godwin has more guts than brains — or are his ideas as sound as his fighting heart?

**ROOKIE ON THE HOOK (Baseball)** ..... **Robert Sidney Bowen**  
Eddie Morgan's dream comes true, after four years. Then he finds that he's been dreaming alone . . .

*lead off our  
big September  
issue of*



**SUPER SPORTS**



by  
**David  
James**

*Our constabulary  
is making every  
effort to stop  
these exhibitions.*

# Stand Up And Slug

**An Off-Trail Story**



ENSE, straining muscles stood out of his sweating neck as Alex Richal pounded his massive right hand into killer Bob Lattimore's midriff. A dinner-bell in the hands of a pro-Lattimore rooter sounded the

end of the 26th round, on this night of July 26, 1880. Both men had agreed to fight to the finish, and Richal seemed to have a slight edge. For the past week, Alex had soaked his hands in brine to toughen them. The tall, 223-pounder was thinking that it would take at least 35 rounds to put away his very tough and worthy opponent, as he looked around the ring, crudely set up in an empty

We offer this story, gentle reader, as a picture of contemporary life, presented as accurately and faithfully as is possible, within the bounds of good taste. Neither Mr. James, nor your editor, desire to offer an apology for the illegal practice of prize-fighting, which most persons rightly consider brutal and degrading, in this enlightened year of 1880. But we feel that it is better to show something of the seamy side, to dispel some of the false glamour that has begun to spring up around this so-called "sport"; and it is stories and articles of this nature, we believe, which will be more effective in combatting such phenomena, than an attempt to bury it in silence and try to pretend it does not exist.

field back of the livery-stable. The police had an annoying habit of breaking up these fights and throwing the combatants in jail—as much as they might sympathize with the sport, personally—but all seemed clear, tonight. He caught the eye of one of the bartenders from the *Golden Ace Saloon*, who had agreed to stand at either end of the field and act as lookouts—should any of the local constabulary attempt to interfere with the proceedings—and grinned.

Alex was in splendid shape, six feet tall with a barrel of a chest. A purse of \$1000 had been promised the winner, while the loser would get \$500. More important was the fact that the victor would stand an excellent chance of demanding a match with the mighty John L. Sullivan.

Both men rushed each other at the opening, but Alex kept his man off-stride with powerful rights to the ear, time and again. Lattimore had closed Alex's left eye with a wild swing that had broken his hand. By the 20th round, welts had begun to appear on both fighter's bodies.

The bell, calling them out for round 27, found Lattimore still in his corner. Alex protested angrily, demanding that his opponent either fight or concede. He couldn't get anywhere, though, with a referee who had placed

quite a sizeable wager on Lattimore; the arbiter turned deaf ears on Richal's plea. Finally, Lattimore came out—to be met with angry rights and lefts to the body until a quick bell saved him.

The spectators, who had formed a ring around the two fighters, began to raise even more of a din than they had done before. Round 30 came and went, both fighters showing signs of fatigue from the gruelling pace and the heat. Alex felt that he had just one punch left; he'd put all he had into it—if Lattimore still stood after that, Richal knew the fight would be lost.

There was no chance to give that one supreme effort for the next few rounds; both of the sweat-stained boxers were nearly out on their feet by the time Round 36 was history. Finally, Alex found his opening and lifted one from the floor. A flash of white-hot pain seared the length of his arm; his hand was broken, the thumb hanging awkwardly. But there was no further need; Lattimore was stretched out on the ground, four teeth missing from the force of a blow that had broken his nose and turned his face into a sea of red, mixed with the dirt caked into his pores.

In vain, the referee tried to revive his color-bearer; the arbiter had to

declare Alex the winner. Lattimore was still stretched out on the ground when he was called to toe the mark for the start of the next round.

Angry grimaces turned towards Alex from a hostile crowd. Shouts of ire and threatening looks came upon the countenances of the gentry, who had lost quite a bit of change. Alex was hustled from the glowering mob by his seconds.

**P**PROMPTLY at ten o'clock next morning, Alex and his manager presented themselves at the office of Lon Dykes, the banker who had held the bet money and purses for both fighters.

One look at the balding, cigar-chewing man with the angry red face told Alex that Dykes would be a bit reluctant to part with the winner's part of the purse. A clenched fist under the perspiring chin of the recalcitrant banker quickly dispelled any thoughts he may have entertained about keeping the money for himself. Disgusted at his own timidity before the huge man towering over his desks, Dykes handed Alex his \$1000 pot along with nearly \$1500 which had been bet against him. A smile flickered across the well-mashed face of the big fighter as he stuffed the money into his pocket and slammed out of the office, his manager trotting along behind him.

It had been Alex's custom in the past to stop at the nearest tavern after each fight's purse had been collected and break training to the extent of a large schooner of brew. Since this town was hardly the size of New York, he had his choice of drinking in the *Golden Ace*, or not drinking at all; he soon was standing at the bar, busy with his beer.

Slouched in the far corner near the piano, sat Bob Lattimore, his face a welter of cuts, lips puffed to twice normal size and a strip of adhesive across the bridge of his nose. He was obviously over-hospitable to the invita-

tion of the bottle in front of him, and Richal saw that the man was in an ugly, sulking mood. Lattimore's glassy-eyed stare enveloped Alex standing at the bar, and a torrent of muttered insults poured from Killer Bob. They were whispered, but didn't escape Richal's ears. He tried not to hear them, but the taunts of the other man began to eat into him.

Placing his mug down on the bar, Alex half-turned, facing his opponent. He smiled, shrugged his shoulders, and turned back to his glass.

This action served only to infuriate Lattimore all the more, and the other man was soon shuffling over to Alex. A sharp outburst of insults stabbed at Alex's better judgment and a wild swinging fist underlined the words. Alex was reluctant to hit a man who was so obviously under the influence, but since so many of the local citizenry at hand had heard of the previous night's fight, and were calling for an encore, there was no recourse but to set to it. The bartender began to shout for the police but the summons stuck halfway in his throat; there was no need for assistance. Lattimore had picked up the half-empty beer-glass from the bar and flung its contents into Alex's face. A rifle-like left hand caught Lattimore flush on the chin, and the Killer was out before he hit the sawdust.

A disgusted look on his face, Alex turned on his heel and stalked out of the saloon.



The newspapers caught hold of the story and played up the angle that Alex, crowing over his unexpected win, went hunting for Lattimore and cornered the badly-beaten man in the *Golden Ace*. To show off to those who happened to be in the saloon at the time, the papers insinuated, Richal gave Lattimore another going-over. To top off the salad, it was claimed that Lattimore was drunk and Richal had

taken unfair advantage of the man's condition.

When Alex read the account, he called on the editor of the newspaper to demand a retraction and public apology. Bursting into the inner sanctuary of the astounded journalist, he waved an issue of the day's sheet under that man's nose and poured forth his version of the encounter. Unconvinced by the tirade, the editor flatly refused to submit to Alex's threats; Richal bounced the newspaperman on the seat of his pants. The following day's journal gave a resume of the incident putting Richal in the worst possible light for a man who wanted to wear the crown he hoped to wrest away from the mighty Sullivan.

**A** MATCH had been arranged between "High Hat" Kelly and Slicker Hannigan two weeks after the Lattimore-Richal brawl. The day before the fight, however, the Slicker fell down a flight of steps and broke his ankle—although people close to the Slicker were more inclined to think that he had tried to walk away from a bar with his feet still firmly planted on the rail. Whatever the circumstances, the bout would have to be called off—unless a substitute could be provided.

It was with this in mind that Andy Crane, promoter, bartender and part-time prize-fighter, called on Alex Richal. From habit, Alex had usually made it his business to see the man who would be his opponent in action—at least one—or get a sketchy idea as to the ring-worthiness of the proposed match. Due to such short notice, it was impossible for Richal to have a look-see first. It was only upon guarantee of \$1000, plus a sidebet for him of no mean sum, that Alex came to terms.

The match was scheduled to take place in a barn, on a cleared-off section of the loft. The floor had been swept as best as could be expected, but rusty nail-heads stuck out of the

well-cracked, warped surface. Somehow or other, ropes had been erected, but they looked as if the slightest pressure upon them would send them toppling.

It seemed that every able-bodied man in the neighborhood was there; cigar-smoke hung head-high over the ring. As usual, it was a highly partisan gathering. The man originally designated to referee was more than reluctant to step into the ring; no matter who won the fight, he would lose. He was so worried about the situation that he didn't bother to show up. After more than an hour's delay, a substitute agreeable to both parties was provided. This gentleman was a politician, who happened to be campaigning in the local district for a very minor office; with a thick application of appeal to his civic pride, as well as a twenty-dollar gold piece for himself, it was not too difficult to convince him that this would be serving his constituents in the best manner. As he entered the ring, the candidate decided to introduce himself to the multitude—each and every one a voter, he thought—and called for quiet. Forty-five minutes and many harangues later, he finished his spiel, to the unconfined joy of his audience.

The only fly-in-the-ointment, however, was that the politician didn't know the first thing about prize-fighting. High Hat wasted little time in adding fifty dollars to the referee's fortunes, with the provision that he overlook a few of Mr. Kelley's over-exuberant tactics.

It was nearly midnight when the fight began. The smoke was so dense, by then, that both fighters found their eyes smarting before a punch had been thrown. It had been agreed that each round was to last until one man went down. Between rounds, three minutes would be allowed for the losing fighter's seconds to rouse him enough to toe the mark under his own power. Should either man be unable to come to the call, then the oth-

er boxer would be declared the winner.

Round One began with both contestants toeing the mark in the boxer's pose; knees slightly bent, head held high and fists at awkward positions in front of the face. Since neither man wanted to be cut by the protruding nails in the floor, they wore waist-high tights and jersey-like undershirts. High Hat was most resplendent in his moustache, long, tapering black hair waxed at the end in the fashionable upsweep that was all the rage. Alex's face was clean-shaven; he preferred not to get his hair mixed into any cut on his face.

High Hat seemed to be the type of fighter who preferred to stand solidly in the center of the ring and slug it out with his opponent. Richal didn't care too much for this kind of fight, but it was the current vogue, and his public demanded it. To Alex, however, it reduced what should be a test of skill into an endurance contest; Richal liked to think that boxing was an art.

**N**EITHER fighter was willing to mix too freely, and the first round was some twenty minutes old before any real damage developed. A quick flurry of jabs and hooks by both men brought a swelling roar from the spectators. Suddenly, High Hat found an opening; a powerful left to the chest caught Alex off-balance and sent him to the ropes—which collapsed in a heap with Alex enmeshed in the debris. The referee decided that Alex had been knocked out of the ring and awarded the round to Kelly.

The seconds, and a few people standing at the front, effected quick repairs to the ropes and the fight progressed. Kelly won the second and third rounds through similarly-questionable decisions by the referee. However, Alex had been giving out more than his share of punishment, and Mr. Kelly was considerably softened up by the beginning of the fourth round.

All during the fight, more and more people had crowded onto the loft until it was dangerously near the breaking-point. The floor sagged even more than before and spectators were so caught up in the affair that they dropped their cigar-butts and matches to the floor without making certain that they were out. One of the stogies landed in a pile of straw and began to smoulder; the dreaded cry of "Fire!" rang out, and the fight was forgotten by the mob.

One of the seconds grabbed a bucket of water, and it was but a moment's work to extinguish the blaze; by then, half the crowd had left and the other half was battling toward the exits—unmindful of the shouts of those who had the presence of mind to look back. One of the first to leave was the referee, who, by now, was miles away and still running. High Hat Kelly also departed and was nowhere in sight when reason returned to those who had remained. Within minutes, the place was nearly deserted.

The few who had remained, soon realizing that there would be no further action for the night, had begun to leave. Alex stood in the middle of the ring, a look of bewilderment on his face, until the humor of the situation struck him and his own laughter began to reverberate throughout the barn. Rain soon came to add the crowning touch to a futile night. Silent and alone, Alex began the long, weary walk back to town.

When the newspaper representatives called on Alex the next day, he made it clear to them that he wanted a rematch with High Hat, because Mr. Crane was unwilling to pay him—since the fight had not reached an acceptable conclusion. Although Alex had argued with Crane until blue in the face, the latter refused flatly to give up the purse. Richal had made

no mention to the journalists that High Hat had vanished when the fire broke out, but made it definite that he would bend every effort toward an eventual rematch.

As for the elusive Mr. Kelly, a week after the fight, he embarked on a safari through the athletic-clubs of Europe. Alex was not too joyous when he heard about this evasive action, but there was no authority to whom a prize-fighter could appeal and Alex was unable to lay claim to any share of the purse. It was only Richal's good fortune that Crane agreed to hold the purse frozen until such time that a rematch could be arranged—if that would be satisfactory to those who put up the money. Since both fighters had agreed upon the purse-holder, Alex could hardly cry fraud; in any event, he knew better than to invoke the law—after all, prize-fighting was illegal. . . .

No. . . further protest of the matter would be entirely fruitless; Alex agreed to Crane's proposal and turned to the business of trying to line up a fight with anyone who would match fists with him.

Alex was not long in finding it—Killer Bob Lattimore was loudly calling "fraud" to the four winds, and the newspapers were calling for a return match. It was quickly arranged for the battle to take place in New Orleans, at one of the multitudinous athletic clubs of that city. The terms agreed upon were for a fight to the finish under Marquis of Queensberry Rules, and, for the first time, Richal would wear boxing-gloves in the ring. Since Lattimore insisted upon this, Alex counter-proposed that the gloves be of the lightest weight possible—very tight, thin gloves with no lacing or metal protrusions.

**T**HE DAY of the fight, police surrounded the athletic club where the bout was to take place and refused to allow anyone to enter. Frantic appeals to the other clubs of New

Orleans also met with the same result; any manager who agreed to let his place be used for the fight was immediately quarantined; and all clubs were warned by the constabulary that, should the fight take place in their establishments, the owner would be summoned to court to face a charge of allowing fighting and charging admission to the same.

Frantically, the search for a place to hold the fight was begun. Old breweries, stables and lofts were all sought out—only to be refused through the intervention of the law.

Finally, they located a barge anchored a few hundred feet off the bank of the Mississippi. Since the river was not in the jurisdiction of the police, the constabulary was powerless to interfere.

Hours before the contest, word began to spread that a grudge fight was being held between two heavyweights, and anyone who wanted to see it would not have to pay—since admission could not be charged someone who was sitting in his own boat. Soon the river swarmed with boats of every size and description; a funeral parlor fronted the barge on land, and it was later said that men had paid \$50 for the privilege of standing at one of the upper windows. Men appeared with ladders and leaned them against the side of the building; soon, people vying for choice positions on the rungs began to fight for the higher positions and several ladders broke under the weight crowded upon them.

Empty portions of the land facing the barge became literal gold-mines. One property-owner set up empty wooden boxes and was asking and getting outlandish sums for places on them. Many other owners followed suit, and soon the ground and buildings in the neighborhood of the barge were swarming with humanity. Some fainted from the push—their places were quickly taken by the next man. Hawkers appeared with a variety of foods and drinks, and were making a

tidy sum as the anxious mass became impatient. Other, more hardy souls donned bathing suits and squatted in the water, a foot or two in front of the bank of the river; a few drunks also ended up in the river, but without undergoing the formality of changing clothes.

Bedlam reigned, and the din from the mob was frightfully loud. By 10 P. M., the crowd, which had been waiting since three or four in the afternoon, was becoming sullen and bitter. It was rumored that John L. Sullivan had sent his representative to watch the contest and pick up any possible tips on the styles of each fighter.

The referee called the contestants to the middle of the ring for a word of advice. After his instructions were concluded, the long-awaited match got under way.

Alex immediately set the tone of the battle by letting go a haymaker that grazed Lattimore's forehead, opening a cut at the hairline. Killer Bob responded with a wicked blow to the heart. Alex kept working at Lattimore's head...the rounds passed without definite results, but Lattimore splattered claret over the ring as the 17th Round bell sounded. The referee, a man of high integrity, showed that he was in favor of declaring a TKO; but he also knew that such an ending for a fight, which some people had waited four to six hours to see, would not be healthy for him.

Round 18 was seconds from being concluded when Alex suddenly had Lattimore bottled up in a corner. The mob yelled for a finish, and hundreds of throats voiced desire for an ending for the Killer. Alex threw everything he had at Lattimore and his last effort sent the badly-hurt man back to the ropes just as the bell rang. Alex heard the bell and immediately dropped his guard, preparatory to returning to his corner. The dazed Lattimore also heard the gong, for he dropped his own guard momentarily; the Killer

looked up and saw Richal half turned away from him, moving toward his corner. Lattimore shot a lightning-like right hand that caught Alex flush on the chin and sent him sprawling. The referee, honest but quick-tempered, looked at Lattimore with disgust all over his face and disqualified him, awarding the decision to Alex, who was still on the floor.

An angry roar from the spectators turned into a high-pitched staccato of insults and became increasingly louder. Then it subsided to a dull moan; the mob noticed that Alex was not getting to his feet.

A doctor was hastily summoned and the crowd hurled invectives at Lattimore as the unconscious Richal was lifted to a makeshift stretcher and carried away.

“**MR.** RICHAL, I shall be blunt. Only a man of such iron constitution as yourself could have lived through these past months of pain. However, not even your marvelous physical attributes can withstand such mistreatment as you have undergone. Perhaps it may never happen; perhaps it may; but one blow of even the slightest force upon your temple will kill you. In a word, you must never fight again.

“With reasonable care, you may live to a natural old age and have a normal life, a full life. Carelessness may find you dead in a week. I have lain the facts before you, Mr. Richal,” the doctor concluded, “and it is now up to you whether you live or die.”

The room was dark, the shutters tightly drawn. No bustle of activity invaded the room to shatter the death-like silence. Only the ticking of the clock in the corner of the room disturbed the atmosphere.

“Thank you, doctor, for the advice. I'll take your word for it that I am not completely well. It will be hard to learn a trade, but I'll do my best.



"Thanks again for your trouble," Alex answered.

With a cheerfully assuring smile, the doctor rose and extended his hand toward Alex's. "Mr. Richal, I'd like you to drop in to see me in a month's time just for a check-up to see how the wound is healing. Goodbye and take care of yourself."

Alex turned toward the door, grasped the knob and opened the door. He braced his shoulders, raised his head firmly and walked into the bright, noisy street.



Nearly every penny that Richal had saved so scrupulously had gone into paying for his long and costly recuperation and eventual recovery. Alex's resources were down to an alarming amount; the clothes on his back, ninety-five dollars in his pockets and a name, now nearly forgotten.

After long deliberation, Alex decided that he needed that sort of job which kept him out of doors doing physical labor. A week later, he stepped off the train and walked into the office of the Eastern Lumber Company. Minutes later, he walked out with a job.

The weeks rolled by and Alex had nearly regained his health. His body was tanned by the sweltering sun and his muscles had become lean and strong from nine hours a day wielding an axe. It was whispered around the camp that Alex had once been a prize-fighter, and soon the foreman, John Stanley, came to ask Richal to participate in the Saturday evening boxing matches, that had been a weekly feature of the night life at the camp. Alex politely refused.

Time and again Alex was approached and each time he neatly evaded committing himself. He had lost all interest in boxing, hadn't even bothered to read the sports pages to keep up with the times, he told Stanley. Alex meant it, but each refusal

spurred Stanley on toward even more ardent attempts to gain Richal's consent. After the latest refusal, the foreman invited Alex to have a drink with him; soon the two men were caught up in the conversation, and hadn't even noticed a newsboy hawking his papers. Idly, Alex glanced about the room and his eyes fell on the headline. In bold type, Alex read:

**LATTIMORE CHALLENGES  
RICHAL TO COME OUT OF  
HIDING.**

Alex snatched a paper from the boy's hand and read the details of the challenge:

*St. Louis Aug. 12—"Killer" Bob Lattimore openly challenged Alex Richal to come out of hiding for a third bout in their exciting series. It is remembered that Lattimore lost both previous fights, the last under rather odd circumstances. Since John L. Sullivan refuses to fight Lattimore until he has beaten Richal, it seems certain that Lattimore is bent on earning a fight for the title. It is obvious that Richal stands in the way of Lattimore's claim to a title fight and the Killer has spent the last three months in a vain attempt to locate Richal. It seems, however, that Richal has disappeared and cannot be traced.*

The newsboy, who had been patiently waiting to be paid for the paper, looked at Alex's face and quickly abandoned any idea he may have entertained about receiving his due. Alex's countenance was purple with rage, his eyes burning with anger.

**T**WO DAYS later, Richal had returned to New Orleans and issued a statement to the press accepting Lattimore's challenge.

Alex made no mention, however, that he had revisited the doctor and had

been strongly cautioned against endangering his life merely to "get even."

Since the doctor had been unable to change Alex's mind, he suggested that a headgear be devised to protect the weakened temple against a possible re-injury.

For weeks, the tirade went back and forth between Richal in New Orleans and Lattimore in St. Louis, via the press. The sporting world was agog; New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Baltimore were bickering with each other and the other major cities for the privilege of holding the fight.

Alex refused St. Louis and Lattimore was just as shy about New Orleans. Finally, Detroit was awarded location, since that city was large enough to make it pay but the police department was small enough not to be able to stop it. October 21st was selected for the historic battle, and both men settled down to heavy work in preparation for the bout.



On the 18th of October, 1884, Alex arrived in Detroit. The train carrying him from New Orleans had arrived at the station two and a half hours late, but a large crowd was on hand to see him. Indeed, Detroit was caught up in the fight fever and it seemed that every eye in the country was centered upon the impending fight.

Lattimore arrived on the afternoon of the 19th to be met with a reception equal to that of Alex.

Alex spent the few days before the fight sharpening up his already-attuned reflexes. Three miles of roadwork had been his exercise on the 20th and he spent the morning of the fight in bed so that he would be fully rested come fight time. He traveled to the arena by carriage, and arrived at 11 o'clock. The stands of the newly-coverted ball field were packed long ago, ticket booths having closed at 6 o'clock that morning, the police turning away people ever since.

The inventiveness of the frustrated sports-fan came to light; a group of men had rented huge covered barrels from the brewery, and spent the previous day erecting them in such a manner that one stood on top of the other and a third on top of the second, totem-pole fashion. By the time five or ten barrels had been arranged thus, the first barrel cleared all obstructions and afforded the person seated atop the pile an excellent view of the ring.

All roads leading to the stadium were crowded beyond belief, and the eye could see more carriages that day than on five such days in New York City. A contingent of militia had been sent to the arena to preserve what little order that was left remaining. As soon as they debarked from the train, all thoughts of patrolling the field were forgotten; soon they, too, were fighting their way into the arena.

A light rain fell about 11:30, but no one thought about leaving. The shower made the roads leading to the field a sea of mud and carriages still battling toward the field were soon bogged down axle-deep in the muck. Unwilling horses were exhorted to pull their loads out of the mire but were unable.

The drizzle stopped abruptly about noon and the sun shone forth to sop up the wet. There were no preliminary fights and the crowd waited endlessly for the start.

A referee had been imported from England to handle the match, and both fighters felt sure that he would not lean in the other's favor. Richal insisted upon bare knuckles; Lattimore wanted five-minute rounds of unlimited number until one man was knocked out, or so badly hurt that he could not continue. Alex chose the doctor who had seen him over his last misfortune, and a man named Lou Donnerwell, close-friend and sparring-partner, for seconds.

The starting time that had originally been agreed upon was 2:30, but

since all parties were there long before that hour, the contestants agreed to begin at 1:30.

**A**S ALEX strode down the aisle toward the ring, a sea of shouts engulfed the stadium. Lattimore was greeted with slightly less ardor, since many had read accounts of the brutal tactic he had displayed in the previous meeting.

Lattimore wore black tights and looked to be in marvelous condition for the encounter; Richal was clad in purple trunks and wore a cotton-stuffed, leather headgear which came down to his eyebrows, and looked very much like a cap that was too large for his head.

After Archie Crestfield, the referee, had given the signal, the fighters moved from their corners toward the center of the ring. Introductions and other formalities concluded, they shook hands begrudgingly and resumed their places.

Since both men were fully aware that the outcome of the fight would certainly mean more to the winner than any of their previous engagements, there was a reluctance to mix too freely; the first few rounds were sparring exhibitions, far removed from the sparkling battles that were the usual result when Alex met Lattimore inside the squared posts.

As the rounds progressed, each man began to search for openings in the other's defense and there were many brilliant flurries. The crowd, on the other hand, having read of the brutality evident when the previous fights had taken place, was whooping it up and clamoring for more slugging and less dancing. Angry shouts from the spectators spurred the men on and sometimes they were carried away by the noise and swung without keeping up their defenses.

Suddenly, the two were in the center of the ring, standing toe-to-toe, slugging it out. Lattimore unleashed a vicious attack on Alex's head; Richal,

meanwhile, was working on Lattimore's eyes and had his face in a mess when the fight had reached the 16th Round.

The anxious mob had been more receptive to the last few rounds and were keeping up a constant din. Men forgot themselves, tore off their collars and stood on their seats to get a better view of the fight. Loud voices wafted through the arena, urging the contestants to harder effort. Women fainted in the hot atmosphere, mixed with cigar-smoke and sweat.

As Alex prepared to come to the center of the ring for the next round, the doctor called him back for a consultation. "Mr. Richal, you are endangering your life every moment that you stay there with Lattimore. Is there any means which I can use to dissuade you from taking a further chance?"

"Doctor, I *must* stay in and finish this fight. I can't explain it to you now, but after the fight's over, I'll tell you why..." Alex broke off and went to the center of the ring.

"I hope you're alive after the fight to tell me". The doctor's words were unheard by Alex as he nodded to the referee that he was ready.

Time stood still for the thousands there, that day, as two bronzed fighting machines tested each other's endurance. Blood appeared from Lattimore's mouth after a shocking left hand exploded on his chin; Richal had welts on his body and the headgear he wore was practically useless when confronted with the raking fists that tried to tug at its supporting straps.

Two lefts to the head knocked the protection to the side of Richal's head and a sweeping right hand sent the leather gear toppling. In a fit of anger, Alex backed away, tore off the dangling thing, and threw it out of the ring.

**L**ATTIMORE bore in, swinging wildly at his opponent's unpro-

tected forehead; he had found an opening in Richal's armor and intended to make use of it. A flurry of right hands to the forehead brought Alex's guard up and a wicked blow to the stomach brought it just as quickly down. Calling on every bit of energy, Lattimore swung at Richal's forehead and caught the dazed man with his hands down, still guarding his belly.

The blow landed on the temple, and Alex dropped his hands to his side. Lattimore came in for the kill and sent blow after blow onto his opponent's unprotected body; the referee, noticing a strange look in Richal's eye, stepped between the two and pushed Lattimore away.

The crowd was up on its feet; screaming women keeled over on seeing the dumbstruck look on Richal's face. Lattimore stood at a neutral corner, lightly dancing on his feet, his lungs fiercely sucking in the air.

Suddenly, the noise disappeared and in its place came deathly silence. Everyone was on his feet, but not a sound came from the crowd or anyone in the house. It was as if a hand had been placed over the ears, drowning out all noise.

Alex blinked a few times, raised his eyes to the sky and slowly crumpled into a heap at the referee's feet. Still, quiet atmosphere was not defiled by a whisper. The referee bent over the motionless form and went to one knee. He reached for a handkerchief from his back pocket and wiped his perspiring brow. Lattimore stopped moving his hands, and his feet suddenly took root. The doctor slowly moved to the center of the ring, his black bag in one hand. He bent down over the man on the canvas. Not a soul stirred.

The doctor bent to his task, opening the bag and producing a few items necessary for his examination. The referee sent a questioning glance at him, but the doctor was impervious to all but the man at his feet. He lifted Alex's left hand about a foot off the floor and let go of it; the hand fell to the canvas limply. The doctor put his ear to Richal's mouth, then took a mirror from his bag and placed it close to the fighter's lips. Then he reached up toward the head of the fallen man and gently closed the staring eyes.



### 3 FEATURE MYSTERY NOVELS 3

- **WRONG NUMBER** (*featuring Guthrie Lamb*) ... Hunt Collins

When they sent this gal out to kill, she was the wrong number!

- **HERE'S YOUR SYNDICATE** (*featuring Ware & Pender*) .....

..... Seven Anderton

Edna Pender plays target for the biggest stakes of her career!

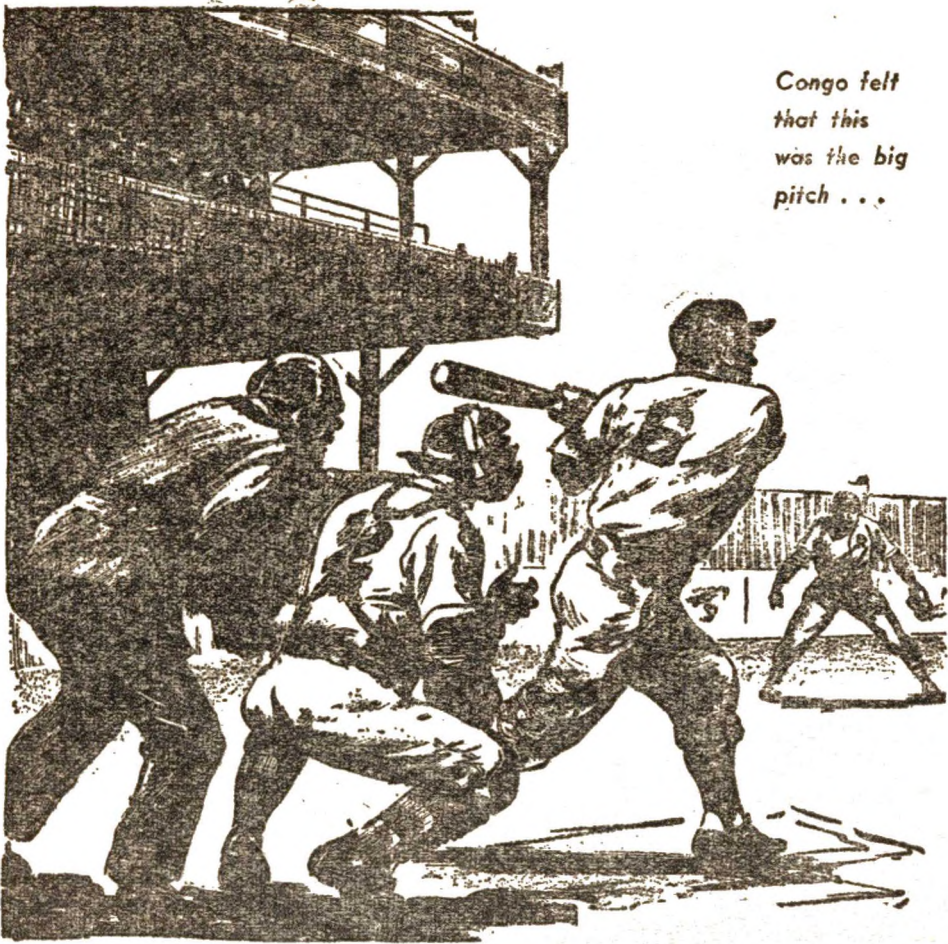
- **MURDER'S THEME-SONG** ..... Sim Albert

Was the one man who regretted this singer's death her killer?

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**FAMOUS  
DETECTIVE  
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*Congo felt  
that this  
was the big  
pitch . . .*

# DUSK ON THE DIAMOND

**By Roe Richmond**

They were all saying "Old Congo's done," and Congo Corriden knew they weren't so far from wrong. But he had to deliver, somehow, for the rest of this season; Dutch had stuck his neck out for Corriden, and only Congo could prevent his manager from going down to ruin with him!



LD CONGO'S done," they were saying in the press-box. "Dutch is taking an awful chance, keeping Congo in there for this one. The Dutchman's really sticking his neck out today."

"Old Congo's all through," the home fans were griping

in the stands, forgetting all the games Congo Corriden had sent them home happy from through the years. "He's washed up. What the hell's Schultz thinkin' of, usin' the old man instead of young Pollard? Congo ain't had a hit in a week!"

In the Royal dugout, Dutch Schultz was muttering, more to himself than the men around him: "I don't know; maybe I'm wrong—but you hate to give up on a guy like Corry."

"It's rough, Dutch," agreed Jameson, the pitching coach, "but Corry isn't helpin' us much. We'd have more punch with that Pollard kid in there."

"Maybe, Jamie. But Corry does somethin' for the club—somethin' that nobody else does."

"Sure, he carried this club on his shoulders for years. But even the best of 'em come to the end of the line, Dutch."

"I wasn't thinkin' of the games he won, himself," the Dutchman said, his gnarled homely face frowning in thought. "There's more than that to Frank Corriden..."

This was the final game of the season, the Hawks and Royals tied at the top, battling it out for the flag. They had split the first two, and everything hung on this one—a whole season of sweat and strain and heartbreak, wrapped up into one nine-inning session at the end of September. Corriden had gone hitless in the first two, failing time and again with men on base, but he was still in the lineup. Schultz had been criticized all summer for using Corriden more than young Keith Pollard. If the Royals lost this one, the Dutchman would be crucified by the press and the public.

The Hawks had gone down in order in the opening round, Teale, McClane and Garro falling before the weird fluttering stuff of Wade Holt, the long lanky lazy-acting right-hander of the Royals.

Leading off against Rochmann in the home half of the first, Kip Culross

had cracked a single back through the middle. Joe Welty laid the sacrifice, and Tom Strode flied out. Now, with a runner on second and two outs, they were purposely passing tall Slat Kennelly to get at old Congo Corriden.

*Time to hang up my spikes*, thought Corriden, kneeling in the on-deck circle. *When they put on an extra run to bring me up in the first inning, it's sure time to quit...* He'd always thought he would know enough to bow out gracefully before he slipped too badly. A man owed it to himself, his family and friends and the fans. There's nothing more pathetic than an aging star trying to carry on after outliving his usefulness... But it's not easy to give up something that has been your whole life, ever since boyhood. Nobody ever loved to play ball better than Frank Corriden.

He wasn't so old, either—only thirty-five—but the power that had made Congo Corriden the batting terror of the league was gone. His eye was still good; he could hit the ball, but it didn't ride like it used to... Routine grounders to the infield; soft flies to the outfield—no more wicked whipping line drives that stopped only at the fences, or somewhere outside the park. He had slowed up some, of course, but he could get around all right in center field, and they didn't dare to run much on that rifle-arm of his. Defensively, he was still superior to Pollard; he knew a great deal more, and had that rare instinct that fielders like Speaker and DiMaggio had. But the way Corriden was, now, the kid would outhit him by plenty—and did every time he got the chance.

**SO** THEY were walking Kennelly to set up a pushover, and the pushover was big Congo Corriden. Two years—even a year—ago, it would have been an unprecedented and incredible maneuver; but this season, opposing teams had taken to doing it with increasing frequency. Sometimes Corriden made them sorry for it, but

more often he was an obliging out. . . Watching Rochmann on the mound, Corriden thought of their countless duels in the past. The time had been when Rocky, with all his cocksure confidence, would have rather seen anybody but Corriden up there.

Dud Ordway, the flashy young left-fielder of the Royals, was coming out with his bats, as Kennelly took ball four and jogged toward first. "Save me a cut," Ordway called, without much hope or meaning in his voice. "You must have one hit left in that club, Corry."

Corriden nodded curtly, and walked to the plate, knowing that Ordway resented his being in the lineup instead of Pollard. A rumble of disapproval and disappointment went through the stands, that once had thundered a tribute every time Congo Corriden appeared. Now they too wanted Pollard, for mighty deeds of the past weren't going to win this ball game pennant.

Trudell, massive and stolid in his catcher's armor, spoke through the mask, as Corriden crossed to the right-hand batter's box: "Never thought we'd be doin' this to you, Corry."

"You're liable to regret it, Truck," Corriden said, thinking that enemy veterans like Trudell respected him more than some of his own teammates did.

Trudell shook his masked head. "Not today, Corry. Rock's really got it today."

Planting his cleats, and settling into his wide-balanced stance, Corriden still looked powerful and formidable at the plate, a big rangy broad-shouldered man, mild brown eyes narrowed in his rough-hewn dark face, cropped black hair slightly frosted under the cap, a chew of tobacco lumping one lean jawbone. He still loomed big and tough and dangerous up there; but Rochmann was regarding him with an insolent, half-pitying grin, twisting his bitter mouth and knobby features. Rocky no longer feared him in the least; Rocky enjoyed getting his revenge for all those

ballgames Congo Corriden had busted up on him in the old days.

The count was two-two when Corriden got hold of a low curve, hitting it fairly solid but straight into the ground toward short, and springing into stride for first. The runners were off to flying starts, and the ball hopped high as Ernie McClane moved in on it. A left-hand batter might have beaten it out, but McClane's pickup was clean, his throw to first strong and swift, pulling Bull Garro into the baseline in front of Corriden.

Seeing that he was out by a couple of strides, Corriden twisted away to avoid a needless collision. But the brawny Garro, set and waiting, threw a hard muscular hip into Corriden as he went past, belting him off balance so that he staggered and fell on all fours, pain knifing through his left hipbone.

"Sorry, old-timer," Bull Garro said, a contemptuous grin on his black ugly face. "You all right, Congo?"

"I'll remember that, Bull," said Corriden, getting up and dusting his knees, trying to keep the anguish from showing in his face. "I'll be down this way again."

"I doubt it," laughed Garro. "You don't scare anybody, any more, Congo." He turned and swaggered toward the Hawk bench.

**C**ORRIDEN tried to walk to center field without limping, and it required considerable effort and will. He had failed once more with men on the bases—an easy setup for the great Rochmann. And Garro, that big bull-head who used to give him plenty of room at first base, had deliberately hipped him today. . . Corriden groaned more at his failure than from the grinding agony in his left side. At the end of one inning it was a scoreless tie, and Corriden had blown another chance for the Royals. His ears burned at the mere thought of what they were saying in the stands, the dugouts, and the press box. And

some of the comments from the bleachers were only too audible.

Hod Matzek, the long limber Hawk clean-up boy, was up to open the second, a towering loose-jointed perfectionist at the platter, leading the league in batting and homers and runs-batted-in. The experts said Matzek had the best eyes and wrists, the smoothest swing in baseball... *Wrists like I used to have*, Corriden thought with some bitterness, for his trouble was in the wrist-action. Only two other people knew about it—his wife and Doc Weaver, the Royal trainer. Corriden's wrists had stiffened just enough to rob him of the terrific whiplashing power that had made him one of the greatest right-handed hitters. To use this for an alibi would be admitting he was through, and Corriden had another reason for keeping it secret. He didn't want the Dutchman to feel obligated to him.

Now he shifted back and over toward right-center. Matzek batted left, and you had to play him to pull, give him a lot of room, although he occasionally sliced to left. Wade Holt, grinning pleasantly and chewing his tobacco on the hill, was unworried by Matzek, or anyone else up there with a bat, but that didn't make Matzek any less menacing.

The sun was high, the shadow of the double-decked stands not yet encroaching on the diamond, and the air was golden and clean, warm for late September, a trifle hazy with autumn and smoke within the stadium. Standing easy and relaxed, but poised for instant flight in any direction, Frank Corriden watched Wade Holt work on the Hawk slugger, running up a full count.

The payoff pitch nearly fooled Matzek, but he got a piece of it, with that late fast swing of his. Not a very good one, just enough to bloop it out over short into shallow left-center. Corriden, off instantly on the jump, was the only man with a chance of getting to it, but Ordway

was crossing from left, and Fenner was flitting back from the shortfield. Driving hard, hobbled somewhat by his cramped aching left hip, Corriden strained to get under that looping fly, but it dropped in front of him. Trapping it on the short bounce, Corriden straightened and threw to Culross at second. Hod Matzek was on with a cheap safety, and Corriden knew the crowd was blaming him. They had seen him make so many of those look easy, that they thought he was dogging it if anything dropped safe in center.

"Pollard woulda been waitin' under that one!" bellowed a bleacherite. "Why don't you give up, Congo? Crawl off an' die somewhere!"

Chip Drohan, a chunky compact right-hand clouter, was up next, with the hit-and-run on, but Wade Holt had too much stuff for him. The pop-up went foul and Slat Kennelly snared it out of the first-base boxes, a pretty catch.

Peppery cocky Red Burns stepped in, chattering at the lanky lounging pitcher, which only made Wade Holt grin the wider. Crouching behind the pan, Bill Schefflin said: "If words was hits, Red, you'd bat a thousand instead of two-fifty." Burns laughed and retorted: "If you could read, Bill, you'd know I was right up there around two-eighty or ninety."

Burns blistered one on the ground toward left, but Flit Fenner flashed into the hole to fork it and fire to second. Kip Culross pivoted smoothly off the bag, unleashing his relay just before Matzek crashed violently into him. Both men rolled in the dirt, exchanging caustic remarks and elbow jabs, but Slat Kennelly scooped Kip's throw deftly for the double-play that retired the side.

**O**UT IN CENTER Corriden sighed with relief as he started in, thinking: *Well, at least they can't charge a run to me—not yet, anyway.*

It was going to be a rough tough all-out battle, with no holds barred. It



generally was when these two clubs clashed, old enemies from way back, and this was for the championship and a Series split. The Hawks had started throwing their weight around early, and the Royal dugout was smouldering.

Dud Ordway, bat in hand, said: "I go up first so much, I feel like a lead-off man." A subtle thrust at Congo Corriden, of course.

"Too bad you don't hit like one," Bill Schefflin said, stripping off his protector and shinguards.

On the bench, Slat Kennelly and Keith Pollard were telling pitcher Holt that the Hawks shouldn't have had a runner aboard at all—meaning that Corriden should have caught the blooper.

"That Matzek's the luckiest hitter in the world," drawled Wade Holt. "With his luck he oughta bat five-hundred."

It was plain to see how the Royals were divided. The younger players—Ordway, Fenner and Kennelly—were for Pollard, resenting the way Corriden was hanging on. The older men—Culross, Welty, Strode and Schefflin—remained loyal to Corriden. And Holt did, too.

Keith Pollard himself, anxious to break in and establish himself as a star, naturally hated Corriden's guts for blocking his way. It was human nature, Corriden didn't blame the boy, but it hurt just the same. . . . *I'd feel the same way in his place*, Corriden thought. *I did feel like that about old Moose Malloy when I was breaking in. But I liked the Moose too, and I wasn't above learning from him.*

Corriden glanced at Pollard. A good-looking kid with wavy brown hair, clear blue eyes, fine carved features, cleft chin and all. . . . Tall, well-built, with the smooth fleetness of a greyhound in action. He'd be quite a ball-player sometime, Pollard would, but he wasn't ready yet. A rather self-centered conceited boy, Pollard didn't take kindly to advice and coaching, but he had a wealth of natural abil-

ity. Pollard would be big-time in the future, but he wasn't right now. Dutch Schultz knew what he was doing, when he kept Corriden in there.

Out on the slab, Rochmann was really warmed up by this time, and he took three Royals in a row with consummate ease. Ordway flied out, Fenner fanned, and Bill Schefflin grounded to Red Burns at third. Red's peg pulled Garro into the line, and Bill barreled into him like a fullback. They went down in a tangled welter behind the bag. Bull Garro, shaken up and snarling curses, held the ball for the putout, but he was raging mad.

"Quit cryin', Bull," said Schefflin. "You started this stuff yourself. If you can't take it, don't dish it out."

**T**HE HAWKS could do no better in the top of the third. Andy Cusick bounced out to third-baseman Joe Welty. Big Truck Trudell timed one of Holt's butterfly balls to perfection, whaling a long drive over center, but Corriden was racing back with the crack of the bat. He took it going away, out by the flagpole, turning after the catch to take the jarring bump of the bleacher wall on his shoulders. A beautiful running clutch, and the fickle fans gave him his due.

In the dugout Dutch Schultz said: "How many center-fielders would've got to that one? It was tagged for three bases and plenty of trouble."

Wade Holt rubbed out Rochmann on strikes to finish the half-inning. Corriden was limping a little as he jogged in, the bruised hip stiff and sore. Strode and Culross moved along side of him, kidding about making them look hard out there, and Corriden smiled with warm pleasure. But it wasn't enough to excel defensively; he had to do something with the bat.

Rochmann evened up with his rival twirler, whiffing Wade Holt, and went on to get the slender blond Kip Culross and the wiry leather-tough

Joe Welty. No score with three innings gone. This final was by way of being an old-fashioned flinger's duel.

The game moved on, the shadow of the stands creeping out over the infield, and the pitchers continued to dominate the show... When Frank Corriden came up in the last of the fourth, Slates Kennelly was on second after doubling with one out. Another run set up for old Congo. Once Corriden had liked nothing better than to go up with men on base, but now he was beginning to dread it. The groan of the crowd indicated how they felt about it, and that didn't help any.

*I ought to try punching them, as long as I can't take my old cut, thought Corriden. But I've been a free-swinger all my life, and it's hard to change this late. I'd look foolish poking at 'em...* The pressure was building up on him, and Corriden tightened up, in spite of all he could do to stay loose.

Rochmann, mixing his blinding speed with sharp-breaking stuff, sent Corriden down swinging, spinning all the way around on his last stroke. There was some booing from the stands, as Corriden walked back to the dugout, his dark head bent, his angular face somber.

"He's costin' us runs, Dutch," said Jameson.

"You just wait, Jamie," said the Dutchman. "Corry'll come through yet. It means a lot to a guy like him, to go out the right way. I want Corry to wind up that way. He deserves the chance."

"He may lose us the flag."

"I don't think so," Dutch said calmly; "he's won a lot of 'em for us."

"He's got no wrists left, Dutch; he can't whip the bat any more."

"I know all about that."

"What happened to him?"

"Accident at sea," the Dutchman said tonelessly. "Blown up. Corry landed on what was left of a raft, half-knocked out. Another guy in the water, unconscious. Corry held onto him

until help came, the water freezing cold. They had to pry his hands loose. His wrists haven't been right since."

"Why the hell don't people know about that?" demanded Jameson.

"Corry doesn't want 'em to. He never told me, even..."

"But how'd you—?"

"I got it straight," Dutch said, "from a guy who was there."

**I**T WAS NO consolation to Corriden, that Dud Ordway was equally futile, before, Rochmann, popping feebly to second-sacker Cusick, letting Kennelly die on second... When Corriden went out past first, Slats was swearing, kicking the bag, growling something about, "No more punch than a rabbit!"

In the fifth, Corriden came swooping in to snatch a sinking liner off the grasstops, a spectacular shoestring grab. In the sixth, Corriden raced deep into left-center for a leaping back-handed clutch that brought the thousands up roaring. But there was small comfort in that for him, except that it cut off enemy threats... What Corriden had to do, what he wanted more than anything else, was to come through at the plate.

The scoreless innings rolled on, the shadows lengthened, and the smoky haze thickened in the enclosure. Going into the seventh, it was still 0-0, a great day for the big rugged Rochmann and the lanky loose-limbed Wade Holt. Strictly a pitcher's battle, enlivened by superb fielding plays.

The Hawks finally opened up with their vaunted power in the seventh. Bull Garro and Hod Matzek singled in swift hard succession. Chip Drohan lined toward right-center, fairly high and deep, the runners holding up about halfway. Swiveling and leaping off in pursuit, Corriden's cleats caught and all but threw him to the turf, the sudden wrench locking his left hip in momentary agonizing paralysis.

Kicking out of it with a tremendous effort, Corriden drove his long legs onward, but that lost instant had

done it. The white ball fell out of reach on the green, the enemy runners started tearing around the base-paths. Straining mightily, Corriden secured the bounding ball and wheeled toward the diamond. Little or no chance of flagging Garro at the pan, but Matzek was loafing a bit on his way to third... Corriden cut loose his throw, pouring everything into it. The ball streaked past Matzek and hopped into Joe Welty's glove at third base. Hod went hurtling in viciously, his spikes high, but Joe Welty made the tag. One out, a runner on first, and one run in.

"You see that?" Dutch Schultz said in the dugout. "Nine out of ten men would've thrown blind to the plate. Corry's always thinkin', he never throws wrong."

"But he should've caught that one," protested Jameson.

"His leg tied up," the Dutchman said. "Garro really hurt Congo when he hipped him at first base."

Out in center, Corriden was thinking: *There's a run they can chalk up to me. But I'll get it back for 'em... Somehow, I've got to...*

Wade Holt, cool and unruffled as ever on the hill, grinned pleasantly at the vituperative chatter of Burns, and got the Redhead on a weak roller to the mound, Drohan taking second on that topped ball. Two down, another run halfway home.

Andy Cusick was the smallest player in the big burly Hawk lineup, but built square as a brick and twice as hard. He tied into one of Holt's rare fast balls now, drilling it on a dead line to left-center. Corriden raced over, swift and smooth in spite of his cramped left leg. Leaning far forward, twisting his rangy frame in full flight, Corriden stretched and backhanded that whistling drive inches above the grass. A superlative play, but the applause was scattered and perfunctory. The fans weren't forgiving him for that enemy score. The Hawks were ahead, 1 to 0.

KEITH POLLARD was laughing when Corriden entered the dugout. "Congo," he said, "how is it you catch the hard ones and let the easy ones drop?" Corriden glanced at him and went on toward the bat-rack, where Kennelly was already pawing over the sticks.

Jameson nudged the Dutchman. "Sometimes, Dutch, a thing like Corry's wrists is partly mental."

Schultz nodded and called, "Hey, Doc," and Weaver, the trainer, came over to the manager. They conversed briefly, and Weaver moved to the bat-rack, gesturing at Corriden.

"Like I told you, Corry, a lot of it's in your head," Weaver said. "Try to forget your wrists and cut away like you used to, free and easy with plenty of snap. You get hold of one good one, you'll be okay."

Corriden nodded solemnly. "Yeah, it's about time I did, Doc."

Last of the seventh, the diamond deep in shadow now, and sixty-odd thousands standing for the stretch half. Slats Kennelly dug in at the rubber, a tall strong aggressive left-hand clouter against the right-handed Rochmann, the best in either league, a power pitcher whose speed and stuff seemed to increase as the innings wore on.

Slats slammed one past first base, a riflshot into the right-field corner for his second double of the afternoon. Corriden took his place at the plate, with an angry rumbling sound in the stands, a few hoarse shouts of, "Give us a hitter! Put Pollard up there!" Rochmann was scornful, big with an overall bigness, craggy-faced, sullen-mouthed, cold-eyed. In this dusky fading light, old Congo would be a cinch.

Corriden, weight spread evenly on his cleated shoes, willed himself to stay loose and limber this trip. Before Doc spoke to him, Corriden had considered confessing about his wrists to the Dutchman, suggesting a pinch batter. But something about Weaver's manner told him that Dutch already

*knew*, and was relying on Corriden regardless... Or letting his sense of gratitude and obligation overbalance his judgment. Whichever it was, Corriden had to come through for him... *Dutch knows, he's known all along*, Corriden thought. *I can't let him down now. He's putting his neck on the block—for me. I've got to deliver.*

Perhaps Rocky was over-confident, figuring on fogging his fast one by old Congo in the murky gloom. Corriden took a one-one count, striding into his swing on the next pitch, laying the wood on it fairly and following through with whiplashing wrists. It rang clear and clean as a bell, resounding in the stadium, the bat springing vibrantly in Corriden's hands, the ball taking off on a line over short and into left-center. Teale and Drohan were chasing back toward the distant bleacher-wall, Kennelly was homeward bound, and Corriden rounded first, on fire with exultance. That one was in there, all the way to the 440-foot sign.

Kennelly scored easily with the tying run. Corriden turned second and raced Drohan's powerful peg to third. It was close, but Corriden hit the dirt with a beautiful reckless slide, hooking inside and under Red Burns, his right toe catching the canvas as Red dropped on him in the storming dust. Sound filled the park like roaring surf on a rockbound shore.

"Where in hell did you get that one, Corry?" muttered Red Burns.

"I been savin' it for you boys," Corriden said quietly.

Pitching in cold murderous wrath, Rochmann struck Ordway out, and took Fenner on a puny pop. But good old Bill Schefflin, the long lean Royal catcher, blazed a single through the right side, putting Corriden over with the tie-breaking tally. Wade Holt was out on strikes, but the Royals led, 2 to 1, with two rounds to go.

**T**HE HAWKS came back in the eighth, clawing and fighting, a tough team to keep on the short end

of a score. Broad beefy Truck Trudell tore off a single to right, and Rochmann bunted him along to second. Vince Teale waited patiently and walked, putting two on with one away... Dutch Schultz came out to talk with Wade Holt, but left him in there, although there was much activity in the Royal bullpen.

After fouling off a hit-and-run attempt, Ernie McClane dragged a bunt, dying at first himself but moving the runners along the second and third base. With two down, Bull Garro set himself in the left-hand batter's box, huge and black and contemptuous, blasting one through second into center field, sending two Hawks into homeward flight.

Charging the ball like an infielder, Corriden came up with it cleanly, turning loose a peg to the plate, to head off the second run. Trudell had counted, and Teale was coming in fast. Corriden's arm was rifle-accurate, but the bounce went so high Bill Schefflin had to stretch up after it. Teale skimmed across in a dust-cloud, before Bill could bring the ball down, and the Hawks were up, 3 to 2.

Garro took second on the throw-in. Out in center, Corriden was cursing and kicking the earth, spitting tobacco juice in disgusted splashes. Hod Matzek was the batter, and the Hawk coaches were reminding the world at large that Hod was leading the league.

Wade Holt, his smile thinner and his brown face leaner and bonier, used a variety of motions and fantastic curves on Matzek, but Hod got hold of one with prodigious power, a long towering blow to right-center, headed for the sun seats. The crowd sat stricken and moaning... But Frank Corriden fled back in under it, turning at the base of the green barrier, leaping incredibly high against the wall, and grasping the ball in the web of his glove. The hoarse approval of sixty-some thousand made the ground shudder, but Corriden was

scarcely aware of it as he ran toward the shaded diamond. Only one thing burned in his brain: *the Hawks were one-run ahead.*

"Get those runs back for Wade!" they were jabbering in the Royal dug-out. "Get enough of 'em to break their backs!"

"Get 'em for Corry, not me," Wade Holt said; "he's the guy."

"Just get 'em," said Corriden. "Never mind for whom, boys."

The top of the list in the home eighth, the best opportunity the Royals would have to pull this pennant out of the fire. And Rochmann was rougher than ever in the late innings, the waning light, his fast one a thin blur, his curve almost as fast. A one-run margin was generally all Rock needed.

Kip Culross, slim sharp and blond, slashed a hit through the hole into left field for a starter. The Dutchman, playing it close to the belt with so much at stake, put on the sacrifice, and rawhide Joe Welty laid it neatly. One out, the tying run at the midway station, and solid quiet dependable Tom Strode at the bat.

Tommy came through, lashing a line single to right, and Kip Culross was bent on going all the way from second. Hod Matzek fielded the ball and unfurled a fine throw, but Culross' savage slide cut the legs from under massive Truck Trudell, just as the ball hopped into his mitt. There was a twisted tangle in the boiling dirt, and the ball trickled out of it. Kip's spikes were across the rubber, and the umpire's palms spread in the safe sign. It was tied up again, 3-3, and Tom Strode was on second base, one out.

But Rocky bore down cruelly, breaking off the wickedest curves he had thrown all day, mixed with his flaming fireball, and Slats Kennelly went under swinging for the second out. That left it up to old Congo Corriden, and this time the crowd was roaring for him, as in the past. . . . But this time Rochmann would not be over-confident and careless. Rock

would throw everything in the book at him.

"He'll never do it again, Dutch," murmured Jameson.

"He's as good a bet as anybody we've got," the Dutchman said. "And better—for my money."

**T**HEY FOUGHT it out as they had so many times before, a great pitcher against a great batter, with the World Series money riding on every ball. Corriden was different up there now, Rochmann felt, more like the mighty Congo of old, whipping that long heavy bat as if it were weightless, fouling off Rocky's best pitches, letting the bad ones go, out of the strike zone by fractional inches. The count went two-and-two.

One more ball, and the bench would want to pass Corriden, but Rochmann didn't want that. Ordway had been easy all afternoon, but the Royals would have somebody hitting in his place. . . . Rocky got everything he had behind the next delivery. Corriden stepped lithely and swung with smooth even power. There was a solid ear-splitting explosion, as Corriden poured wrists and arms, shoulders and back into that synchronized stroke, the impact rippling way to his elbows. The crowd-noise was like a sudden vast waterfall, the ball streaking a rising rifled line to left-center.

*Too high*, Corriden thought, breaking for first base. *Too damn high, and enough room out there for Drohan to get under it. . . .* Then he saw the coach at first leaping high in the air, and looking out Corriden caught the downward arc of the ball as it descended toward an upheaval of humanity, well up in the bleachers. Slowing to a jog, tingling all over with exultation, Corriden followed Strode around the circuit, and the whole Royal squad was out on the top step of the dugout to welcome him.

Yes, even young Keith Pollard, pounding his sweaty back and saying, "Corry, I'd sure like to shake

hands with you; I've been a damn fool and a bum sport, Corry."

"Forget it, kid," Corriden said, smiling as their hands gripped. "You're all right, and you're goin' to be a great ball player, Polly."

Ordway flied out to close the eighth inning, but the Royals were in front, 5 to 3.

The Hawks were a fighting crew, however, never licked as long as there was a breath of life left in them. Opening the ninth, Chip Drohan clipped a single to left. Red Burns flied to right, with Tom Strode turning in a sparkling catch on the dead run. One down, two more to get... But little Andy Cusick sliced one to right, and there were Hawks on first and third.

Dutch Schultz moved to the mound to confer with his pitcher, but Wade Holt wanted to stay on the job. "I'm all right, Dutch," he drawled. "This is my baby. Don't take it away from me, Dutch."

There was a gentle kindly smile on the Dutchman's battered, broken-nosed brutal-looking face. "Just remember, son, we don't want this to go extra innin's," he said, and turned to the dugout.

**B**IG TRUCK TRUDELL got the good wood onto one, driving it high and deep to center. Frank Corriden loped back, every stride costing him pain, and hauled it down with easy grace. Drohan coasted across with the run, of course, but Corriden's throw held Cusick on first. Two outs, and the Hawks trailed by a single run, 5-4 now.

A pinch-hitter coming up for Rochmann, a powerhouse clutch batter named Johnny Moore, and the Royals were still in grave danger, for Moore was one of the best in the business, a lefty against right-handed Holt.

A pitch got away from Bill Scheflin, far enough to let Cusick dash to second, and the tying run was halfway around. Schultz started out of the dugout, but Wade Holt waved

him back. The count went three-and-two... Wade came in with a screwball, breaking away from the left-hander, and Johnny Moore caught it on the end of his bat. A curving drive to left-center that looked like trouble.

Springing after it, Corriden felt his left leg lock once more, clamped in agony from knee to hip, and knew that he could never get to it. "Take it, Dud!" he yelled, beckoning desperately, and Dud Ordway came flashing over from left field, running like a madman. The ball seemed sure to drop in there, and Corriden froze with horror as he limped to back the play... But Dud Ordway turned on the steam, lunging frantically into a dive, clasping the pellet in his gloved hand, sliding and tumbling along the turf, but holding onto that precious leather with a viselike grip.

Rolling onto his feet, grinning and shaking his head, Dud Ordway trotted on toward old Congo Corriden, the stadium a roaring ocean of sound about them. Thrusting the ball into Corriden's hands, Ordway said: "It's yours, Corry; you sure earned it, and I want you to have it."

"Not after that catch you just made, boy," protested Corriden.

Ordway laughed happily. "I only made one of 'em, Corry; you've been doin' it all day. Not to mention what you did with the bat."

He flung an arm about Corriden's broad high shoulders, and they walked in toward the dusky diamond together, the autumn air shuddering under its burden of noise. Tom Strode joined them, and in the infield the entire team gathered around, for a triumphal march to the dugout. And old Congo Corriden was one of them, the best one again...

"You see what I mean about Corriden?" said Dutch Schultz.

"Yes, I see," said Jameson. "He sure came through for us, Dutch. But how in hell did you ever dare to keep

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# THE FOUR-HANDED PASSER

By William F. Schwartz



Step right up, ladies and gentlemen, and meet Antie, the gridiron wonder, with four — count 'em, four! — hands. And he can pass, carry the ball, block, and tackle with any or all of them!



**T**HIS WOULD never have happened if Cod City didn't have two big league football teams.

Of course, there are many who will scoff and let loose with some large belly-laughs at my use of the word *two*

in counting the number of *big league* gridiron aggregations that represented

Cod City.

None will dispute that the Cod City Bisons were strictly of top-notch caliber; the Bisons were a rough, tough outfit that crushed all opposition with the ease of a kid stomping on a nest of insects. They had captured the loop championship four seasons in a row. At home and away, they performed before huge masses of humanity that overflowed the stands and packed the stadiums.

On the other side of the ledger, and

on the other side of town was my own club, the Cod City Yellowjackets—most times referred to as the Stingless Yellowjackets. The Yellowjackets hadn't won a single game in two years. And as for spectators—well—just let me say that the Yellowjackets went through their inept antics before stands that were filled with large areas of empty spaces. Anybody who came to a game risked all the horrors of solitary confinement; it was hard even to give away passes.

Such was the sordid state of affairs one gray September afternoon when I wired Pat Hogan, my chief scout, thusly: *PAT STOP EITHER COME UP WITH SOMETHING THAT WILL ATTRACT CROWDS OR YOUR PAY STOPS STOP ART HASKINS.*

It was about a week later when I received the following: *DEAR ART STOP HAVE SIGNED AN ATTRACTION WHO IS OUT OF THIS WORLD AS AN ATTRACTION STOP HE WILL JAM THE STANDS BELIEVE YOU ME OR MY NAME AIN'T PAT HOGAN.*

I counted the number of unnecessary words in the telegram. To myself, I breathed a few words of blasphemy and promised Hogan's name would be mud if this attraction wasn't good.

A day or two later, there was another telegram from Pat.

*DEAR ART STOP NEW PLAYER IS DUE TO ARRIVE TOMORROW ON SIX FORTY-FIVE TRAIN IN GOD CITY STOP SUGGEST MEETING HIM AT STATION AS HE IS UNUSED TO A BIG CITY STOP YOU ARE NOW THE OWNER OF A STAR GRIDIRON ATTRACTION THAT WILL BE THE ENVY OF THE LEAGUE AND SUGGEST MAYBE YOU SHOULD AWARD A BONUS TO PAT HOGAN.*

Again I counted the number of words in the telegram. Again I mouthed some uncouth comments. "Bonus, my neck!" I muttered to myself. "The cost of that wire comes out of your salary."

**P**RACTICE was a little long the next day but, anxious to view the prospect that Hogan recommended so highly, I was only about five minutes late in reaching the station. On the platform where the 6:45 had just arrived, there was a vast crowd, milling and shoving. Almost a squad of police was trying to hold back the unruly gathering.

Center of the attraction was a tall, gangling youth about six-feet-three—with an odd-shaped head that protruded out from the center of the throng. I couldn't figure out what the blazes he was at first—some movie star, a man from a spaceship, or some football player just signed by the Bisons. One thing I suspected, though: My own alleged football player would be somewhere in that cluster of pushing humanity. Finding him now was going to be extremely difficult and I repeated my favorite words again.

"Oh, well," I said, finally, and resigned myself to waiting until the crowd thinned out to look for him.

Then lieutenant of Police Al Snyder, whom I have known for several years, forced his way through the horde and confronted me with an angry scowl.

"*You!*" he muttered. "Get him out of here before I arrest you for—for obstructing traffic or something."

I was puzzled. "Get whom out of where?"

"As if you didn't know!" he belted. "Don't tell me this ain't a publicity stunt." He pointed an angry finger at the youth who was the cynosure of all eyes and hollered. "*Him!* I mean him! Now get him out of here before I run both of you in."

I began to protest, "What have I got to do with—" Then it struck me. "Don't tell me he's my new football player?"

Snyder's bull-like face was beet-red with wrath as he nodded sullen affirmation. "He says he's lookin' for you."

"What!" I ejaculated. You could



have knocked me over with a crow-bar.

At last the Yellowjackets had something that would draw a crowd! If Hogan were there, I probably would have planted a nice, juicy kiss on his ugly puss. But what? Who? Why? Why was this crowd so enthused over my new football player. The prospect couldn't be some sensational All-American, because, then, Hogan would have had, at least, mentioned his name. Hogan would have been only too happy to brag about it in his costly telegrams.

"Take me to him!" I ordered Snyder. "I want to shake his hand." Snyder sneered. "Maybe hands you mean."

The remark was utterly meaningless to me as the lieutenant, and another beefy representative of the law, dragged me through the gaping crowd.

Then, when I reached the new player, the meaning of Snyder's words struck me like a blow from a sledge hammer. Please don't phone for the wagon and don't shove me in a padded cell—but *the guy had four arms!*

**I** WAS SO dazed I don't even remember introducing myself. But, in a couple of seconds, Snyder and his minions of the law were shoving and pulling us through the crowd to the place he knew my car would be parked. The press had gotten hold of the news by that time and flash bulbs were popping all over the place—so much so they almost blinded me.

"Oh, well," I was thinking to myself. Hogan probably was on another bender when he received my telegram and got my instructions all fouled up. I wanted a football player as an attraction. He probably thought I meant any kind of an attraction—a freak, even. Anything to bring the public through the turnstiles.

But this was the most publicity the Yellowjackets had ever gotten in their whole history, so I was only a trifle sore at Hogan. I decided to hire this

kid—even if it had to be only a water boy. Surely, a guy with four hands could tote water, at least. Since the Yellowjackets, as they stood, were absolutely zero as a drawing card, anybody or anything that could attract as many as, say, ten paying customers was a decided asset to the club.

But, as we were shoved through the open-mouthed and bug-eyed throng, I kept assuring myself that I'd wake up soon and have my wife, Rita, yelling at me to stop screaming in my sleep.

I didn't wake up, though; it was no horrible nightmare. But I was driving away from the pursuing crowd in my jalopy with the four-armed boy by my side before I regained my senses.

Then I decided to take the stranger out into the country and find him a room at some isolated hostelry. This was a variation of my usual procedure with new players. My custom was to take a new player home and introduce him to the missus and the house full of kids. The object was, of course, to show them my environment was remote from the luxury they might envision all pro-club owners dwelling in. I wanted to show them that I couldn't pay salaries that could be termed fabulous by any stretch of the imagination.

But I didn't want to take the guy home. Frankly, I was afraid the kids might be scared out of a couple of years' growth or throw a couple of convulsions if they saw this character with his four—count 'em—four long, dangling arms.

"What do you do, son?" I asked, sympathetically.

"Do?" he asked. I was surprised to learn he had a well-modulated, almost cultured voice.

"Yes, do," I said. "Eat fire? Or maybe you're tattooed all over."

"I don't understand," he said; "I thought I was hired to play football."

"So you *are* a football player?"

"Of course."

"Where'd you play?"

"In high school."

"College, too?" I inquired, hoping against hope.

"No," he said, a little sadly, I thought. "Pa wouldn't let me leave home—kept me working on the farm."

What a farm hand—or should it be hands?—he'd be, I mused to myself. With four hands going at once, he should be able to do twice as much work, at least, as the average farmer. Maybe plow and hoe at one time or whatever they do on farms.

"What changed his mind? You're away from home now."

"Pa died last month; that's why I left. Don't have anybody left back there now."

Then I realized I didn't even know his name. "What do they call you?" I asked.

"Name's George," he said. "George Anderson. People call me 'Antie', though, 'cause I look like an ant."

He said it as calmly as somebody else might have said, "They call me Clark because I look like Gable."

And the poor kid did look something like an ant, especially with those arms. He looked like one of those dressed-up bugs you see in cartoons in the movies, or in some kid's funny book. His head had a strange look, too—a dome-like head with sturdy jaws, the latter something like mandibles on an ant. When you looked at him, you found yourself wondering where the feelers were.

**T**HE NEXT day, photographers spent nearly an hour taking pictures of my new football protege, from all angles. Reporters deluged him with questions. All the time I was basking in the joy of so much publicity. I felt more than a trifle elated because there were more reporters and photographers on hand than I had ever seen in all the annals of the Yellowjacket stadium.

The kid answered all questions calmly and straight-forwardly.

One goofy reporter had the gall to

ask him: "Are you an ant or a human being?"

The kid patiently explained that he was a human being, because if he were an ant his skeleton—or something—would be on the outside of him forming a shell, or something.

To another query on how he got to look that way, the kid said: "Pa could never explain it fully. The only way, maybe, he could account for it was that Ma was reading some science fiction about ants the size of human beings right before I was born."

"I guess I'm something like a two-headed calf," he told the reporters.

What I saw and admired about the kid was that he certainly wasn't downhearted about his physical appearance, and was man enough to stand up under their silly questions. I found myself pitying the kid and finally shooed the reporters and the photographers out of the stadium.

"I have to have some secret practice with Antie here," I explained.

But, honestly, I had no hopes for him as a football star. A freak, that would start the turnstiles clicking, maybe—but never a grid performer.

I can see him yet as he stood there for his first practice session with the Yellowjackets. We found a pair of shoes and a pair of pants to fit him. Of course, we had no jerseys with four sleeves, so he had to use his own tee-shirt. Luckily, the sun was shining and the air wasn't too crisp. So he didn't catch cold.

We were standing on maybe about the fifty-yard line, close to the sidelines when I asked Antie what he could do with a football.

He walked over and picked up a pigskin from a pile of practice balls with what I guess was his upper right hand and said, "Look at the cross-piece on the goal posts."

I looked.

He reared back, with the ball

grasped tightly in his big hand—or should I say claw or whatever it is insects have for hands? The next thing I know the ball is shooting through the air on a slight arc. It hits the cross piece dead in the center.

“Do it again,” I said.

He grabbed another ball—this time in what I guess you would call his upper left hand.

“I’m ambidextrous,” he explained, modestly. “Can use any of my hands. Watch.”

I watched.

The same arc; the same *ker-plunk* as the pigskin bounced off the exact center of the crosspiece.

The whole Yellowjacket team was grouped around us. It’s not every day you see a guy with four arms; and it’s not every day you see a guy perform magic with a pigskin like that.

But there was more to come.

Antie said to me, “Tell any four of those—those gentlemen—to go out on the field and stand anywhere—far apart, preferably.”

**I** DID AS he instructed. I stationed one player on the thirty-yard stripe near the one sideline; one on the twenty marker on the other sideline; one in the middle of the ten-yard line, and another behind the goal post in the end zone.

Antie calmly sauntered over to the pile of balls. While we watched, gaping, I know, he lifted a ball up in each of his four hands. Total four pigskins.

“Now watch.”

There was a flurry of arms. *Zoom! Zoom! Zoom!* Four footballs were flying through the crisp October atmosphere at the same time; each one of them hit its intended receiver square on the chest. Being Yellowjackets, three of the players were so surprised the balls popped out of their arm. Only Spiker Kelly, my left end, who was in the end zone, held onto his. But Kelly was my best pass catcher (and I use the term loosely).

“Touchdown!” Kelly roared, triumphantly. Nothing could startle Kelly—except maybe making a real touchdown in a real game. You see, before the advent of Antie we had no pass-chucker.

As for myself, I was nearly delirious with joy. I almost swallowed my nickel stogie as I danced around in glee and delight.

“Am I acceptable, sir?” Antie asked, politely.

“Acceptable? Acceptable?” I almost sang the word. “Acceptable? Why, kid, you’re in! *In*—do you hear? You’re in.”

I was so happy I thought, for maybe a couple of seconds, that perhaps I *would* send a bonus to Hogan. I quickly discarded the idea; Hogan would probably only spend it on booze, I decided.

“Do I get a uniform, sir?” Antie asked, glancing down at his thin tee-shirt.

“Do you get a uniform? Do you get a uniform?” I chanted, happily. “I’ll say you get a uniform. I’ll order it right now.”



Ordering the uniform, however, had its difficulties. When I called Mose, my outfitter, the conversation went something like this:

Me: “I want two jerseys, the usual colors, and a parka, all with four arms—I mean four sleeves.”

Mose: “*What!* You know, Art, I thought you said four sleeves.”

Me: “I did.”

Mose: “Did what?”

Me: “Say four sleeves.”

Mose: “Now lissen, Art. I know runnin’ *that* team’s a strain. But did you say *four* sleeves?”

Me: “Yes. Four sleeves.”

Mose: “Take it easy, Art. I’ll call a doctor. Where are you phoning from? Just, relax, Art. Everything will come out all right.”

For once in my life, though, I was

too overjoyed to become peeved and after about fifteen minutes of conversation I was able to convince Mose that I *did* want equipment with four sleeves. But I had to put all four of my assistants on the phone, too, before I could persuade him.

**T**HE NEWS of my attraction, as they say, was noised abroad. That Sunday, for the first time in many years, the Yellowjackets had something that resembled a sell-out crowd.

I kept Antie under wraps, as they say, during the pre-game warm-up. I let him fling no passes, because I wanted to take the Philadelphia Vultures—our opponents—by surprise. But I permitted him to catch a few practice punts, just so the crowd could get the benefit of seeing his four arms in action all at one time. And watching him wiggle all those four arms during limbering-up calisthenics was almost worth the price of admission alone.

The Vultures won the toss and elected to receive. This kept Antie on the bench at the start of the contest because I had decided to use him strictly on the offensive platoon as a passer.

Joe Ostrowski, the center, kicked off for the Yellowjackets. There was nothing remarkable about the boot. It was a wobbly kick that went down to the Vultures' twenty, where Iron Man Dietz nestled it to the front of his blue-and-white jersey.

Dietz came down the field to about the forty-nine, before Al Sabol—the Yellowjackets' defensive left half—brought him down from behind.

The Vultures had a right half-back named Placek who was giving Slingshot Sammy Baugh a run for his money in the race for top honors in the passing statistics. Placek went to work right away. The first play he chucked a short pass over the line to Dougherty, the Vultures' left end. It was good for a first down.

The next play was another short

pass. This time to Atkins, the Vultures' right end. Good for another first down.

It looked very much as if the Vultures were going to chalk up a touchdown before the contest was **very** old.

Beside me on the bench, Antie stirred. "I don't like to praise myself, sir," he told me, calmly. "But I'm pretty good on pass defense; my four arms, you see."

I sent him in.

There was almost mass hysteria when Antie raced out on the field. The spectators rose as one man for a better look; special police had a tough time keeping the fans from pouring down on the field.

The Vultures attempted another pass with Placek still on the tossing end. This was just Antie's meat; he drifted over in front of the intended receiver and snagged the pigskin with his upper left arm. Then he started down the field as the stands rocked with a gigantic roar.

Antie ran with an awkward deceptive stride, straight ahead—like an ant in a hurry to get back to his hill, when a sudden Summer shower overtakes it. There was no bringing him down from the front because he had three—count 'em—three arms available in which to deliver a straight-arm.

Skvar, the Vultures' left tackle brought him down from behind with a bone-jarring tackle on the ten when Jakey Deegan, the Yellowjackets' right guard, missed a down-the-field block.

**T**HE NEXT play Antie threw his first pass in pro league competition. And it made history.

The maneuver was from a split-T formation with Antie taking the ball from the center. Then, his long arms

moving like pistons, Antie faked a series of hand-offs to other Yellow-jacket backs. Then he faded back, the ball in his upper right hand. Some Vulture linemen broke through and began to chase him backward. At almost the last second, Antie shifted the ball from his upper right hand to his upper left hand and heaved the ball to Spiker Kelly, who was standing alone in the end zone.

The roar from the Yellowjackets' stands was deafening. The fans were still yelling when Antie threw another forward to Spiker Kelly for the extra point and the Yellowjackets led, 7-0. It was the first time the Yellowjackets had been ahead of the opposition all season.

The Vultures were a surprised ball-club. But, you got to hand it to them, they came fighting back—especially Placek. He caught Ostrowski's kick-off on the ten and came weaving down the field behind good interference. Dodging and bobbing, he got to the fifty where Antie waited for him.

Now Placek was the kind of a broken-field runner who would offer you his foot to grab and laugh at you when he pulled it away, and you missed and went sprawling to the turf. He bore down on Antie like a two-hundred-pound express train and pretended he was going to run right over him. At the last instant, he veered, sharply, to Antie's right.

Then came the first tackle Antie ever made in the pro leagues.

Antie hit Placek high and low at the same time. His lower arms wrapped around Placek's knees while his upper arms grabbed at Placek's shoulders. It was like an octopus entangling his prey; Placek was so startled the ball bounced out of his arms. After all, *he* only had two.

Antie's lower left arm reached out and snuggled the ball to his yellow jersey. Once again, the Yellowjackets' fans went wild. Antie had recovered a fumble; he was sure a crowd-pleaser.

The Yellowjackets lined up on the

ball, this time in single wing to the left. Antie took a direct pass from center and started running backward in his awkward stride.

Back, back, he raced with three Vultures in pursuit. Then he saw what he wanted. Spiker Kelly had out-smarted Fleming, the Vultures' safety man, and was a stride or two in front of him.

Antie chucked the ball. It was like dropping a letter in a slot. Kelly caught the ball over his left shoulder without breaking his stride. He outraced Fleming to paydirt. This time to break the monotony, I sent in Clooney—who did our place-kicking—to attempt the point after touch-down conversion.

The Yellowjackets, fired and keyed up like they never were before, held like a stone wall while Clooney's foot swung in a pendulum-like motion and sent the ball into the air to split the uprights. That made it 14-0 in our favor.

To say the Vultures became a little demoralized was to put it mildly. With Antie throwing passes all over the lot—to other ends as well as Kelly, and to some of his backfield mates—the Yellowjackets poured it on and came out on top by a 49-0 score.

**A**NTIE WAS swamped by admirers who wanted his autograph after the game. He was a picture of modesty as he signed programs, stubs of tickets and pieces of paper. He must have signed thousands. Of course, it was easier for him than it would have been for anybody else; he was signing the autographs with all four hands!

I sensed I'd have trouble about Antie before the next game. I did. Bright and early Monday morning, I got a wire to appear down in New York before Lew Whalen, president of the league. The meeting was Tuesday afternoon. I grabbed my bag and headed for the metropolis by train. I would have liked, very much, to take

Antie along but I was afraid of the crowds.



Joe Jackson, owner of the Windy City Bruins, our next opponents, and Lawrence Hobbs, pilot of the Cod City Bisons, were in the office when I arrived.

Whalen, whom I had the good fortune to know ever since we played together on the old Pottsville Maroons back in the Twenties, greeted me in his usual friendly fashion.

"Art," he said, "I hated to bring you down here to hear this. But these here—ah—uh—gentlemen have a protest. They think it's unfair for you to use somebody with four arms; they claim it's not legal."

"Oh, no!" I shouted. I turned on Jackson and Hobbs. "Show me a place in the rule-book where it says how many arms a player can have. Show me! Show me! I want to be shown; I'm from Missouri."

Hobbs, who was a huge fat guy with a black mustache, began to try to soft soap me in his oily voice. "But, Mr. Haskins," he began, with what was intended to be a soothing tone, "can't you see it is unfair to use that—well—I suppose you may call him a man, with reservations, of course? We like to play the game fair—let every team have an equal opportunity."

"Cut out the soft stuff, Hobbs," I told him. "You're not running things. It's not equal opportunity you're worried about; it's that nice, big crowd the Yellowjackets had yesterday. You're afraid maybe my new star will draw away some of your fans. Don't hand me that stuff about fair play."

"Then you intend to use him?" Jackson cut in. He was a little wizened character with a face that was all dried up like a prune. "Against us? On Sunday?"

"Sure do, Jackson," I told him. "Try and stop me."

At that juncture, Lew Whalen was called out of the room. Jackson took full advantage of the lull to warn me. "Send that freak out on the field on Sunday and he goes back off—on a stretcher!"

In spite of myself, I winced a little. The Bruins—big, tough, fast—had the roughest team in the circuit—next to the Cod City Bisons, of course. I began to fear for Antie. After all, even if the guy did have four arms, he was built somewhat frail in comparison with the ponderous giants that represented the Windy City Bruins.

**I**T WAS almost before game-time the following Sunday when Spiker Kelly came to me and informed me that he had learned—from a reporter friend of his, I believe—that the Bruins were out, definitely, to "get" Antie.

I thought it was only fair to warn the rookie, so I told him all about it. "Lissen, kid," I said. "If you don't want to play, it's all right with me. If you want to ride the bench and take things easy, it's okay. The Yellowjackets are used to losing. Only—" I hesitated. I wanted to say. "Only we won last week and that victory sure tasted sweet—like honey and sugar and saccharin all rolled up into one big ball."

"I'll play, Mr. Haskins," Antie said. There was a certain resoluteness in his voice. "I'll play all right; I'm not afraid."

"Who's the guy who's gonna do the business?" I asked Kelly. "You hear?"

"Yeh!" Kelly said. "Bruiser Fletcher."

Bruiser Fletcher was a full-back, a powerful human battering-ram who was a heavyweight boxer as well as a professional football player.

"That ape!" I groaned; "if I was only twenty years younger."

"Don't worry, Mr. Haskins," Antie said. "I might surprise him. The only thing that worries me is maybe

he'll pick a fight during the game. If I fight back, we'll both be tossed out of the game on our ears; maybe that's what the Bruins want."

"Yeh!" I said, glumly. I lacked the heart to tell him that if Bruiser Fletcher ever clouted him one, Antie'd be carried off the field—on a stretcher, just like Jackson warned.

"Which is Fletcher?" Antie asked.

I pointed out to where Fletcher was practicing catching punts. "There. Number 51."

Antie rolled all four of his hands into fists. He walked toward Fletcher with a resolute stride. "Well, here goes!" he said.

I followed after, anxious to stop whatever devilment he had in mind, because Bruiser Fletcher was no character to fool around with.

But I was too late. Antie waited until Fletcher came running down the field, arms extended to catch a high punt. Then, just as Fletcher passed, Antie stuck out his foot and Fletcher went tumbling seat over tincups. Bruiser was up instantly. His battered, ugly face was twisted into a sneer.

"You!" Bruiser snarled and came rushing at Antie, both fists swinging.

But Bruiser had made the greatest mistake of his career. He had only two fists to swing; Antie had four.

**A**NTIE FOUGHT like a cagey boxer. First, he'd clinch with his lower arms and flail away at Bruiser's face with his upper fists. Then he'd tie up Bruiser's arms with his upper arms and use his lower fists to batter away at Bruiser's body. When Bruiser tired, Antie smashed at him with all four fists at the same time. Needless to say, Bruiser was soon stretched out on the grass, begging for mercy.

Then Antie sauntered over to the other Bruins. "Anybody else got any ideas?" he challenged.

There were a few tight lips and angry white faces among the Bruins' contingent, but none of them accept-

ed the challenge. To put it mildly, they looked a little befuddled—and a little scared.

But Antie wasn't through with them. He caught the opening kick-off and went charging down the field. Using his three free fists—more like an enraged pugilist than a straight-arming grid-warrior—he plowed his way through the whole Bruin team for eighty yards and a touchdown. He did it mostly alone, although his team-mates did throw a few nice blocks. Thus, the game was only seconds old when the Yellowjackets went ahead, 6-0. They were still ahead, 38-0, when the game was over. Antie threw five touchdown passes. Miracle of miracles—the Yellowjackets had won two in a row!

With Antie in there pitching passes and running when the occasion warranted it, the Yellowjackets stacked up a victory streak of seven in a row. The club—or maybe I should say Antie—was the sensation of the sports world. Long lines of fans fought to get into the stadiums where we played. It was such a reversal of our dismal beginning at the start of the season.

Finally, it was an afternoon in December and our opponents were our City rivals, the Cod City Bisons. Hobbs and the rest of the Bison outfit hated us like sin now. They were sore because we were out-drawing them, and the shekels that formerly poured out of the fans' pockets into the coffers of the Bruins were now being diverted to the Yellowjackets. It was the final contest of the regular season and the winner would travel out to Sunny California to meet the Los Angeles Lambs for the pro championship.

The day was far from sunny in Cod City, though. The snow was two inches deep and the wind was blowing like a hurricane when the rival captains met in the center of the

field for the toss of the coin that would open the fray.

It was no afternoon for a passing attack and Antie sat on the bench, bundled up to his ears in a couple of blankets as a protection against the fierce wind and the falling snow flakes, which were about the size of quarters. I kept thinking to myself as I looked at him that ants do their chores in the bright Summer sunshine and are never abroad when the cold Winter comes.

The Bisons won the toss and chose to receive. The howling wind caught Ostrowski's kick-off boot and the ball carried only to the Bison's forty-five: where Clooney, the Bisons' elephant-like two hundred and forty-five pound tackle, fell on it.

The Bisons, ponderous and powerful, were equipped by nature to do their best on a slippery field and began to grind out yardage slowly but steadily on the white-blanketed grid-iron.

Just a few yards at a time, the bone-crushing Bisons shoved the ball down the snowy turf. Lugging the oval were Garkus and Somers, both hefty monsters, who usually alternated at the fullback slot. For variation, they brought back Clooney, the Giant tackle, out of the line and sent him smashing into the smaller and lighter Yellowjackets' forward wall whenever only a yard or two was needed.

Down they moved, the powerful Bisons. There was no trickery, no deception in their maneuvers—nothing but sheer power.

**A**NTIE WAS in the game, now, and playing with a savage desperation. But it was no use; the Bisons got a first down inside the ten-yard line and kept going forward. With only two yards to go to pay-dirt, Clooney took the ball and went bowling his way across the goal line with three Yellowjackets, including Antie, clinging to his back.

The Bisons failed to click on the

extra point, though. Dexter, their quarterback, slipped and fell before he could make the hand-off to Clooney. It was a lucky break for our side. But we were still on the short end of a 6-0 count.

The weather was so rough that even the Bisons bogged down after that first score and the first half settled down to a grueling, sliding, slippery melee, mostly in the midfield. The wind was howling louder and the snow flakes grew in size until they were as big as fifty cent pieces.

The end of the first half came with the score still 6-0 in favor of the Bisons and it looked like it would stay that way all day—unless the Bisons snapped out of what seemed to be a temporary slump and decided to really battle the wind and the snow for another touchdown.

Then the weather changed. We were in the dressing room between halves when one of the water-boys came in, almost breathless. "The snow's startin' to stop!" he yelled. "And the wind's dyin' down."

The tired, dirty and battered Yellowjackets gave a few mild whoops of joy.

"Good! Good!" Kelly muttered through battered and bloody lips. "Maybe Antie can throw passes now; just fling 'em at me, boy, and we'll show those muggs yet."

I looked at Antie. He was huddled in a heap, his four arms wrapped tight around his body as he hugged himself for warmth. Then he extended his hands. They were blue and numb with cold. "Look at these," he said, laconically.

Both the wind and the snow had slackened down when the second half opened. But the weather was still plenty miserable. What surprised me most, though, was the large crowd that was still on hand to witness the remainder of the brawl. They were hardy souls, all right, but they were being treated to a well-contested ball-game. That's what kept them glued there.



THE LAST quarter was under way when the snow stopped falling entirely, and the sun came out like a pale wafer in the sky. I noticed that Antie seemed to thaw out a little when the sun's feeble rays hit him. Suddenly I had an inspiration.

"Build a fire!" I ordered one of the assistant managers. "And, Antie, you warm your hands on it."

I stalled for time and called for two times-out until the assistant manager got some wood from some packing cases in the dressing room and built the fire I ordered. There was happiness on Antie's face as he extended his four hands over the blaze for warmth.

The Yellowjackets' supporters shouted with joy when they saw what he was doing. Everyone—the fans, the Yellowjackets, the Bisons—knew what I had in mind. One pass for glory with Antie on the heaving end.

Finally, while the spectators whooped with glee, I sent Antie in. On the first play, he went back to pass. But the Bisons' line, desperate now, came charging through and pinned him to the earth. Antie was roughed up plenty on the tackle and came up limping. The men in white saw the foul and a fifteen-yard penalty was walked off against the Bisons.

The Yellowjackets went back into a huddle and came out of it. Ostrowski, the center, hunched over the ball. It was Antie back again; another pass.

But the Bison forward wall ripped in before the ball was even snapped. Antie was buried under an avalanche of brown-colored jerseys. This time he didn't get up and lay sprawled out in the snow. I went skidding out on the icy field with Doc Jones, the trainer, by my side.

We were lifting the injured Antie to his feet when I became aware of a strange noise—a savage growl that sounded like a pack of wild animals on the loose. Then I saw what it was. The Yellowjacket fans had stormed

out of their seats and were charging for the field. The special police who tried to stop them were brushed aside like corks.

Antie had long been the darling of the spectators; now, the fans were filled with fury because he had been deliberately injured. It appeared as though the Bison players were about to be lynched, and they looked more than a little frightened as they grouped together for protection.

For some reason or other, I always think of some great hero in history when I remember how Antie snapped back to consciousness and confronted the angry crowd. He raised his upper right hand like an Indian saying how and asked for silence.

"Don't harm them," he said, "let them go. We'll beat them. Don't stop the game, we want to win." Then he turned to the no-docile Bisons. "Let's play football—and *only* football!"

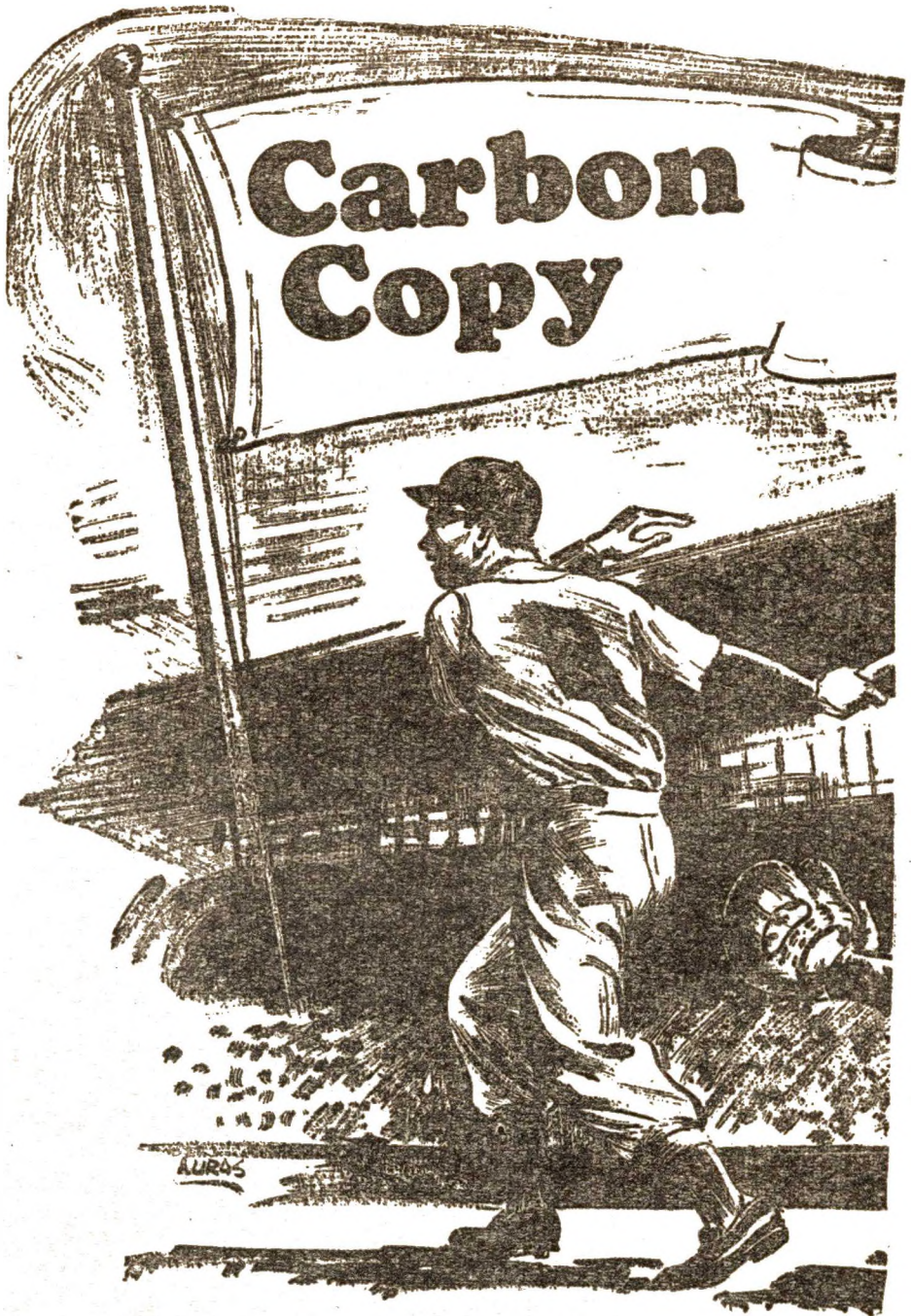
The fifteen yard penalty for unnecessary roughness that was imposed on the Bisons for their last attack on Antie shoved them back to their own fifteen-yard line.

The whistle blew to resume play and Ostrowski leaned over the ball once more. Signals were called. The pigskin was snapped back to Antie. He began to fade for a pass, trying desperately to locate Kelly who was screened off by at least four Bison defenders.

THEN ANTIE saw the opening. In his awkward stride, he began to slither and slide toward the goal line. Five yards. Ten yards. A whole host of brown-jersied players rushed to stop him. But he was in touchdown-land before he was brought down by a vicious but legal tackle. That made it 6-6 and the delighted roar from the Yellowjacket fans rent the cold December air.

The all important extra point. There was a death-like stillness as Ostrowski bent over the ball. The

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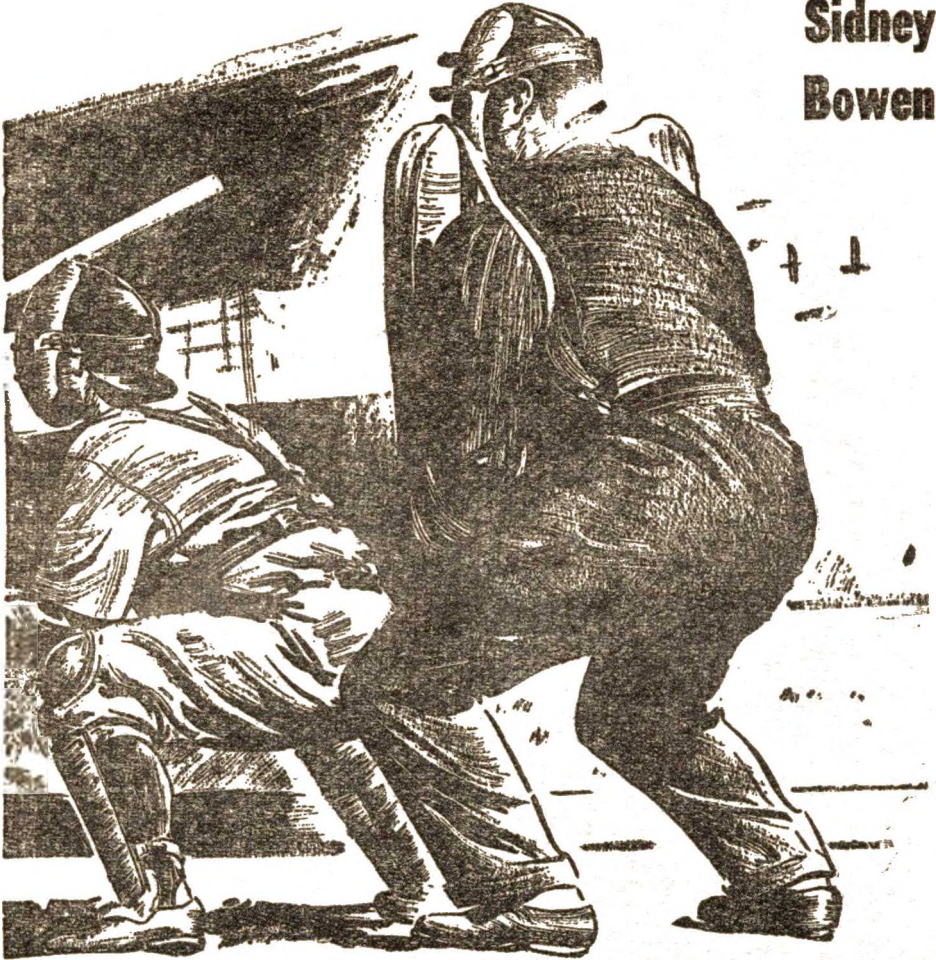


**“So you think I’m lucky to be Big Jim’s son, think I’m a guy with all the rough spots smoothed out for him, and the welcome mat rolled under his feet. Well, you’re wrong—it’s not easy for me, and there’s not one of you lugs, who had to fight your way up, that I don’t envy. No matter what happened, it was your own name you were trying to make—me, I haven’t any name—I’m just ‘Big Jim’s son!’”**

# Feature Novel

## of a Shackled Ballhawk

By Robert  
Sidney  
Bowen



**A** SINGLE voice yelled out, "Come on-n-n, Johnny!" but instantly the entire Haverford student body took it up and rolled it down in waves of sound onto the playing-field. Over on the third-base

side of the diamond, a host of State's loyal sons and daughters made rolling sound, too—begging and pleading with their man on the mound to end it in a blaze of perfection.

It was the last day of Commencement Week at Haverford and this game between bitter rivals, long down through the years of college sport, the grand finale of a gala seven days. Right down to the wire it had come,

with State leading all the way by a single run tallied in the opening inning. The do-or-die effort for Haverford, with two outs already hung up on the scoreboard. A pinch-hitter had worked a walk for himself so there was still hope. Great hope because moving in there to the plate was Johnny Banks.

Johnny Banks, son of Big Jim Banks one of the greatest names ever recorded in the pages of baseball history. Johnny could do it. He had done it before. And he was Big Jim's son. A boy become a man and walking pace for pace in his illustrious father's footsteps. Come on-n-n, Johnny!

On the spur of inspiration the Haverford coach called Banks back from the plate and walked half way out to meet him. He placed an assuring hand on the youth's shoulder and smiled into his eyes. "Just to ask a favor, Johnny," he said. "Poke a good one for us. Poke one the way Big Jim poked one so many times."

The youth nodded, but a tightness came to the corner of his eyes and to his mouth. "Sure," he said. "Like Big Jim would do it."

He turned and walked into the batter's box and a quivering hush settled down over the stands. The State pitcher looked him over and took his signal, and pitched. It was wide and half the stands let out a whoop. The pitcher threw another one. It was a taking strike and the other half of the stands let out a whoop. The third pitch came in, a beautiful hook aimed to cut the outside corner. Banks set himself and swung viciously.

The crack of the bat was all anybody needed. The rest was more or less automatic. The ball sailed high and deep, and finally down out of sight over the left field wall. Pandemonium broke loose as Banks circled the bases, and but for the field cops and some nice interference by his teammates, it is doubtful if he would have reached the dressingroom with a single stick of clothing on his back.

Once inside, the Haverford players made up for it in a hurry. They fairly mobbed the good-looking, husky hero of the day, and it was a rough and tumble battle before he could twist and lunge away to the comparative safety of the showers. When he finally came out, the place had quieted down some. It was over, the big festive week, and for some of them all of it was over. They had lugged their last book to classroom, played their last game for Haverford. Tomorrow they would go home; this time next year, who knew for sure where they would be, or what they would be doing.

ONE OF them was Johnny Banks, and as he sat in front of his locker there was sadness in him, and a great bubbling relief. Sad that he was leaving Haverford and the host of friends he had made, yet in a way greatly relieved. Tomorrow he would go home, too, but only to spend a few days with his parents before going on to New York for the job he had lined up.

"Well, I guess I don't have to ask you, do I, Johnny?"

Banks turned his head and looked up into the grinning face of Coach Jock Standers. "What, Coach?"

"Don't have to ask what's next for you," Standers said. "Big Jim's son? A chip off the old block, and a perfect carbon copy, if there ever was one? Follow right on through in Big Jim's footsteps. Right?"

Banks shook his head and the tightness came to his eyes and mouth again. "Wrong, Coach," he said. "I'm taking a newspaper job in New York."

Standers looked as though he'd been hit in the face with a dead fish. "Newspaper job?" he gasped. "Big Jim Banks' son? Why?"

The youth pulled on his shirt and started working at the buttons.

"Why?" he said and his voice was harsh. "Because I want to be *Johnny* Banks, newspaper reporter. That's why!"

The Haverford coach held the dead

fish slap expression on his face for a moment, and then took a breath and let the surprise and disappointment show through. "Well, if it's what you want, Johnny, it's what you want," he said slowly. "Always thought you'd go right on up to the top, like Big Jim did."

"You and the rest of the world," the youth said, and leaned over to tie his laces. "I'm going to be a newspaper reporter. A good columnist some day, I hope."

Standers stared down at him, wagged his head from side to side, and took another deep breath. "All the luck in the world, Johnny," he said, and walked away.

**B**IG JIM BANKS sat in his wheel chair like an eager boy waiting for his parents to say he could start opening his Christmas presents. Tall, and big-boned, he had been a right handsome Adonis in his time. As a matter of fact, age had not entirely removed the traces. It had put a thinness in his face, and withered away considerable of the flesh about his bones, but the impression was still unmistakably there.

Only the blanket over his knees hid the fact that Big Jim was not as other men of his age. It hid the thin, twisted left leg that had been ripped clear to the bone that day years and years ago. A day when at the very peak of his greatness Big Jim Banks had tried to block off the runner thundering home from third. He had succeeded, made the tag and clung to the ball, but at a terrible, frightful cost.

Flashing spikes had ripped his left leg to bleeding shreds. Cut the artery, and snipped the ligaments like lawn mower blades. They had carried Big Jim off the field on a stretcher, and never again since had the great catcher stood on his own two feet. The end of a great man's baseball life, but his deeds and his greatness were recorded in the book forever. Spin the pages and where you read Ruth, you read Jim Banks. Where you read

Cobb, you read Jim Banks. And where you read Wagner, and all the others, you would also read Jim Banks. One of the greatest, and still very much alive today in the hearts of the millions of lovers of the national game.

"What the devil's keeping him, Anne? You suppose he missed that train?"

Anne Banks put a hand on her husband's shoulder and pressed gently. "He would have wired, Jim. Be patient, dear. Goodness, it's only two minutes since we heard the train. Even a taxi couldn't get him here that quickly."

"Train's been gone ten minutes at least," the great man growled. Then he sighed and cup-overflowing joy glowed in his lean face. "My boy! Anne, he'll be every bit as good as I was. He'll be even better!"

A faint sad smile moved across Anne Banks' lips and went away. She nodded almost absently. "We'll be very proud of him, Jim," she said. "We are, now."

The great man didn't say anything, or bother to. The front door had opened and his son stood there framed in the opening.

Johnny Banks looked at his parents. At his father in the wheel chair, at his mother standing by his side, and a lump got stuck in his throat and made the backs of his eyeballs smart. He finally shut the door with his heel, dropped his two suitcases to the floor and came toward them. He hugged and kissed his mother, gripped his father's hand hard, and then stood back a step. "Take a look, folks! The college graduate, no less. A sheepskin to prove it!"

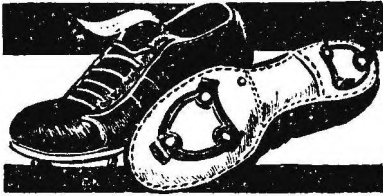
"A very handsome looking graduate too," Anne Banks said, and smiled through the tears.

"Put it there again, son," Big Jim Banks said, and reached out his bony hand. "They said on the radio it was the longest ball ever hit in college baseball. I'm proud of you, Johnny. Damn proud!"

"I guess it did go a piece," young Banks murmured and grinned at his mother. "Okay, Mom, I'm asking it. What's for dinner?"

His mother laughed and came over and kissed him again, and held him very tight for an instant. "Some things they can't change in college," she said. "Your favorites, of course. Everything. And, my stars, I better go get it out before it burns up."

It was no lie. Everything he'd specially liked since kid days was there on the table. He ate like a horse, two horses, and in between bites he answered the hundred and one questions his father asked about the State game. The great man beamed with pleasure and every so often there was a secretive twinkle in his eye that made the weight on Johnny's heart become just a little bit heavier.



**WHEN HE** and his father were back in the livingroom, and his mother in the kitchen with the dishes, it came out. Big Jim lighted his pipe, leaned back in his wheel chair, and grinned at his son. "Well, Johnny," he said, "I could have told you before, but I thought it best to wait until you'd graduated. Guess what?"

Parts of the weight fell off young Banks' heart and dropped into his stomach like lumps of lead. He smiled and looked mystified. "What, Dad?"

"The New York Bears, Johnny! My old club. You're reporting to them in Florida next Spring."

Young Banks tried to hold his smile and swallow at the same time. It resulted in grimace that caused his father to stiffen and frown. "You're not tickled silly? You didn't hear me? The Bears, next Spring! I've arranged it for you. No minor league club, or

anything like that. The Bears. My old club! The big jump, and you'll make it!"

Outside the June night was cloudless but inside the room thunder rumbled and things took on grotesque outlines and proportions. The rumble was in Johnny Banks' head, and the distorted vision was in his eyes. He licked his lips, and stared down at the floor. And presently he looked up at the baffled astonishment on his father's face. "Thanks, Dad," he said humbly. "That was pretty wonderful of you, but I hadn't figured on playing ball after college."

"Hadn't *what*?"

"Dad, I wouldn't want to disappoint you for the world, but I guess baseball doesn't mean as much to me as it did to you. I majored in journalism at college, and that's what I want. The newspaper business. The father of a friend of mine at college owns a New York daily. There's an opening there for me. Sure, at the bottom, but it's a break. A great chance. I want a whirl at it, anyway. I really do, Dad."

The great man stared wide-eyed. He suddenly blinked and shook his head to rid himself of some upside-down illusion. "You?" he gasped. "Big Jim Banks' son? Every bit as good as I was at your age? You want to go work for some damn newspaper?"

"Yes, Dad. I do. I know it's hard for you to see, but there it is. I like baseball, sure. I had a lot of fun playing it in college. But it's not what I want for my life's work."

"You're crazy!" the great man cried. "You're out of your head. My Lord, a million kids would give their eyeteeth to be reporting to the Bears next Spring! And you want to report on a newspaper? When I've arranged it all? Smoothed the way for you, and made it as easy as any rookie ever had it? Dammit, you're Big Jim's son!"

"I guess that's the reason, Dad," the youth said grimly.

"The reason? What the hell are you talking about?"

He tried to keep it down but it wouldn't stay. It all flowed up to his tongue and off. "I'll tell you what it's about! I want to get into something where I'll be plain *Johnny Banks!* In college I was Big Jim's son. Hit one like Big Jim, they'd tell me. Do this and do that the way *he* used to. Son of one of the greatest. That's you, boy! Get out there and show us. Show us like *he* used to. That's the way it was, and that's the way it would be with the Bears, or any of the clubs. Big Jim's son. You were the idol, and you still are. And me? Me, I'd be the carbon copy with every eye watching to see if I was going to trip and fall on my face. Good grief, a week of it and I'd run out and cut my throat!"

**T**HE GREAT man didn't say anything. His lean face had paled, and his hand trembled as he relighted his dead pipe. He blew out the match carefully, and watched as he dropped it in the ash tray stand. Then he looked at his son. "A helping hand's no good? You don't think a father should do everything he can for his son? It isn't good to be the son of a man who's made a name in a profession? It's bad? For you baseball would be bad? One of the greatest business enterprises of our time, no good for you? It couldn't give *you* anything?"

"And what did it give *you*?" the youth burst out before he could cut his tongue off.

Big Jim Banks sat very still for a moment with his eyes closed. When he opened them there was the hurt of the world in their depths, but there was also a warm light of great patience and tolerance.

"A great many things, Johnny," he said quietly. "A great happiness through the years. A great sense of satisfaction of a job well done. The house you were born in. Enough money to last your mother and I as long as we live. Enough money for your clothes, and your education, and your

car, and all the other things. Yes, it took my leg. Cut off my career right at its peak. But should I damn baseball the rest of my life? An accident that happened. Baseball's to blame? A sea captain going down with his ship curses the shipping business? A great scientist curses his profession because of the laboratory accident that injures him for life? Or any other greats who meet injury in their work? No, Johnny, you don't curse or damn something you've always loved and always will. You feel sorry for yourself, and you regret bitterly that the end of it has come; but you don't curse and grow to hate what has given you so much."

Big Jim stopped talking and a leaden silence hung in the room. Anne Banks had come to the kitchen door, and she stood there now motionless and silent. Johnny wanted to speak. He wanted to say he was sorry for the words that had slipped off his lips. He wanted to assure them that he understood and was humbly grateful for all the advantages baseball had given him through his father's greatness. And he wanted desperately to make them understand how it was to stand ever in the shadow of greatness. How almost self-annihilating it would be to go on through life forever striving to keep pace in the shadow of an illustrious memory. It wasn't fair, or right. He had his own life, with all its own individual hopes and fears that would come and go. He wanted to tell them all that and more, but his tongue was dry and stiff and would not give off a single word.

"I have tried to help you, Johnny," his father spoke again, "because I wanted to, because I could, and because I felt it my duty as well. But don't misunderstand me for a minute. I would never want, nor try, to govern a single day of your grown up life against your wishes. I've dreamed for years of seeing you in the uniform of my old club, but everybody has dreams that may not come

true. You're a man now, and as such entitled to all the privileges of a man. The greatest of which is to do with your life as you wish."

The once-great ball player paused to clear his throat, but continued before Johnny could utter a sound. "That being my son will make it tough for you, is silly. Baseball's tough for *anybody* trying to make the grade. True, I can spare you some of the hard going, and speed things up for you, and why shouldn't I? Any father would. And don't tell me baseball isn't in your blood. I've seen it ever since you were this high. You're a natural ball player, and I thank the Lord for it. However, as I said, your life is your own. I won't insist, Johnny; I will only ask that you think it over very carefully. Weigh all sides of it before you make your final decision. And now I think I'll go lie down for a bit. It's been quite a day."

**T**HE YOUTH got quickly to his feet to help by pushing the wheel chair, but not quickly enough. Big Jim rolled it himself right by him and through the door of the downstairs bedroom his wife held open. She went inside with him and closed the door. The youth stood there a moment with his hands still half outstretched to help. He let them fall to his sides, sat down in the chair again and rested his forehead on his laced fingers. "He wants your happiness most of all, Johnny. We both do. He only wants to help. To do something for you, that's all."

His mother was standing beside the chair, her gentle hand stroking his hair. He looked up and groaned. "It was the same as hitting him, Mom. I said a rotten thing. I didn't mean it. I appreciate everything, I really do! But it's just that I want to be somebody all on my own. I don't want it handed to me just because I'm Dad's son. Don't you see?"

She leaned over and kissed him.

"I see it, dear," she said softly. "I see your father's side, too. That's why my heart aches for both of you."

## 2



**T**HE FLORIDA sun flooded Flamingo Park with its golden warmth, and a shirt-sleeve crowd of some eight thousand watched and waited while the visiting Cleveland Indians and the New York Bears went through their pre-game routine. Out in center field Johnny Banks shagged fungo flies; got them all, and each time rifled the ball into the hitter.

Four weeks of Spring training had gone by. Another two and the Bears would start north for the opening of the regular scheduled season. A dozen or more rookies had come up and had their try, flopped, and gone their respective ways. Johnny Banks was still with the squad; playing every day, and unquestionably the loneliest, most unhappy man in the Bear fold.

It had gone along just as he had dreaded it would go along. Every night now for the last couple of weeks he had bitterly cursed himself for having finally given in to his father's persuasive arguments. Yet even as he cursed he knew in his heart he would act no different were he given a second chance. He would rather die than break his father's heart, and he had realized that such might happen if he kicked aside all that Big Jim Banks had worked for and dreamed about since the day of his son's birth.

So in the end he had given in, left his father with the joyful and thankful impression that the boy had finally come to his senses and realized how wide open his future lay before him, and reported at the Bears' camp. Big Jim Banks' son with the club! The publicity department jumped on it with both feet; not that the sports writers needed any particular amount of stirring up. Figuratively speaking the gates were flung open, the red carpet



rolled out, and Big Jim's son escorted through to the blare of trumpets.

Just as it had been in college, but on a much grander scale. Big Jim's son, never Johnny Banks. A load that was a ton weight around your neck. The glad hand here, the word of praise there. Never knowing whether it was sincerely meant for you, or for the great man you symbolized in somebody's mind. You could try hard, or you could coast. It didn't seem to matter much. You were Big Jim's son, you couldn't miss. The path was strewn with flowers, and all the doors flung wide. You couldn't fall on your face, you didn't dare. So you kept at it, and you were lonely and heart-sick for a true goal of your own.

But not always lonely. Two people down here were his friends. Dan Taylor, who had once played with Big Jim and was now veteran third base coach of the Bears, and Taylor's motherless daughter, Irene. Two real people who offered their friendship for himself and not because of the great name he represented. They lived in one of the hotel beach cottages, and on several occasions Taylor had taken him home to eat some of his daughter's cooking, and later just sit around and relax, and talk about anything at all.

He was almost happy on those occasions, and deeply grateful. They at least stopped him from running out and cutting that throat of his, as he had mentioned in the first volcanic talk with his father. Irene, perhaps more than her father, had that life-sparing effect upon him. Pretty, though not beautiful, vivacious, though not bubbling all over the place, Irene Taylor was the kind of a girl who could discuss the infield fly rule with you or Beethoven's Fifth, and with equal ease. Best of all, she treated him as a rookie named Johnny Banks. She knew all about Jim Banks, who didn't? But she seemed honestly interested in him. Liked to talk and laugh with him. Even seemed to like to take a walk along the moonlight

flooded beach now and then when Dan Taylor was doing paper work, or over at another cottage for a conference with Manager Billy Hawk, and the other coaches. Two real honest friends. He often wished he could bring himself to pour out to them all that was inside of him. Perhaps between them they might have some kind of an answer that would help the futile ache, and lessen the load.



**A** LITTLE later as the P.A. system boomed out the day's batting orders, and the ground keepers performed their final stint before action, Dan Taylor came over to where he sat alone on the bench.

"A date for you tonight, Johnny," the veteran coach said. "Irene's cooking up a mess of fried chicken. Northern style she says. You're to come over and help us put it away."

"Me for fried chicken any style," the rookie said. Then added with a frown, "That makes three times this week, Dan. I don't want to wear out the welcome mat."

"You couldn't," the coach assured him. "Besides, I want to have a talk with you."

"Anything special?"

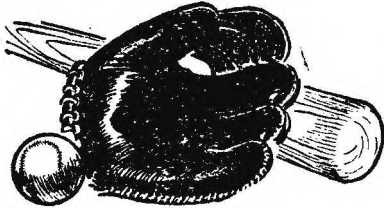
"Couple of things Big Jim probably never mentioned, because he never dreamed," Taylor said quietly. "Anyway, see you tonight. Now get out there and play us some ball. Watch Lemon's slider. It's a lulu."

The veteran coach walked away, and a little later Johnny Banks went out and played a full nine innings. He got two hits, and made a fine running catch up against the wall.

Irene Taylor's fried chicken was wonderful and Banks ate his share, plus his share of all the other nice

things she put on the table. All in all it was a meal equal to any his own mother had ever put out, and but for a certain something in the room never before there, he would have been as content as man at the end of day can be.

The certain something was a hint of strained tension in Taylor and Irene. Perhaps not exactly that. More like a profound pensiveness. He had sensed it five minutes after arriving and become conscious of it more and more. It seemed as though they shared a secret between them. A secret they might or might not tell him, it all depended. He caught them exchanging glances several times, and though he had no way on earth of knowing he was sure something concerning himself passed between them in those glances.



Nothing was said, however, until after the dishes were washed and dried and put away, and they were sitting in front of a small fire Taylor had lighted to hold back the night's chill, the Chamber of Commerce's claims to the contrary! "Why do you hate your father, Johnny?" the coach suddenly asked him.

Only quick reflexes and faster hands saved a cup of coffee from spilling onto the rug. The rookie stared dumbfounded. "What?" he gasped. "What did you just say, Dan?"

"I asked, why do you hate Big Jim?" Taylor told him.

Young Banks took a moment out, and shook his head like a floored fighter taking nine. "Me, hate Dad?" he said with an effort. "Are you kidding? He's the finest man I've ever known, or ever will. What on earth

gave you the idea I didn't like him?" "Then it's simply jealousy?" the third base coach asked.

The rookie looked at him hard and frowned. "Not jealousy, either," he said hotly. "Now, what *is* all this between you two? Tell me, please. You're the only two real friends I've got down here, so if there's something I should know I'm asking you to tell me."

"Right there, Johnny," Taylor said and pointed with his cigarette. "A lot of people down here would be your friends, if you'd let them."

The rookie laughed shortly and held up a finger. "I'll concede one," he said. "Johnson, who writes for the *Post*. Read his column today? He as much as said that if it wasn't for the name of Big Jim Banks I'd probably be training with Mobile about now! There's a man who can call a spade. No?"

**H**E LOOKED at Irene as he spoke the last. She didn't speak; she bent her head to look down at her clasped hands in her lap, and he saw her firm young breasts rise and fall in the action of a sigh.

"Maybe you're just dumb!" Taylor broke the silence sharply; "maybe you're just plain thick-headed!"

Young Banks looked at him and let the confusion go away and the anger to flow in. "Maybe I am, Dan. But it's a thing you just can't explain to people, and make them see it the way it *really* is. I tried to tell it to Dad, but it was no go. There just aren't the words to describe it, that's all."

"To describe what, Johnny?" the veteran coach asked gently. "Try it on me for a change. Just what is it that's holding you back?"

Banks shot him a look out of widened eyes. "Holding me *back*?" he cried. "You've got that one twisted. Nothing's holding me back. The chute-the-chutes have never been greased so well. Big Jim's boy. Remember?"

Taylor sighed and mashed out his cigarette in the tray. "For such a nice kid you're quite a coo-coo," he said. "But let it slide. Go ahead and tell me what it was you tried to tell Big Jim. What was it?"

He was tempted to shake his head and switch the topic of talk. He could talk all night, and they wouldn't be able to see it his way. Nobody could unless he'd once been in the same kind of boat. They'd look at him the way his father had last summer and winter. You like to play ball, don't you? Sure! And you can? I guess so. Well, what the hell, all I'm trying to do is help you to the top quicker! Is that bad? It's what you've had all your life. What you like to do, and can. So, what the hell?

What answers could you give? What could you say that wouldn't sound ridiculous to listening ears? With the ability in you, and the future all there on a silver platter for you, how could you tell anybody that you'd rather get something else the hard way on your own, and not have them think you were cracked right down the middle? He had seen that reaction in his father's eyes, and he would see it in theirs if he told them. Why bother to say it all over again? He was wearing a Bear uniform. Big Jim Banks was happy in his old age. A son's debt to his father was being paid off.

"Won't you tell us, Johnny? We're your friends. You've just admitted it."

**H**E LOOKED across the coffee table at Irene who had spoken, and in that moment if it had been a murder committed he was trying to keep to himself he would have come out with all of it. He took a breath, stared into the fire, and started to talk. He tried his best to tell them how it was. He tried to make them feel as he had felt playing baseball in college under the golden banner of Big Jim Banks. The way the sports writers fawned all over him; the way some of the team's players rode along

with him in the glory of a great name, and how even Coach Jock Standers used to point him out to the visiting fireman as the great Big Jim's son playing for Haverford. Yes sir, just to see him swing at a pitch makes you imagine the great man, himself, is up there at the plate.

"But my Lord, boy!" Taylor interrupted at that point. "That was a compliment. A fine compliment!"

"I didn't think so," Banks said stubbornly. "In a way, yes. Praise for Dad, and he deserved all he got. But none of it was for me, *really*. For big Jim's son. Not *me* as an individual. A couple of the other players hit as well as I did at Haverford, but did they get pointed out, or written up every day? No! Big Jim's son was the white-haired boy. I swear at times I hated to go out onto the field. Hated the whole idea of baseball."

"But you *did* go out and play," Taylor spoke again in his soft voice. "And know why? Because baseball's deep-rooted in you, whether you think so or not. That's truth, Johnny, and I'm *not* saying it has to be because you're Big Jim's son."

"I like to play ball, sure, but I don't know," the youth said miserably. "It's... Well, it's like Dad's right here at my elbow every second. Everybody watching me and hoping they're watching Big Jim. It wears you down so you don't know what to think. Everybody with a smile and a handshake becomes suspect to you. Is it for me, or because I'm his son? This last month, a damn goldfish bowl. Except for you two, of course. You try to follow a pattern but there isn't any pattern. None but the one laid down for you by a great name. Two hits I got today off Lemon. Johnny Banks got them? No, Big Jim's son got them, the way the great man used to get them off Walter Johnson, or Cy Young, or any of the old time greats. How do you think that sort of thing leaves you feeling? Where's the incentive in your life? What's the goal, if any? You're a great man's son, and

the door's open wide. Three cheers!"

Emotionally as well as vocally spent, the rookie stopped talking and stared dull-eyed into the fire. He knew that he had failed again, and probably made a fool of himself, but his tangled-up head had received some relief with the telling. Once started, he had wanted to tell them. Particularly to tell Irene so that she might perhaps realize that under his golden mantle of being Big Jim Banks' son he was also a man with ideas and hopes of his own, unsponsored by anybody on earth.

"There's just two things that could happen to you," Dan Taylor broke the silence. "But damned if I know whether either one of them is good or bad."

"What?" the youth mumbled and turned his head from the fire.

"Hawks could fire you off the team tomorrow," the veteran coach said bluntly. "And not even bother to farm you out. Maybe that would knock the props out from under this crazy fixation of yours. Or you could snap out of it yourself, and wake up to the truth of who and what you really are."

"I know," the youth said harshly. "Big Jim's son!"

Dan Taylor took a long breath and held it while he compressed his lips. Presently he let the air out in an exasperated sigh. "Nuts!" he said. "Don't give me that line again. I'm not talking about your father; I'm talking about *you*. I've seen ten thousand ball players come and go, so I know when I'm looking at a good one. I'm looking at one now, so stop riding the coat-tails of a great man. And that's what you've been doing! Riding along on Big Jim's name instead of really trying on your own. Now what do you think of that?"

"Dad, please!" Irene murmured softly.

**T**HE VETERAN coach seemed not to hear. He sat glaring at Johnny

Banks and the rookie felt the blood of anger in his face, and though he did not realize it he clenched his two fists resting on the arms of his chair.

"Your two hits off Lemon today," Taylor suddenly spoke again. "You could have put both out of the park if you'd really *tried*. Okay, so you think everybody looks at you and pictures you as Big Jim? Well, change it! Show them what *you* can do. Make them forget there ever was a Big Jim Banks."

"That's crazy!" the youth said automatically; "nobody will ever forget Dad's playing, and you know it."

The veteran coach shrugged and made a little movement of one hand.

"Just a figure of speech," he said gruffly. "What I'm trying to get through your thick head is that you're *not trying*. You're not giving the best you've got. That's not fair to the club, to yourself, or to Big Jim's hopes and dreams."

The anger boiled in young Banks, but he held it in check and stared down at the floor. He hadn't tried? He hadn't gone out there day after day in the blast furnace sun and sweated his guts out trying to live up to what was expected of him. Taylor had a hole in his head. And damn him for swinging the whip in front of Irene!

"One thing more," the older man spoke again, "and then I've got to trot over and see Hawks for a bit. Big Jim would give his other leg if he could be here and watch you, Johnny. But he can't be here, and I almost thank the Lord for it. I wouldn't want to see the look on his face as he watched you just go through the motions half the time."

Taylor got up and went over to the wall bracket for his hat. He paused by the door and looked at the rookie with neither sympathy nor anger in his face.

"Think it over well," he said. "It's in you, but you're the only man in the world who can bring it out. Good night, and I won't be too late, Irene."

## 3



HE DOOR opened and closed, and Banks sat staring at the floor for a moment before he lifted his head and grinned thinly across at Irene.

"Dan's frank enough, anyway," he said. "But I really

didn't expect either of you to understand. Nobody knows what it's like to be born a great man's son, unless you're one."

The girl looked at him steadily for a minute as though making up her mind about something.

"It isn't easy to be born the daughter of a ball player, either," she said quietly. "Then you can't do a thing! Dad meant well, I'm sure, Johnny, but let's not talk about it any more. I think I'd like to put on my coat and take a walk on the beach. How about you?"

Banks thought it a good idea, too, and so they went out and walked along the beach and talked about all manner of things outside of baseball. When they finally came back to the cottage and he said goodnight to her, a lot of pent up anger had ebbed out of Johnny Banks. He took her hand and held it tight for a moment. "Thanks for being you, Irene," he said. "That helps a lot."

"I want to help, if I can, Johnny," she said softly, and returned the pressure a moment before she withdrew her hand. "Goodnight."

He said goodnight and went back to the hotel, and the girl went inside and sat down before the fire to wait for her father.

When he finally came in she stood up and looked at him level-eyed. "I think I'm a little ashamed of you, Dad," she said. "That was pretty mean, pretty rotten telling him all those things when he was a guest under your roof."

The veteran coach didn't reply for a moment. He hung up his hat and then went and stood in front of her. "Very rotten," he said and nodded. "I hated my insides every minute of the time, but I've got to wake the boy up and make him see the truth. He's here under a terrific handicap, I'll admit. Big Jim's name and reputation cover him like a tent day and night. It's tough but he's letting it get him down, whether he thinks so or not. For the last week he's just coasted. Hasn't played one-tenth of the kind of baseball I know he can play. Irene, that boy can be every bit as good as Big Jim was in his first year if he'd only forget this great-name complex and get in there for *himself*. I've got to wake him up somehow."

"But did you have to be so brutally sudden?" Irene asked. "I know you told me you had some serious things you wanted to say to Johnny, but I never suspected you intended to whip him in public the way you did!"

Her father winced, sighed, and lifted a hand and let it drop back to her side. "Irene, Big Jim was the dearest friend I ever had," he said evenly. "Taught me half the baseball I ever learned. I've just about worshipped that man for years, and I still do. I'd do almost anything to save him a broken heart!"



THE GIRL started and put a hand to her mouth as though to cut off a cry. "Johnny?" she whispered through her fingers.

"Johnny," he said and nodded. "Billy Hawks would lean way over backwards for Big Jim. He was Billy's friend, too. But there's a limit to everything. Billy has to think of the team as a whole first, the individual players second. Johnny just isn't coming along as he should, and simply

because he's not *trying*. That's no excuse for him at all. Billy was talking to me just this morning. He's about given up on Johnny as a member of the Bears this year. He thinks he'll send him to St. Paul, and see how he shapes up there."

Dan Taylor paused and his daughter didn't speak. She stood there silent, her fingers still against her lips, and her eyes wide with fear and sadness.



"A million rookies have been farmed out their first year up," Taylor went on talking. "Ten times out of ten it's usually the best thing that can happen to them, but Johnny's case is the exception. He's a natural ball player. He has everything in him right now, *if* he'll only bring it out. And Big Jim. He's dreamed, and planned, and worked all his life for the day his son becomes a Bear regular. He knows, too, that it's in Johnny to make the big jump in his first year. I tell you, Irene, if Billy sends him to St. Paul it will break Big Jim's heart."

"Oh, no!" the girl breathed fiercely. "I know Johnny would rather die than do that to his father."

Dan Taylor raised his two hands and let them fall. "I hope I've shocked him out of it, but I don't know," he said heavily. "Maybe I should have told him what Billy's thinking about, but that would be betraying a confidence. Billy's my boss. I guess we can only wait, and hope, and pray."

The girl nodded and stared unseeing down into the dying fire.



There was no game or even practice sessions the next day. Billy Hawks gave the entire club a twenty-

four-hour break in the grueling grind. Half the players went off on fishing trips, and the other half just lolled about the hotel grounds and beach taking it easy.

Johnny Banks was one of the latter group and he stood it until lunch time. A dozen times he started to go over to the Taylor cottage and take Irene for a swim, or maybe a catboat sail. Each time he let the idea slide. A night's sleep had done nothing to wipe away all the effects of Dan Taylor's tongue-lashing. He was still sore at the veteran coach for stepping out of character in front of his daughter. The man had been so completely wrong. He *had* tried, but the spark just wasn't there. Taylor couldn't see that, couldn't understand. Nobody could. And if Taylor had been trying to throw a scare into him by way of third base, that was kind of silly. He was doing all right. Good enough, anyway. Hawks hadn't given him any hard looks, and the manager was playing him in regular center field every game.

So he didn't go over to the Taylor cottage. Not that he didn't want to see Irene, but for fear he'd run into her father and the veteran coach might suddenly decide to pick it up from where he'd left it off last evening. Fond as he was of old Dan, you can take just so much from anybody. In addition, Dan was Irene's father.

After lunch he gave it up, and went around to a drive-it-yourself place and hired a car. In the next four or five hours he saw a lot of Florida through a windshield, and when he finally returned to the hotel things were buzzing in the lobby. He quickly learned that a switch in training camp routine had been made. Originally the next seven days were to be spent at Flamingo Park with pick-up games between the members of the squad. That had been cancelled, however. Hawks had split the group into two squads. One squad he would take to other league club fields for exhibition games. And the second squad, with

Dan Taylor in charge, would fly to Cuba for a four game exhibition series there with the top Cuban clubs.

**T**HE LISTINGS of the two squads were posted on the lobby board, and as Banks took a look he was glad and relieved to see that his name was down to travel and play with the manager's group. One reason was because Hawks' list was made up of practically all regular Bear players. That his name was on the list seemed to refute Taylor's charges last night. Obviously the Bears' manager was finding no fault in the club's latest addition, and intended to take him along all the way. The other reason was that he certainly had no wish to give Dan Taylor any more chance to corner him, and ride herd on him. Perhaps the next time in front of the players. He would miss Irene, she was making the trip with her father, but for the present at least he wanted no part of her father, good as the veteran coach's intentions may or may not have been.

Anyway, he made the short road trip with Hawks' squad and played every one of the five games scheduled. And it was like reporting to the Bear camp multiplied by five. At each park visited the sports writers, and local newspapermen, welcomed him with arms flung wide and typewriters oiled. He was interviewed a hundred times, went on the radio twice, and television once. Over and over again he was bombarded with the same questions. How did it feel to wear the same uniform his famous father wore? How did it feel to be following in the great man's footsteps? Would he hit thirty homers his first year as Big Jim had done so many years ago? Did he use his father's same style at bat? Did he belt the same kind of pitching? Had he brought any of his father's bats to training camp? Did he like this, and did he like that?

On and on and over and over until he wanted to scream at them to

shut up, and run away and never stop. Not for a moment during the trip was he once just plain Johnny Banks to anybody. He was Big Jim Banks' son, and they would have given him the key to the local bank had he asked for it. Like a helpless animal in a zoo, and, with Billy Hawks playing him every game so that one and all could come, and get a full nine inning look.

Perhaps sub-consciously the memory of Dan Taylor's words stirred him up. Anyway, he tried hard, but the driving spark was not there. It didn't seem to matter what he did. When he got a hit they cheered, and when he struck out they cheered him all the way back to the bench. By the time the fifth game was over, and the squad was on the way back to Flamingo Park, he was so sick in mind and soul that he was actually close to hating his father's great name. And that night he dreamed a beautiful dream. He was a rookie by the name of John Doe who loved to play baseball and could play it, but nobody had ever heard of him or his name in all their lives. When he woke up he stayed happy as long as it took bitter reality to come forward and face him.

**T**HAT MORNING the manager ordered light practice at the park, and gave them the afternoon off. The Cuba group flew in that evening, and next morning everybody was at the park. The Dodgers were in town for the first of a three-game series, and throughout the entire Citrus Circuit this was looked upon as the big one of the entire Spring training season. The sports writers played it up as a pre-view of next October's World Series, and possibly rightly so because in the winter books the Bears and the Dodgers were favorites to take their respective league pennant.

Billy Hawks had rested his best pitchers for this series, and it was reliably reported that the Dodger manager had done the same. Though the

four exhibition games would be just that, and count for nothing but a memory come the start of the regular season, both managers wanted it bad, and were ready and willing to go all out with everything they had to get it.

Such being the case Hawks supervised a stiff workout during the morning, and made it very plain to them just what he expected from them against the Dodgers. He made his little speech at the end of the session, and then waved them to the dressingroom to get ready for the lunch trip back to the hotel.

In the multiple shower room Banks suddenly became conscious of Dan Taylor dancing around under the spray of water next to his. He hadn't spoken a word to Irene's father since his return from the Cuban trip, but not that he had purposely avoided the veteran coach. They just hadn't crossed paths, but as their eyes met through the water sprays Taylor grinned broadly. "Still sore at me Johnny?" he said when they'd both turned them off.

"About what?" the rookie grunted and wrapped the carpet-sized towel about him.

Taylor grinned again and nodded. "Good," he said. "Irene bawled me out, but it was only to help you. To wake you up. I hope I did?"

"Sure," Banks said flatly and turned away. "You woke me up."

The veteran coach reached out and caught him by the arm and stopped him. His face was sad, but his eyes were brittle. "I guess I didn't," he said. "I'm making another try. Get out there and play ball, you young fool, before you break your father's heart!"

The rookie stiffened, and he came within an ace of bringing up his fist to the older man's chin. Instead he looked Taylor straight in the eye and spoke through stiffened lips. "Leave me alone, will you? Just leave me the hell alone!"

With that he turned on his heel and stormed blindly out into the locker

room. The black mood engulfed him while he dressed, during the ride back to the hotel, and all through lunch. As a matter of fact it was as black as ever come game time and the P. A. system was booming out the batting orders, and the field captains and umpires were having the usual confab at the plate. He was playing center again this day, but when he heard his name he was struck with the crazy, insane urge to go down the bench and tell Hawks to get another boy and walk right out of the damn park. Break his father's heart? What about breaking his own heart?

A few minutes later he trotted out to his spot in center field, and the game got underway. He scored an out in the opening half of the inning, and he had his first crack at the plate in the Bear half. The mood was with him as black as ever, and he swung viciously at a very bad pitch. By a crazy freak of luck he caught it on the very end of his bat and sent a single over first that landed one inch fair. Two hits following his sent him across the plate with the first run. Dan Taylor smiled broadly as he came down the dugout steps, but he cut the veteran coach cold and passed right on by to the water cooler.

**B**ROOKLYN changed pitchers at that point and the flurry died down. It was not until the fourth Banks got his second turn at the plate, and he got on first through no effort of his own. He was walked, but he didn't score. A beautiful double play sent him back to the bench. In the sixth he made all three outs on flies he could have caught with his bare hands, and the packed stands made a lot of noise.

In the seventh he came up again and the Brooklyn pitcher hit him in the place where he sat down and he got another free trip to first. A long triple sent him across with the second Bear run. In the top half of the eighth the Bear pitcher weakened slightly and the boys from across New York's East River jumped on



him hard. When the fireworks were over the Dodgers had picked up three to lead by one.

The Bears filled the bases in their half of the seventh but the Brooklyn pitcher got rolling again, and nobody got as far as the plate. The eighth and the top half of the ninth saw some beautiful baseball, but no runs scored by anybody. The Bears came in for their half of the ninth, a do or die effort necessary, and Billy Hawks pacing off a trench in the dirt in front of the dugout.

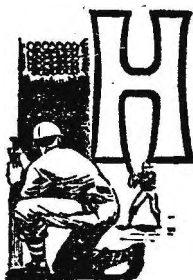
The Brooklyn pitcher got his first two outs in quick order, then took a breather he shouldn't have and lost the next man on a walk. Johnny Banks, waiting in the batter's circle, tossed aside his extra club and walked in there. "For Big Jim, boy! Hit it!"

Dan Taylor's voice carried through the general roar to the rookie's ears. He flinched, scowled out at the Dodger pitcher, and banged the meat end of his bat on the plate. Anger was ablaze in him, and the red film of it in front of his eyes. The first pitch came in and he would have lashed at it by way of releasing pent up fury had the ball not curved down into the dirt and bounced clear to the backstop.

On the next pitch that came in he started to swing, saw it was going to be bad, but couldn't stop his bat before breaking his wrists. The solid smack of meeting the ball made him the most surprised man in the park. And for a full second he stood there half way twisted around in his follow-through and watched the white thing sail out high and far. He had barely reached first when the ball went over the left field fence and away, and the runner ahead of him was galloping by third on his way to the plate. When he crossed it the cash customers were down on the field and racing for him, but the park cops held them back and he got into the Bear dressingroom in one piece.

"I told you you could do it, boy!" Dan Taylor screamed in his ear. "I told you, didn't I? Hello, Slugger!"

4



ARDLY realizing he was doing so the rookie shoved the coach out of the way, pushed off other congratulating hands reaching for him, and raced for the showers, tearing off his clothes as he ran. The fools, the

damn blind fools! If they only knew! A mistake single, a walk, hit by a pitch, and a fluke homer to win it! Good Lord, and they were going crazy over it. Yelling that Big Jim's son had come through, just like Big Jim used to do! The dopes. The fatheads!

They mostly let him alone riding back to the hotel. When they reached there Dan Taylor pounded his back once more, and urged him to come to supper at the cottage. Much as he longed to see Irene, he turned it down. He wasn't in a fit mood to be decent company for anybody this night. He ate his supper at the hotel, and went straight to his room to try and get the ground under his feet again, and make some sense out of the whole crazy business. He was still awake around midnight when the bell-hop came up with the telegram.

As he ripped open the yellow envelope his heart started pounding strangely against his ribs. He read it and his heart became a cold stone falling through his chest.

*DAD SUFFERED STROKE  
THIS EVENING AND PASSED  
AWAY QUIETLY. FUNERAL  
ARRANGEMENTS BEING  
MADE FOR FRIDAY AFTER-  
NOON. LOVE. MOTHER.*

Big Jim Banks had been taken to his final resting place. Distant relatives, close friends, and half the sporting world had paid their tribute to the great man, who would live on in memory in the hearts of millions

as long as baseball was played, and gone their respective ways. In the livingroom of the house, still heavy with the sweet smell of flowers and wreaths, Johnny Banks and his mother sat waiting for the man to come and pick up her baggage. Rather than face the immediate future in the empty house Anne Banks was going to visit a married sister in St. Louis. Perhaps one day she would return to the house or sell it and never return.

"He was so pleased, so proud of you, Johnny," the widowed woman said gently to her son. "He passed away in happiness, and I shall always be so thankful for that."

The youth looked down at the rug and didn't dare let himself speak. Receiving the fatal telegram had stunned him almost beyond endurance, and now even five days later it all was still impossible, and unreal.



"You granted his dearest wish," Anne Banks spoke again. "No son could have done more. As I told you, he listened to that Brooklyn Dodger game. I had never seen him so excited, or so completely overjoyed when you hit that home run."

The youth continued to stare at the rug he could no longer see because of the smarting mist filming his eyes.

"Are you listening, dear?"

The rookie looked up and nodded numbly. "Yes, Mom, I'm listening."

"He was worried after you'd left for the training camp," Anne Banks said quietly. "Worried for fear that after all his dreams, and the things he wanted for you, were simply founded on his own selfishness. Once or twice he started to write to you about it, but his faith in you, his great pride, wouldn't let him. Then that last game he listened to. It

seemed to make everything all right inside of him. Even as he lay in his bed waiting for Doctor Hall his face was serene and his eyes shining. He said these words to me, Johnny."

**HIS MOTHER** paused to regain her composure and the youth wanted to beg her not to say anything more. Razor-edged knives were slashing up his heart, and ripping out the very soul in him. But he could only stare mutely at her and presently she continued.

"It's all right, now, Anne. The boy found himself today, and he's going to be all right. I've prayed he would, and now I know it. Johnny Banks, a better player than his father ever was!"

The youth tried to stem the aching crumbling of the inside of him. He got to his feet and went over and put his arms about her and clung to her tight. "If it was only true!" he said miserably. "That's what hurts so."

"He believed it true," she said softly and stroked his hair. "I'm so glad of it, so thankful. Dear, what do you want to do, now? It's still your life, you know. Do you think that newspaper position is still open? Would you like to find out?"

He didn't reply right away. He remained for a moment on his knees by her chair, his two arms clasped tightly about her. Presently he released his arms, leaned back, and lifted his eyes to her face.

"Tell me, Mom," he said slowly, "has it ever happened in your life? I mean, you think one way about something, and one day you don't think that way at all? It's all changed around, and you don't know why it is? You can't possibly explain it to anybody, because you can't even explain it to yourself? It's just changed around, that's all. Did it ever happen to you, Mom? Do you understand what I mean?"

She smiled at him gently, and bent her head and kissed his cheek. "Yes, dear, I believe I understand," she

said softly. "You mean you're going back because you really want to?"

He nodded and took her hand and pressed it. "Yes," he said. "And because I really want to. I wonder why? Why does it all seem so different? So...so much better?"

Anne Banks shook her head slowly and put her other hand on his. "Does it matter why, Johnny, if it puts your heart at peace?"

Billy Hawks let his eyes rove over the jam-packed seats, over the host of men in uniform working up a pre-game sweat on the playing field, and smiled to himself. It was always the same, opening day of the regular season. No matter how many you had seen far back through the years opening day never changed, never dimmed in its color or excitement, never was anything less than it had been any other year.

He smiled to himself again, started to check the batting order card in his hand and stopped short. Johnny Banks had just come down the ramp into the dugout, and was standing before him in uniform.

"Johnny, you back?" the manager heard himself exclaim.

"Just got in," the rookie told him. "Weather held us up at St. Louis."

"But there was no need, boy," Hawks said. "I mean, it would be all right for you to miss the first couple or so. After all, you have..."

"Would Big Jim have missed an opener, if he could have helped it?"

The manager started slightly and looked closely at the youth in front of him. "Why, no, I guess not," he said slowly.

"Then why should I?" came the quick words. "I'm Jim's son. I'm here to play...if you want me?"

**O**N BILLY HAWKS' batting order was the name of a tired but aging veteran for center field, but he didn't think about that. He stared at young Banks and thought of the

talks he had had with Dan Taylor since the day the news arrived that the great Big Jim Banks was dead. He looked again at the great man's son, and he thought he saw something in his face that had never been in it before. He turned his head and glanced out to see the veteran coach busy rapping balls to the infield. Then he turned back to the rookie and nodded.

"You're playing center," he said, "but I want to tell something first. A great name put you in a Bear uniform, but it was another man who kept you in one. As far back as three weeks ago I was thinking of sending you to St. Paul. You weren't measuring up, and it didn't seem to me you were trying to. It was Dan Taylor who talked me into postponing my decision from day to day. He was certain you were a player we needed and wanted. He got me to wait while he tried to do what he could to stir you up. You never would have played in that Brooklyn game, if it hadn't been for Dan Taylor. He feels you're sore at him for meddling in your own business, so I just want you to know how it was."

"Thank you," the rookie said humbly. "Thank you very much for telling me."

The manager shrugged and scratched out a name on his batting order sheet. "I thought you ought to know," he said. "Get out there, now, and limber up."

Johnny Banks nodded, and went up the dugout steps and onto the field. He started toward the outer gardens but checked his step as he saw one of the other coaches take over at the plate and Dan Taylor start back to the dugout. The rookie ran over to the veteran coach. "Dan!"

Taylor stopped walking, blinked, and then beamed as he thrust out his hand. "Johnny, you're with us?" he cried. "Wonderful!"

The rookie gripped the hand hard and swallowed the dryness from his throat. "Hawks has just told me.

Dan," he said with an effort. "I don't know what to say. I..."

The older man raised a hand and shook his head and smiled. "Don't try to, Johnny," he said. "There's no need of it at all. Just seeing you back is enough."

"But I was such a self-centered heel!" the rookie blurted out.

The veteran third base coach shrugged and chuckled. "And on a very rugged spot," he said. "Still feel like you're on it, Johnny?"

The rookie looked at the jam-packed park, and at the players in Bear uniform, and those in the uniform of the Washington Senators, come to town to partake in the opener. He looked back at Taylor and grinned. "No, I don't," he said quietly. "Something Mom said to me after the funeral. I'd like to tell you sometime, Dan. I think you'd understand too."

"I could try," the coach said and reached out and pressed the rookie's arm. "Now play us a game. Play us a game for Big Jim's son."

"That I aim to do," Johnny Banks said and went trotting on out to center field.

**A** CASH-PAYING crowd of an even sixty-two thousand saw that opening game, and not a one of them will probably ever forget it. The Bears rained all over the Senators by a seventeen to three score, but the size of the score was the least important thing of all. What the thousands watched and will never forget was the rookie named Johnny Banks playing center field for the home club.

They saw him play in his major league debut such as no other rookie had ever played in one before. Not even the great immortal, Big Jim Banks. They saw him flash all over center field to make seven putouts, two of them impossible catches, but he made them. They saw him go to the plate six times and hit three homers, two triples, and a double for

a total of sixteen bases, and eleven runs batted in. And when it was all over they remained standing up in their seats and shaking down the thunder from the skies even after the last player and bat boy had disappeared up the dugout ramp.

A little over an hour after the game Dan Taylor opened the door of his modest New York apartment and pushed Johnny Banks over the threshold. "Go right on in, boy," he said. "If Irene isn't here, yet, she will be in a minute."

Irene Taylor was home, and she came flying out of the kitchenette at the sound of her father's voice. She stopped a few feet from the rookie and just stood there smiling at him and not saying anything. He smiled at her and there were no words on his tongue, either. The veteran third base coach looked at them both, raised his brows and started patting his pockets.

"Left my cigarettes at the park," he mumbled. "Better go around the corner now and get some."

He slipped out and closed the door and they didn't even notice. They stood smiling at each other, and talking with their eyes. "Hello, Slugger," the girl presently broke the silence.

The rookie swallowed and broadened his smile. "Hello, Wonderful," he said. "Know something?"

"What, Johnny?"

Banks took a step or two closer and stopped. "Personally," he said, "I'm awful glad you were born the daughter of a ball player."

The girl looked at him steadily for a moment and then walked slowly forward. "Personally, I guess I am too," she said softly.

Dan Taylor gave them a full half hour before he returned with his pack of cigarettes.



# TURF OF TERROR

By Robert Turner

Always before his eyes was that vision of hoofs pounding down upon him, and the remembered pain of their terrible weight . . .



ICE, YOU say. Florida in the winter and a place in the sun. A big, warm, friendly hunk of sun that feels good on your short-cropped blond hair. Especially when you know that up north, where the poor

people are, that same Old Sol is wan and dismal, with his rays dulled by distance or else hidden completely behind February snow clouds. Good duty, eh?

There I was in a good spot along the rail in the middle of the stretch at beautiful Sunbeam Park, in my robin's-egg-blue sport shirt and fawn colored slacks, both handstitched and obviously worth the sixty bucks they'd cost. With a hundred-dollar "win" ticket on a longshot, in the Seventh, coming into the stretch turn three lengths in front of the other beetles. What more could a man ask?

There's only one thing wrong; when you've ridden a thousand skins yourself, before you got marked putrid by everyone in the business even the little one-man gypsy stables, it is sometimes nerve-wracking to watch another guy guide a nag



toting your good money on his snout. You feel like a pilot in the cabin of a plane, with another man at the controls. It doesn't help either that it's your last hundred romping along on the horse and if he loses you'll be dead-flat broke and the man'll be suing you for the back payments on the shirt and slacks—and another man has already grabbed the canary colored, fish-tailed convertible you loved so well. And back at the hotel, tonight, they won't let you sign another tab for dinner, nor take the French Key out of your room lock because so what if you have to sleep on the beach? It doesn't help at all. Not when that bangtail out there shouldn't *be* three lengths in front and the rider's made every mistake in the book.

I tried not to be nervous. I tried to unpeel my hands from the death grip they had on the rail. Tried not to listen to the railbird next to me, laughing and screaming: "That front-running dog is dying already! He'll never stick it out! Mixmaster will catch him easy, another hundred yards!"

Look, I told myself, maybe you're prejudiced because Lew Drisko is up on that mount and you hate his guts. Maybe Lew's making the ride of his life and they know what they're doing, pushing Quick Silver out front like that. They could be smart, trying to steal the race. Maybe that big gray gelding still has something left for the finish and will stick it out.

And maybe a cow can really jump over a moon, like in the fairy tales. Because on top of all the other mistakes he's made in this ride, I now saw Drisko lay into Quick Silver with the bat. The beginning-of-the-end department. I'd ridden the Gray a dozen times, back when he was a leading stake horse and I knew him like a brother. You could show him the bat, scare him with it, but never sting his hide. I watched what happened when you did that.

Quick Silver first broke stride,

hung a little, before bearing out. Then Drisko used too much muscle, dragging back so hard the beast lugged-in, almost ran through the rail. This cost the Gray a length of that lead, coming around the turn and as they bore into the stretch, he forgot what little run he had left in him and gave up the ghost. I watched Mixmaster, the favorite, overhaul him and take the lead. Then the rest of the pack, except for a few broken-down stragglers, forced past Quick Silver on the outside.

I began to remember how ornery a man's stomach can get when it misses meals, the way beach sand is not so soft as it looks when you toss and turn on it all night and awake in the ayem with a couple of land crabs affectionately nuzzling your neck. I watched Quick Silver come in ninth.

The crowd roar fell to a letdown murmur with the end of the heat. I took out the hundred dollar mutual ticket, with that nice, dredged-out feeling all inside of me, kissed it and ripped it neatly in two. "You win some and you lose some," I informed the man next to me and watched him shrink back from my ghastly grin.

Since there is nothing so degrading as to stand and watch a bunch of horses race, with your hands in your empty pockets, I decided to skip the eighth. I went under the stands, ambled back toward the paddock. One advantage of being an ex-hot-shot rider, even though the kiss-of-death is on you as far as getting mounts is concerned, you can still get behind the scenes.

**N**OOTCH RONSKY was the Pinkerton on the paddock gate and unlike some people, Nootch remembers the longshot good things I used to sometimes ride and always gave him. He let me inside, grinned, said: "How're you makin' 'em, kid?"

"Just fine," I told him, pulling out an empty pocket. "The more you know, the better you can lose!"

Passing the jockey's quarters I

saw Lew Drisko trailing the other riders from the last race, into the building. He gave me his favorite sneer, the one he usually saves for the two-buck players when they razzoo him for pulling an odds-on favorite. He stopped, twisted his surly little mouth up at one corner in a reasonable facsimile of a grin and I knew that he had it figured that I'd probably bet on Quick Silver. You could almost see the happiness radiating from him. "Hi, Jan," he said. "Sorry I couldn't whomp that one in for you. How much you lose on him?"

"Are you kidding?" I said. "I wouldn't bet on a mount of yours if you were up on Battlefield in a three-horse six hundred dollar claimer and the other two skins had their legs sawed off."

His fine dark brows went up almost to the goggles resting on the peak of his riding cap. "You mean you don't like me any more, pal?"

I told him how much I didn't like him in the kind of terms you hear in the best of sewers and got a fair-sized clout out of watching his face redden-up and his eyes go bright-hard.

"If I wasn't afraid of getting set down for a month for being seen with a racetrack wrongo, I'd beat the boots off of you for that," he snarled. "But I'll tell you what you do: get yourself a mount in the Palmetto Handicap next month and we'll settle things by seeing which one of us can ride the other through a rail. Okay?"

And then he went on into the jockey's quarters, bent over, killing himself laughing, because the idea of me getting up on an entry in the Palmetto or any kind of overnight event, even, was supposed to be hilarious. Especially to a guy like Lew Drisko, who knew the whole story, who was the cause of that being such a funny idea. But if Drisko knew what I had on my mind at this moment, ridiculous as it might sound, the laughter would have

soured on his stomach. More so, since he'd just given me the notion that suddenly took shape all at once and seemed what might be the answer to all my problems.

Before the anger could flow out of me, and my common sense and, natural pride could cook up a million reasons why not, I set out to do something about this big idea. I hustled around toward the barns and found Wick Jameson, the guy who owned Quick Silver. Wick was a good guy, a soft touch and when he gave me a big, wrinkle-faced grin, said: "Jan Nelson! Haven't seen you in months, kid. What you doing for yourself?" I took courage, shook his hand hard and tore right into the pitch.

"Look, Mr. Jameson," I said. "I just got a great idea and you've got to hear me through on it. You'll do yourself a favor as well as me. You've got to enter Quick Silver in the Palmetto and give me the leg up on him. I know I can win the thing with that Gray and they're all wrong about me, Mr. Jameson. I'm not really fin—"

"Hold it, Jan," he cut in. His grin grew a little strained, but his voice was kindly. "Whatever the gag is, you're wasting it on me. I don't own Quick Silver any more. He was claimed this race. And the way he pooped-out there in the stretch, I'm not sorry."

He looked even more pained. "I'm afraid that's what louses up your deal, kid. The Rambeau stable claimed him. You know, Nan Rambeau. But it's probably just as well because you would have looked bad trailing the field in the Palmetto on that gluebag. Quick Silver is finished as a stake horse. Maybe got a few good overnight sprints left in him but that's about all."

I hardly heard him. I said: "Thanks, Mr. Jameson," and turned away. I walked back toward the paddock, feeling as low as a guy who's only five-feet-three to begin with, can feel. Like an amoeba,

maybe. Or a spit-ant. I watched the pieces of my big dream bubble floating away in the breeze. It didn't help much to remember that old Frenchy Rambeau, owner of the contract stable I had worked for so long, was dead and that his daughter, Nan, who had always liked me as a kid, was grown up now and running the stable she'd inherited from her old man. I didn't entertain any wacky idea like that even though Frenchy had practically gone bankrupt because of me, and blown his brains out, Nan might not, even so, hold any grudge. Things like that don't happen.

**T**HE WHOLE thing ran over in my mind like an old movie film as I stopped and stood dejectedly at the edge of the paddock area, trying to figure what to do. It had started eight years ago, when Lew Drisko and I were both seventeen, both crazy, flash-pan apprentices, running neck-and-neck for leading-rider-of-the country honors. It started with a natural rivalry and grew onto one of the most bitter jockey feuds the turf world ever saw. Every race we rode in, Lew and I, it was dog-eat-dog and we pulled every rotten trick in the books against each other to win—leg-hooking, grabbing saddle-cloths, lashing at each other with the bats and bumping when we were bunched on the turns and hoping the judges wouldn't spot it.

The only times we ever spoke was outside of the tracks and each time it ended in a knock-down-drag-out fight. We were pretty evenly matched with our dukes, too, except that Drisko took the last tussle, which made him one-up on me there. And it went on like that for seven years, until a year ago, November, at Aqueduct, when it ended the way it was bound to end with one of us.

It was a six furlong allowance sprint for maidens, and the filly I was up on was fast but a bad actor always. She balked getting away from the gate and I couldn't squeeze

her through the pack again and make a bid for the lead until we were in that sharp stretch turn. Then Pennyante, Lew Drisko's mount, drifted out a little, carrying the two outside horses with him. I made for that railslot and tried to squirm through. From the corner of his eye, Drisko saw me and knew if I got by him here, I'd take the heat on him. In desperation, he reached out to grab my saddle-cloth. I swore and swiped at him with the bat but I missed. I didn't miss my filly's head, though. The bat swished cracking hard across her eyes. She wheeled into the rail, stumbled and I went arcing over her neck. I came down onto a hard-packed spot a few feet out from the rail, landed on my back, numbed, all breath gone out of me, unable to move.

I watched the pack thunder over and past me and it was seconds of terror that filled my nightmares for months afterward. My mouth and my eyes were filled with kicked-up dirt. The pound of those hooves past my ears was like distantly booming artillery. And then one of the veering bunch stepped on my ribs. Another hoof ground down on my thigh and that was all I knew...

I'd been riding for Frenchy Rambeau all those years. He'd started me off first in the stables, then cooling off horses, walking them, until I was ready to break in as an exercise boy in the morning works. He brought my apprentice license, gave me my first mount and my only contract. Because of all that, old Frenchy saw me through the hospital seige and when I got out, even though the doc told us that I shouldn't ride any more, that another spill might do things to the metal work they'd put in my thighbone that would make me lose the limb, and that with the left hand that had been stepped on still weakened, that spill might not be long in coming, if I tried to ride again—in spite of that, Frenchy said: "What about it, kid?"



He knew that when you're little, just shy of being a midget, when you've known the crowd cheers bawling your name, your name headlined on the sports pages and your picture in the newsreel after winning a big stakes, that if you stop riding and lose all of that, there just isn't much left.

"I ain't afraid," I told Frenchy. "I'll take a chance."

"Okay, kid," Frenchy said, sighing. "You're still my boy. I'll put you up on Hammermill tomorrow, as a starter."

Words are big, loud things but they don't mean much. I found that out the next afternoon when I rode out on Hammermill in the post parade for the Fifth. My bad leg felt stiff and weak. It felt as though it wasn't going to be much help in holding me aboard that colt as he hammered around an oval at forty miles an hour, especially in the going, in the bunched-up places. And my left hand could just about close around the rein, hold it. I knew it wouldn't be able to apply much pressure. So I was scared, out there, in spite of my tough talk.

A jockey is often only as good as his hands. Especially with a horse like this Hammermill. He likes to wear himself out in the early running, then quit. The only way he can win, is to hold him back off the pace until you hit the stretch, then turn him loose and he'll bound on like a house afire to nip the leaders before the wire. But he's big and a lot of horse and you had to have a strong pair of hands to hold him back. So Hammermill got away from me that afternoon, right from the break. He went into a six length lead on the backstretch. But it didn't do him any good. He conked out cold in the stretch, loafed in next to last.

Old Frenchy, with his bushy white brows and hair, didn't say much. He just looked at my hand, swollen from trying to haul back on the reins with it, said: "I guess we'd better

save you for the strong finishers, now on, Jan."

**T**HE NEXT ride, a few days later, I had a mount that should have been three lengths the best in that company, but I got boxed in on the turn. A hole on the rail opened up, halfway down the stretch, but it had been a rough ride and I felt as though another bump would knock me right out of the saddle. I got visions of what that first fall had been like. I could hear the rumble of hooves around my head, feel the pain of their terrible weight crushing down on me. I didn't take that hole. I swung to the outside, instead. I lost enough ground doing that, to lose the race, only make fourth money.

Afterward, Frenchy said: "I guess that rail slot wasn't as wide as it looked from the clubhouse, was it, Jan? Otherwise you wouldn't have wasted all that time going to the outside, would you?"

I said: "I dunno, Mr. Rambeau. I really don't know." And I didn't. I didn't know whether I had just used bad judgement or if I'd really turned chicken. I soon found out.

For the next ten races, not one of Frenchy Rambeau's horses got into the money. Frenchy started to go into a long spell of the quiets, where he didn't talk to anybody much, seem interested in anything. And he drank a lot. He was one owner who only worked out his horses in the mornings. When he entered a skate in a race, it was going for the money and he always backed them with big dough of his own. So I knew that those first two weeks I was back in the saddle cost him a fortune. I knew it had to end. I told him so. I told him I was through, that there was no use in kidding ourselves any longer. I told him to tear up my contract. We both had a lot of moisture in our eyes after that speech.

Frenchy put his hand on my shoulder. "Kid," he said, "I'm as stubborn

a man as you are. We're going to try it once more. The way Miramar has been working out, she will win the Empire Stakes up at Saratoga next week, hands down. Even if you try to keep her from winning, she'll take it. With a wooden dummy on her back, even, so I don't see how you can miss. There's twenty five thousand dollars added for the purse. I'll get down on her with everything I can hook, borrow or steal and get out of the hole. And maybe winning one big one like that will break the ice for you and you'll be as good as ever."

He sold me and I said okay. Well, you know what happened. Miramar went off at four-to-five and was running like it, a good two lengths in front when we hit the turn. But there she decided to go wide. I was whipping with my right and my weak left hand couldn't hold her. She drifted all the way across the track before we came out of the turn. We finished the race along the outside rail and I'll never forget the looks on the faces of those railbirds who'd bet on us, as we flashed by them, so close. Because the rest of the field poured down the stretch on the inside and Miramar was lucky to get third money.

I didn't see Frenchy Rambeau again after that. I left the pieces of my torn-up contract with a groom. For a few weeks I didn't do anything but mope around away from the tracks. Later when I tried to come back, get mounts as a free-lance rider, the smell had spread and there was always some excuse. I couldn't get any rides on the Big Apple. At first when I drifted to the leaky barn circuit, the country half-mile tracks, it was different and I picked up a few rides. But it was finally the same story there, on top of getting bad, cheap horses that I couldn't have won with, even when I was in good form.

From that it was only one other thing: borrow a small stake and grind it into the mutuel machines.

The hell with them, I told myself. You know horses. You can make more money betting them than you ever could riding them. That's what I thought. And for awhile I did all right. Then it was the down road, in hock, in debt, chiseling—and culminating in an afternoon like this one, after the Quick Silver race, when you can't fool even yourself any more and you know the honeymoon is over. You've got to do something desperate and quick.

**I** HAD JUST finished beating myself with all that when I glanced toward the paddock stalls where they had the horses lined up before the next race, saddling them. And I saw Nan Rambeau. At first I didn't recognize her because all dressed up in a snazzy little linen suit the way she was, with her honey brown hair in an upswept arrangement, she looked about five years older than I thought of her. She looked real grown-up. And beautiful even from that distance.

I remembered how it was me, who first taught her to ride, on Frenchy's big farm down in Virginia, how she'd always had sort of a school girl crush on me, thought I was the best rider in the world, back in the old days. And I knew that this was my one, last and only chance—so I had to do it. I put all my nerve into one pocket and went over to her. She was all alone in front of her horse's stall and that made it a little easier.

She bowled me over, right off, by lighting up her cute little face with a big smile.

"Hello, Jan Nelson," she said. "I was wondering when you'd get around to looking me up. And just when I need you, too. You must be psychic or something."

I just gaped at her, shifting from foot to foot, cracking my knuckles like a nervous frosh talking to the Junior Prom Queen for the first time. I heard her say: "You remember Quick Silver, Jan? He ran some of his best races with you up on him.

You two won a lot of money together, a lot of big purses. Well, I just claimed him back. I'm going to enter him in the Palmetto, and I was wondering if perhaps you knew a good boy who would like to ride him. Not Lew Drisko, though. I didn't like the way Lew handled him this afternoon."

It came breaking out of me like water over a dam, fast, without taking a breath: "Nan, that's just what I came to see you about. You're a genius. You've been watching Quick Silver, too, then: the way he's been coming back to form lately; not quite able to get up in time in the sprints, but improving all the while, getting ready for a peak effort. Listen, he's got one big race left in him. And I don't mean just any race; he'll win a half dozen more overnight claimers or cheap allowances before he's through. But I mean one more whopper—like—like the Palmetto. And me, Nan, I've got one more big ride left, too. Put me on that big gray for the palmetto, and we'll both show you! We'll—"

I cut it off, then, because she was laughing, and I suddenly realized I'd made a fool of myself because that's exactly what she'd had in mind, herself, had been teasing me into putting up the proposition myself.

"I—I'll rate him right, too," I went on, lamely, as her laughter died.

"No mistakes like trying to front-run him." I held out my left hand, looked down onto the fingers I still couldn't quite straighten out fully. "And I'll hold him, Nan, I'm rested and stronger, now."

She looked pointedly at my middle. "We'll probably get him in awfully light, maybe around a hundred-five or six pounds. Can you make that weight, Jan? You look heavier than I've ever seen you."

I swatted myself in the gut. "I'm only one-sixteen now," I told her. "I'll get this lard off in a couple of days. Can you see doing it, Nan, putting me up on Quick Silver for this big one?"

"Can you do it, Jan?" she said, softly. I felt like I was drowning in those great brown eyes of hers. "I mean, it'll be a really rough trip, with every rider really going after the marbles, with that fifty thousand added. If—if you should get hurt, I'd feel it was my fault."

"I'll be all right," I said, grimly. "You don't have to worry. You just watch and look all nice and pretty to step down into the winner's circle after it's over and accept the trophy and the check."

I DIDN'T tell her, but what I knew, what I had in mind, was this: this was going to really be the big one for me, because win or lose, it would be the last. I knew that, like Quick Silver, I was through forever, in the first ranks, as a consistent winner, but I thought we could both make this last, lone comeback. If we won, with my five grand share of the purse, I'd buy a couple of cheap platers and become an owner, try to build up a stable. If we lost—well, I wasn't even going to think about that now.

Nan Rambeau held out her hand. "Okay, Jan," she said. "It's a deal. You start working out Quick Silver, tomorrow morning."

I didn't let go of her hand right away. I held onto it. I said, huskily: "I don't know why you're doing this honey. After what I did to Fren—to your father, I can't see how you'd even want to speak to me again, let alone—"

"Quit that!" she broke in, sharply. Her eyes swung away from me. They filled a little and her chin firmed against the crying that was trying to break through. "There's something I've got to tell you, Jan. Dad didn't—well—do what he did, because of his gambling losses alone, because you'd let him down or anything like that. He—he was sick, Jan. Incurably sick, he found out that day. That was why. His note made me promise never to tell anybody that. I guess because he was always such

an active, seemingly healthy old guy, he was sort of ashamed of it, or something. He'd always felt that to give into sickness was a sort of weakness. But I had to tell you now."

She pulled her hand from mine, turned away, suddenly. Without looking back, she said. "See you in the morning, Jan." And then she was gone, back through the crowds toward the clubhouse.

It was a long month until the day of the Palmetto. I got down to the riding weight in a week. We worked Quick Silver out carefully, got him trained down fine. He took second in a seven furlong tightener about a week before the Palmetto, coming from way back, like a house-afire, in the last hundred yards, to just miss in a photo finish. That was my first time up in a race in over six months and I was nervous and soaked with sweat clean through my silks, after the thing was over. But I was filled with a wild exultation too. I'd pulled a good ride, almost like the best of the old days. Quick Silver had been plenty of horse under me and I'd felt, the way he was moving, toward the end, with those great, springing, ground-eating strides, that given another quarter mile, he would have romped away from the best in the country.

During that time I'd taken a lot of good natured kidding from the other riders about making a comeback. And a lot of the most vicious needling from Lew Drisko. Several times I had all I could do to keep from driving my fist into his sneering face. I was glad that he hadn't been assigned a mount in that seven furlong trial race. I prayed that I wouldn't let him get me in the Palmetto.

The Saturday of the race, I tumbled out of bed about ten o'clock and my heart went down into my socks and I broke out into a cold sweat, shivering, when I looked out the window and saw the rain sluicing down. Even if the skies cleared by post time for the First, the track

would still be like quagmire for the Fifth, the Palmetto. Quick Silver had no high mud mark but he was all right in the sloppy going. He could hold his own. That wasn't what bothered me. It was thinking what the running of that race a rough trip, even on a smooth, fast track, would be like in the slippery, slimy going we would have. I could see all those thoroughbreds sliding and slithering around the turns, bumping, the riders taking every chance in the books, fighting for position. Riding a big stakes in the mud, is one of the lesser known methods of courting sudden injury or death.

**I GOT THE** thing out of my mind finally. I got out to the track just before the riders-out call for the First. I sat around the locker room in boots and the bottoms of my silks, with a couple of other boys sweating it out to the Fifth. I played Gin with an apprentice kid, the hotshot bug-boy of this year and tried not to hear the things Lew Drisko was saying for my benefit.

"Yes, sir," Lew would say. "It's goin' to be murder out there, this afternoon. For a wooden slug, I'd cancel the ride and they know what they can do with their percentage money. You go out there and get crippled for life, maybe—or killed. For what? For five grand?" He made a juicy Bronx cheer. "What do the owners care if one of us gets lumps out there, today! I wonder what it's like to be sprawled out there in the mud and feel that pack thundering over you? Nelson knows. He got it bad, once already. Hey, Jan, what's it like to get thrown and mangled out there?"

I didn't say anything. He was making maggot-like cold things crawl up and down my spine and he knew it. I wanted to stop his mouth with my fist, but knew that if I let him break me, now, I was finished. I was thankful, when after several hours, one of the other riders got sick of hearing that kind of talk, over and over, because it was getting

on their nerves, too, and succeeded in quieting him.

I didn't hear anymore from Lew Drisko, until after we'd saddled-up, ridden out on the post parade, and were heading toward the big starting gate up in front of the stands. It was still raining, a straight downpour that had us soaked to the skin before we'd gotten out of the paddock area. The track was gumbo with miniature lakes spread clear across it, every twenty or thirty yards. For the first few moments, the footing seemed to bother Quick Silver some, but then he settled down and I could feel the great, quivering power of him beneath me, waiting to be unleashed. I prayed I'd be able to hold that power back in the early running.

Lew Drisko's colt, had acted a little skittish in the paddock and a red-coated outrider was sticking close to him, on the post parade, so Drisko had his hands full, didn't pay any attention to me, until we got into the gate. I had the Two post position and Drisko, on Blue George, was one stall away in number Four. We were the first ones in and while the assistant starters tried to quiet our mounts, I heard Lew shout:

"Stay out of my way, Jan! Just even get close to me and I'll run you right through the rail. Block me and I'll run my mount right up the back of that gluebag of yours! You hear me, Jan?"

I heard him but I didn't turn. I tried to remember the way Nan Rambeau had looked with the rain in her hair and jewelizing the tips of her long, dark lashes, back there in the paddock before the riders-up call. I thought about the hundred dollar win ticket she'd tucked into my boot. The five thousand that would be my cut of this purse, if I could take it.

But Lew Drisko's shrill, waspish voice, hate-filled, vicious, kept jamming into my ears. "They all got mud calks on today, Jan! They'll grind you to a pulp if you get under those hooves today, kid! Get in the van and stay there and stay alive!

A little mud in the face is nothing to what you'll get if you try to be a hero!"

And then the booming sound of the crowd, the clanging of the starting bell, drowned out Drisko's words. The gates sprung open and slipping for a fraction of a second before they could get footing, the twelve thoroughbreds came jack-in-a-boxing out of the gate. Quick Silver broke well and I got him into fourth position along the rail. Everything was going nicely until we hit into the clubhouse turn and then I was aware of another horse pounding up right on our heels, too close. I smeared some of the mud from my goggles, glanced back over my shoulder and saw Lew Drisko back there, his teeth bared at me, screaming into the wind. He made a violent pushing motion with one arm, for me to ease out, get out of his way, let him into that rail spot where I was running nicely. The three horses in front of me were sticking pretty much to the center of the track where the going was just a little less soggy. I was in a nice spot, with plenty of room along the rail in front of me, anytime I wanted to make my move and try for the leaders.

Looking back, seeing Drisko's horse so close behind, practically eating Quick Silver's braided tail, I felt fear like a cold hand clawing at my guts. I instinctively, remembering Drisko's threats, warnings, started to ease out and let him through. But at the last minute I caught myself. I didn't do that. I said, out loud:

"To hell with him. He won't run over me! *He'd* be out of the race, get hurt, too!"

I didn't move. I concentrated on holding Quick Silver in. The slop must've felt good to his old, tender hooves, because he was more full of run than I'd ever felt him. I had everything I could do to keep him from running way out into a long lead. I felt my bad hand get numb, tighten. Quickly, I let the rein slip out of it, and took the reins in one

hand. I wasn't carrying a bat, because I knew it wouldn't do any good with the Gray. Then I tangled my bad hand into the gelding's mane and told myself that now nothing was going to separate me from this big hunk of horse I was riding.

**H**OOFBEATS pounded alongside of me, then, close. Too close. I half turned and saw that Lew Drisko had moved out, was coming alongside. The wind carried just right and even above the subway-like roar of the crowd, I heard him scream: "I told you what would happen! I gave you your chance!"

Then he let Blue George lug in just a little, so that it would look an accident, if they happened to see it. He bumped me hard and my heart came up against the back of my teeth. Quick Silver slipped, swerved and banged against the rail. He half stumbled and for a moment I couldn't see, I couldn't breathe, nor hear. There was no blood in me, no marrow in my bones and I was just a soggy, helpless heap clinging onto that stumbling creature beneath me. I sobbed and swore and waited for that horrible helpless feeling you get when you're thrown, when there's nothing but space under you and you're somersaulting lazily, gracefully, just before the jarring impact of hitting the dirt.

But it didn't happen. My saddle-cloth half slipped off and I lost the reins and found myself staying on Quick Silver's back with both hands dug into his mane, now. The dizziness swirled away from me. I hunched my shoulder and with it smeared mud dollups from my goggles. I saw that the rest of the horses were well up ahead of me now. They'd moved around me and I was a good two lengths behind the last straggler as we moved into the backstretch.

A coldness came on me, then. I started to shake and to cry. I could feel the tears working out from

under the goggles. The rage spread all through me from the hot coil of anger deep inside my chest. I dug my heels into Quick Silver's ribs and eased my grip on his mane, just a little, got hold of the reins again, then, with my good right hand. I let him go. Even though it was a couple of furlongs too early, I let the Gray out. I had no choice.

He'd gotten back his foot, completely, now and he set off after the pack in a long, easy striding charge. I hand-rode him. I talked to him, urging him with everything I had. I saw the stragglers coming back to us, halfway down the backstretch. I started to move out, around the pack, try to take it from the outside but I knew I'd already lost too much ground. I hit the rear bunch and started moving between horses as we leaned into that last turn.

Every horse in the race had trouble with footing on that turn. Sometimes it seemed that the hooves were churning up the thick, slimy muck without getting anywhere at all, for seconds, then they'd suddenly lurch forward again. I'd see a spot between horses that I was sure wasn't possibly room enough. But I'd head Quick Silver for it. By the time we reached it, the space would open miraculously and we were through.

I got up to fourth position again, then third. We completed the turn, started the run for home and there were only two horses in front of me. They were both out a little from the rail and I saw that the inside horse, the leader, was Lew Drisko's Blue George. I eased Quick Silver in as we went into the last Sixteenth and headed for that narrow slot along the rail. I got halfway through it, grazing Blue George, when Drisko looked around and saw me.

His face turned into a gargoyle's mask, splattered with mud the way it was. I just grinned at him and kept low over Quick Silver's neck, urging her harder. We inched up

along that rail spot and then I saw Drisko switch his bat from his right to his left and. I saw him do that just in time to get my good right hand up and when he slashed the bat at me viciously, I caught it across my palm. I closed my fingers over it and wrenched it away from him.

The wind brought me the sweet sound of his screaming curses. We inched up on him, past his shoulder, then neck and neck. From the corner of my eye, I saw the anger slip from Drisko's face and fear take its place. But when he tried to reach out one boot, hook it with mine, to keep with me, I cut down at him with his own whip. It caught him across the knee and I knew he wouldn't try that any more.

I forgot him, then, and began to hand-ride Quick Silver as I'd never done before. I saw us slipping away from Blue George and just as I had it figured we had half a length on him, I saw the photo-mirrors of the finish line flash past. We were over and we were in. . .

It was something, standing down there in the winner's circle, in the pouring rain, while the movie cameras ground and the news photog's flash bulbs popped. Me, up on Quick Silver and Nan Rambeau, down there, hugging the gelding's neck. I don't think either one of us knew it was raining. I heard Nan say: "I'll see you out at the parking lot in about half an hour," and then I was stripping off Quick Silver's tack stepping up onto the scales and heading back for the jockey's building.

**L**EW DRISKO was waiting for me in the locker room. He'd showered, but his face was still a frozen mask of rage. I watched him come toward me, his fists balled, his chest muscles swelling. I thought: Uh-oh, here it comes, now! For a moment, fear flashed through me. Then I remembered everything that had happened out there on that

dangerous muddy oval, this afternoon and I knew that this would be nothing. Out there, I'd had it all and come through.

I whipped off my cap and helmet and goggles, tossed them to a bench. I set my feet apart. I said: "Okay, Lew, come on! I've only got one good hand but I don't think I need anymore."

He stopped cold, his ugly, spoiled mouth a little open in surprise and some other expression I couldn't figure. But he didn't swing. Then a track messenger stuck his head into the locker room, shouted: "Hey, Drisko, the stewards want to see you, pronto!"

He went dead pale. He knew what that meant. He knew they were going to nail him for his rough riding this afternoon. His fists unclenched. He turned away from me without another word and walked, slowly, his shoulders slumping, back to his locker to finish dressing.

Outside, Nan and I stood for a long time, in the still sluicing rain looking at each other and grinning, before we got into her car. Inside, she held a check out to me, my share of the purse, five thousand beautiful gees. I told her then, what I was planning to do with that money. For a moment there was only the sound of the clicking windshield wipers, but then, as she carefully tooled the big car out of the racing park, she said, softly: "I know a good stable, you could buy into, for a full partnership. A fine stable. The Rambeau stable, it's called. Would—you be interested in that, Jan?"

I said: "Ease off onto the shoulder of the road for a moment, Nan."

When she did that, when she'd cut the motor, I reached for her and told her just how interested I would be, in a carefully chosen few million words. But that was after awhile, of course. That wasn't the first thing that I did.



# the Magic number

A Screwball Novelet by George Kramer



*It's easy to see why  
they call the kid a duffer, etc.*

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Whizzer Williams was the greatest thing the diamond's ever seen  
until his terrible secret came out...

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OW ORDINARI-  
LY, Springtime is  
the season of the  
year when you're  
glad to be alive. But  
to a veteran ball-  
player like myself,  
Spring is the begin-  
ning of a long grind  
to get back into  
shape after the win-

ter layoff, and is anything but pleas-  
ant.

If you've seen one Spring training  
season, you've seen them all I always  
say. With one exception, that is: I  
hope I never have to repeat a year  
like the one when Whizzer Williams  
first shows up at the Buccaneers train-  
ing camp.

We have no warning that this big  
kid will be anything different from the



hundreds of other young eager-beavers who flock to Florida during February and March, in hopes of making the Big Leagues. However I should have guessed when I see old Horse Reilly, the Buccaneer's number-one scout, excitedly introducing the kid to Sy Crane, our manager. Reilly never gets excited unless he figures he's got another Ty Cobb—and everyone knows that Ty Cobbs come along as often as cops pay for the apples they lift off of pushcarts.

Right away, I can see that old Horse must have a very hot prospect indeed, because Sy hustles the Kid into the club-house to get him a uniform—although it is plain to see that no ordinary uniform will fit the likes of Whizzer Williams. The kid stands six-foot-four, and has a build like Johnny something-or-other who is always swinging through the trees in the movies.

"All right, Whizzer," I hear Crane say to the Kid after he comes back out on the field wearing a suit two sizes too small. "Take a few cuts at the plate, right after Gorson and Morgan."

"How do you want me to bat, lefty or righty?" the Kid asks innocently. Sy can hardly believe his ears. Here he figures the Kid will swoon when he learns he is to bat following two of the biggest names in the Big Leagues today.

"Bat whichever way you hit the best," Crane tells him.

"I hit either way equally as well," the Kid says.

"Well, damn it," Sy explodes, "hit anyway you want. Hit standing on your head for all I care, but just get up there. I ain't got all day." I can see that Crane is running out of patience with this fresh busher, but before he can say anything else, Horse Reilly quiets him down.

Del Marks, the Bucs' ace right-hander, is pitching batting-practice, and gives Sy a wink as he gets ready to pitch to the Kid. Now I wish to state at this time that Marks, besides being one of the best pitchers in the

league, is also the greatest practical joker around—although I have to admit that, more than once, I have to keep from busting him one on the beezzer as a result of some of his pranks.

"Okay Kid," he grins at Whizzer, "take it easy on me now." Del winds up, lets go with one right down the middle, and Whizzer swings from the heels. The next thing I know there is a terrific explosion and Marks is rolling on the ground holding his sides laughing. It seems he substitutes one of those trick baseballs that explode when you hit them. Well, I have to admit that the look on Whizzer's kisser is very comical but I do not consider Del's joke the right thing to do to a rookie, especially one as big as Williams. Before Marks is finished laughing, Whizzer is at the mound and with one hand, lifts Del off the ground by the front of his uniform.

"The next time you try anything like that on me, wise guy," Whizzer snorts, "I'll do a little plastic surgery on your map." He plunks Marks down and walks back to the plate. This gets everyone's attention, as it is the first time that anyone can recall ever seeing Del speechless.

"Now pitch—and watch your ears," Whizzer orders.

**BY THIS** time, Del has regained his composure and we can all see he is a bit miffed at being shown up by a rookie. He winds up and lets Whizzer see his fast one. The Kid cuts and whistles one right back through the box that almost takes Marks' leg off.

I can see Crane perking up for it is almost as though the Kid aims the ball at Del—and guys who can hit the ball where they want to, are rare indeed. In fact, the last good place-hitters Pittsburgh has seen are the Waner Brothers, and you know how far back that goes. The Whizzer slams the next four pitches a mile each. By now the whole camp is watching this big guy.

"Let's see you hit a few righty," Sy orders, figuring that Marks can break off a few curves at the Kid. Many the spring blossom fades when they begin

throwing the curves at them. But the result is the same; the Whizzer begins to spray the outfield with viscious line drives that knock hell out of the fences.

By now, Sy is getting real excited. "Where did you find him?" he asks Horse Reilly.

"It is the damndest thing. One day last Fall, I'm riding past a farm in New England when I spot this big guy throwing rocks at some crows in a field. Now ordinarily, this would not be too unusual—but this guy is hitting the crows with the rocks, and from two hundred feet away, at least. So right away I figure this is most difficult to do, even for a big-league player. I stop and talk with him and he finally admits he plays some semi-pro baseball on Sundays.

"Well, I show up at the park and sure enough, there's Whizzer. It's a double-header and Whizzer pitches the first game. He misses a no-hitter when a batter ducks away from a curve that breaks at least a yard, the ball accidentally hits the bat and drops for a Texas Leaguer.

"In between games, I corner him and try to talk him into signing a contract right on the spot but he brushes me off. 'I'm pitching the second game,' he tells me.

"'You're what?' I yell in amazement. 'You'll throw your arm out.'

"'Oh no I won't,' he tells me. 'I'm pitching the second game with my left arm. I used my right arm for the first game.'

"And damned if he doesn't pitch a shut out as a southpaw. Besides that, he gets seven out of nine at the plate. I tell you, Sy, this is the greatest phenom I've ever seen."

Some of us who happen to overhear this conversation begin to look at old Horse Reilly sideways. It sounds very much like old Horse is beginning to lose his marbles and if we do not witness the Kid hitting the ball like a firebrand, we would think that Reilly imagines the whole thing, or else is slightly Scotched up at the time all this is supposed to have happened—

which is not too unusual since Old Horse is generally all Scotched up, especially while out bird-dogging ball-players. If you've ever had to eat in the one-arm joints of some of those hick towns, you'd understand why. But that is neither here nor there.

**E**VEN THOUGH some of us find old Horse's story hard to believe, it is easy to see that Crane is already sold on the kid.

"But one thing," old Horse tells Sy, "the Whizzer is very tempermental. The fact is, Sy, he really dislikes baseball."

"What?" Crane roars, like he is sitting on a cactus, "how can anybody who can hit and pitch like that hate baseball? Are you sure?"

"Positive. In fact, in order to get him here, I had to make some pretty tough promises to him."

"Such as?" asks Sy nervously.

"Well, he has to have two days off a week and he'll only sign a one year's contract."

"Of all the colossal gall," Crane begins to sputter, like he's having a heart-attack.

"I figure this way," old Horse explains. "With this kid on the Buccaneers, we can't miss winning the pennant, even if he does take two days a week off. Besides, he may get to like baseball—although the only reason he shows up here with me is that he needs the dough to pay for his farm, or at least, that's what he tells me."

By this time, Whizzer has worn out three-batting practise pitchers and the bat-boy comes over to Sy to report that they need more baseballs.

"Okay," Crane says; "let's see what you can do on the mound," and with that, the Whizzer walks out to the hill.

"How shall I pitch, righty or lefty?" he asks, his baby blue eyes staring innocently at Sy.

Crane begins to get red in the face and I can see a couple of blood-vessels getting ready to erupt, when old Horse Reilly calls out to the Kid in a

gentle voice, like you would talk to a little child, "Try right-handed first."

Well, Bat Gerson, our best sticker, spends about five minutes trying to hit the aspirin-tablet that the kid is firing at him. Finally, Ed Morgan, standing by the cage, gets impatient and talks Bat into sitting down for a rest while he takes his place. Whizzer, a grin splitting his boyish kisser, switches his glove to the opposite hand and begins to snap off left-handed curves that have Ed talking to himself.

By this time, Crane is in seventh heaven. "Can you imagine what this guy will do after he gets in shape? He's dynamite."

2



WELL, SPRING wears on and soon we're ready to break camp and barnstorm northward. By this time, Whizzer is already the hottest topic on the sports pages. What's more, it turns out that old Horse Reilly is even

a little conservative in his estimate of Whizzer Williams ability, since the kid can also play any infield or outfield position with ease.

As we all settle down on the rattler leaving St. Pete's for Texas, someone notices that the Whizzer is missing. Crane searches the train, personally, but can turn up nothing that resembles Whizzer Williams, although he does come across a couple of likely-looking dolls in the club-car that he files for future reference.

A week goes by and Sy is ready for the man with the net. He has local cops scouring the area between St. Pete's and Amarillo, Texas but to no avail. Meanwhile, the club continues its trek northward; as we pull into Atlanta, Georgia, who is waiting for us at the hotel but Whizzer Williams, looking as satisfied as a baby with a full tummy.

"Where in Hell have you been?" Sy explodes, very much perturbed, but at the same time, glad to see the Whizzer.

"Why," says Williams, "have you forgotten our contract? I do not take my two days off for several weeks and so I take an accrued leave, like in the army. I am surprised that you forget."

Now normally, if anyone ever talks to Crane like that, he can begin packing his bags and head back to Oshkosh. But the Whizzer is something special and Sy knows it. Sy is hungry for a pennant; the last few years are lean ones for the Bucs and Crane knows that Whizzer can mean the flag for the team. So he gulps down his anger and storms away, but not before he gets Whizzer's promise not to take any more accrued leaves.

The Whizzer isn't a bad kid, at that. Everyone on the club figures him as a big-mouth at the beginning, but we soon learn that the Kid is just confident. And whatever he says he'll do on the ball-field, he usually does; so we figure him for some kind of crackpot and let it go at that.

The Whizzer keeps pretty much to himself, and while he is not surly he is what we call a loner. We all try to make friends with him, but since we see he obviously wants to be alone, we give him plenty of the old solitude. Everyone, that is, but Del Marks. Ever since the kid lathers his best pitches that first day, Del follows him around like a St. Bernard. It is really comical to watch, as Mark comes up to the Kid's shoulders. Del cannot believe that anyone can hit his curve-ball so easily, and he keeps after Whizzer trying to find out how the Kid does it. However, even Marks gives up trying to become pally with him; it is very discouraging indeed to try to become friendly with a guy and to get a continual brush.

We finally arrive in Cincinnati, and Whizzer is named to pitch the opening game. The newspapers are loaded with stories about the Kid, and there is a lot of skepticism among the fans. No-

body, they figure, can be as good as the papers claim Whizzer Williams is. And besides, everyone knows that the sports writers are always going off the deep end about some rookie sensation and the guy usually winds up in the Three-Eye League by May 15th. However, all of us figure the Kid can't miss, and we know the fans are in for a surprise.

**C**INCINNATI starts Lash Zachary who always gives us trouble. Now, even though I am a veteran of many years, I still get the old butterflies in the stomach on opening day. I guess I always will as long as I play ball. But the Whizzer is as confident as a bookie watching a one-horse race.

For six innings, the Reds get two dinky hits off the Whizzer while we get nothing that looks like a bingle in five and a half innings. As we come up for our licks in the sixth, Lash, retires McGraw and Turk Farley, making it seventeen in a row. Whizzer strides up to the plate and gets a great hand, Ike Jeffries, the Red's catcher, gives Whizzer a bit of the old needle but the Kid grins at him.

Lash winds up and sends a whistling curve-bail that seems to pick up plenty of the outside corner, but Beans Montana, the arbiter, calls it a ball. Well, Lash and Ike are on him like a flash—but in twelve years in the big show, I never see anyone win an argument with Beans Montana. As a matter of fact, nobody ever does much with any umpire, come to think of it.

Whizzer turns to Ike, and grins. "You know, that was a strike if I ever see one." Jeffries lets the Kid have a few choice Brooklynese comments, which get the Whizzer a little mad. The Kid sets himself and cuts hard at Lash's next delivery. The crack of the bat sounds like music to us, and the ball is sailing deep to right field. Wheeler, their right fielder, starts pushing the fence back but it's no use—the ball is gone. The Buccaneers get their first hit, a home-run. Lash settles down and gets the side out, but not

before we get two more hits. The game winds up one-to-nothing, with the Kid pitching a five-hitter.

**WE** GET off to a good start and the Whizzer is even more sensational as the season goes on. He pitches every fourth day and fills in any position where he is needed—when someone gets hurt, or sick, or something.

Naturally, the papers are full of Whizzer's exploits. The *Pittsburgh Gazette* calls him "The One Man Gang", and the *Dispatch* nicknames the Buccaneers, "The Pittsburgh Whizzers". Everyone is felling very good indeed, especially Sy Crane.

"I've been dreaming about someone like Whizzer for years. Here it is July 4th and his record is 15 and 3. Why he is a sure pop to win thirty games for us. Not only that," Sy chortles, "the guy is batting over .400. I'm in a dilemma as to where to play him. I wish they'd change the rules to let ten men play instead of nine."

Sy is not the only one troubled by the Whizzer's versatility. The fans and the scribes are having a helluva time figuring out what position to vote Whizzer Williams on the All-Star Team; anyway this kind of headache a manager will settle for any day in the week.

In the meantime, Whizzer takes his usual two days a week off, and no one can figure out where he spends them. In fact, it bothers Sy so much that he hires a private eye to tail the Kid, just to satisfy his curiosity. But the result is always the same; the Kid gives four different shamuses the slip and Sy still can't figure out where he goes. Finally, he gives up because the Bucs are going good and Crane figures what the hell, why look for trouble.

Most of us are mentally making plans for splitting the Series dough and the picture is very pleasant.

"Don't get too cocky, you guys," says Gloomy Gonzales, one of our coaches. Now Gloomy is well-known for being the biggest pessimist in the

world and so we laugh his words off. Why, Gloomy is just now getting around to using banks, figuring all these years that they are unsure propositions.

"Never mind, I've seen teams blow bigger and safer leads. Don't forget, the Whizzer is still a rookie," Gloomy insists; but the Kid is going so great, even Gloomy is only mildly worried. So when we roll into St. Louis for the big Fourth of July doubleheader, the second-place Brooklyn can hardly see us for our dust.

The game starts and, as usual, Whizzer is mowing them down. In the last of the third, with one out, up comes a kid by the name of Bob Vale, that the Cards have brought up from Columbus to replace Rogers, their regular shortstop. In fact, when Rogers breaks his leg sliding into second, most of the sports-writers figure the Cards can pack up and go home right then and there.

As Vale steps in, I can see the Whizzer suddenly turn white. It is the first time the Whizzer spots Bob, and it's as plain as the nose on your face that the newcomer upsets him.

"Come on and pitch, chopper," Vale sneers at Whizzer. Whizzer delivers a curve-ball that misses the plate by a foot.

"What's the matter, hacker?" Bob hoots. "This is a baseball bat I've got—not a brassie."

Whizzer's next pitch sails a foot over the catcher's head and goes all the way back to the stands.

"Still the same old duffer," Vale jeers. The Whizzer's next two pitches miss the plate like a drunken mess-sergeant serving food on a chow line.

**V**ALE TAKES his base and immediately goes to work on the Whizzer from first base. Max Lewis, the Cards veteran lefty-pitcher, and a pretty good hitter, moves into the batters box. Mule McGovern, our catcher, signals for a fast one on the outside corner. The Whizzer delivers and Max Lewis connects, sending a bullet to

deep right center. Gerson, our right fielder, does a nifty job of playing the ball off the wall and holds Lewis to a single, with Bob Vale high tailing it safely into third. Two men on. The Kid is as pale as a ghost. McGovern trudges out to the mound for a talk with him.

"Take it easy, Whizzer. This next guy is a sucker. He ain't hit you once all season. Nothin' to worry about."

Ken Smith, the Cardinal second-sacker, is normally not a guy you worry too much about. But he's after Whizzer's first pitch like an actor reading his revues. The ball hugs the third base line all the way into the corner and when everyone stops running, Smith is on third with two runs in.

I don't want to bore you with the details, but before Sy can get the Whizzer out of there, the Cards have seven runs, with big Benny Ribaud, their backstop, slapping one out of the park with two on.

### 3



**I**N THE dugout, Sy buttonholes Williams. "What in hell happened to you, Whiz? They hit you like they each owned a personal ten percent share in you. And what was all them names that this Cardinal rookie is shouting at you?"

But Whizzer turns on his heels and walks away, leaving Crane standing there with his mouth open like a man-hole.

Well the Cards take the game thirteen to one and then win the night-cap in a squeaker, two to one, with Al Horan out-dueling Del Marks. We are a little dejected at dropping a doubleheader, but it doesn't depress us and soon we are back to normal. But the word gets around the league—and be-

fore long, every team is riding the Whizzer unmercifully, calling him such names as "Hacker, dubber, chopper, duffer, etc."

No one, including the other teams, can figure out what the names mean or why they should upset the Whizzer, but it don't take no master mind to see that the Kid is plenty rattled. In fact, the Cubs kayo him in two heats and what's more, the weak-hitting Cincinnati's get him out in the first inning. The Whizzer begins to get hit like a Las Vegas slot machine on the fritz, and before long, Crane has to stop using him, for fear Williams will get murdered by a line drive.

The Whizzer begins to mope, around the hotel and in the dugout, and no one seems to be able to snap him out of it. Sy is frantic, as Marks' arm starts to wear out from overwork and the Bucs begin slipping in the standings. In fact, after the Phillies beat us in a night game by belting the Whizzer around, we slide into second place—the first time we are dislodged from the top since Opening Day. We are all very glum indeed and then Gloomy Gonzales, the coach, rushes up to Crane's room very excited.

"Sy, the Kid's disappeared. I can't find him anyplace. The desk-clerk says he saw the Whizzer leave with a suitcase."

"Oh no," Sy moans. "I ain't got enough headaches. He not only loses ten games in a row, but he can't buy a hit; I don't dare use him on defense for fear he'll kill himself. And on top of this, now he disappears. Gloomy, I am at the end of the rope."

"Why not send for Reilly; he's the guy who found the Kid in the first place. If anyone can sniff him out, old Horse Reilly can," Gloomy suggests.

So Sy calls Reilly long-distance in Chilacarthé, where old Horse is scouting a new Bill Dickey—although you would never figure to find a new Bill Dickey in a joint called *Grogan's Bar and Grill*, which is where Sy finally contacts Horse.

By the time old Horse arrives in Pittsburgh, the Whizzer shows up again. Nobody can get any information out of him and I don't mind telling you that we are plenty sore, especially Sol Levy, the third-baseman, who already has his Series money spent as a down-payment for a liquor store. But as usual, the Whizzer doesn't give a damn and we are all disgusted.

Sy starts Williams in a couple of more games, but the rival benches continue their riding—and sure enough, the Kid gets slaughtered. His record now reads fifteen and fifteen, and the Bucs are in third place and slipping fast.

WHEN WE hit Brooklyn, the Whizzer cops another sneak and Crane puts Reilly on his trail. Two days later, old Horse shows up at the Hotel New Yorker plenty excited. It seems he's found the Whizzer.

"I began to analyze these names that they keep calling the Whizzer ever since that fresh kid came up to the Cards. You know, the kid from Whizzer's hometown," old Horse says.

"How can I forget him," Sy moans, "but get to the point. Where is the Whiz?"

"I am getting to that," Horse says in a hurt tone, figuring he is at least entitled to tell his story in his own way, since it was he who found the Kid, "Anyways, I remember that 'hacker', 'chopper', and 'duffer' are terms that golfers use to describe other golfers who are not the McCoy. On a hunch, I check with some of the golf-courses in New York—and sure enough, a guy fitting the description of Whizzer is a steady customer at a Westchester golf-course everytime the Buccaneers are in town. So I high-tail it out to Westchester and I find the Whizzer, sitting very dejected indeed in the locker room."

"I am sorry that you find me, Horse," he says to me, "because I try very hard to keep this part of my life a secret. You know I do not consider baseball as anything else but a

very silly game. It makes me a good living but my heart is not in it. It was not always like this. As a kid, I love the sport and am very happy while playing. But then I meet Hortense, a very lovely girl whom I love very much indeed. Now Hortense does not consider baseball a gentlemen's game and frowns heavily upon my playing. She thinks I should take up golf which, as everyone knows, is a gentlemen's game. In fact, I wish to state that Hortense is an A-1 golfer herself, and can beat most men without too much trouble.

"Well, nothing will satisfy Hortense until I try golf as a sport. I figure this will be a cinch for me, but much to my amazement, I find it very difficult indeed. As a matter of fact, before long, I can see that I am losing Hortense to my closest rival, Bob Vale, whom you will remember as the rookie Cardinal shortstop who starts me on my downfall. It seems that Bob is only fair as a ball-player but is really great shakes as a golfer!"

"So I say to Whizzer, 'Then why not forget the whole thing and come back and play ball for the Buccaneers?'"

Sy Crane is very upset, and so are the players. And so is Mr. Lonnie McBride, the owner of the Buccaneers, who does not like to pay players who do not play. In fact, McBride does not like to pay players even if they do play."

"So Whizzer says to me, 'You do not understand, Horse. I can never play baseball anymore because they all call me a hacker, a chopper, a duffer, a dubber and many other such names. And they are all correct, for I can never break one hundred. The best I ever do is one hundred fifteen. When Vale comes along and tips everyone off, I even lose my touch as a ball-player. To make matters worse, Hortense is a cinch to give me plenty of ozone after the season and marry Vale, unless I can improve as a golfer. If only I could break a hundred, everything would be all right again.'"

WELL, WHEN old Horse Reilly finishes telling Crane the story, Sy is fit to be tied. "How do you like that Whizzer? Here I've got the greatest prospect in history—and he can't produce because he don't know how to play a screwy game like golf. What are we going to do, Horse; what are we going to do?"

"I don't know about you," Horse tells Sy, "but I'm going out and get stinking drunk."

"A lot of good that will do; why don't you act like an old pro instead of a rumpot?"

All of a sudden, old Horse smacks himself on the kisser and lights up like a pinball machine when you hit all the bumpers. "What a dope! Why I do not think of it before I will never know."

"Why you never think of what?" Sy asks.

"Look, if we can get the Whizzer to bat a hundred, or whatever the hell it is he has to do, then he'll start winning again—right?"

"Yeah. So what's the hot idea you have?"

"Well," old Horse says, "why don't we hire Sammy Meade, the golf pro to teach him how to make a hundred?"

"Horse," Sy says, giving Reilly a hug, "if this works—so help me I'll buy you a case of Scotch."

So nothing will do but Sy Haines and old Horse Reilly must see owner McBride right away, even though it is late at night. Naturally, McBride is quite perturbed at being awakened, although he is generally perturbed at nothing in particular. In fact, Mr. Lonnie McBride is not very popular.

"Well Crane," McBride says, "what is the meaning of this disturbance at this hour."

"Mr. McBride, we have found out what is wrong with Whizzer Williams."

"I know what is wrong with Williams," McBride snorts; "he is a screwball. And an expensive screwball, at that."

"No, wait," says Horse Reilly, "I

will not have you talk in such a manner about the greatest ball-player I ever saw."

Now Mr. Lonnie McBride is not used to people talking to him in this way and naturally is shocked.

"Mr. McBride, the Kid is heart-broken because he cannot do a hundred in golf," Crane says—and with that, he tells McBride the whole story.

"Amazing," says Mr. Lonnie McBride. "But getting Mead will cost a lot of money."

Finally, after much figuring, McBride sees that by spending four or five G's for Sammy Meade to teach Whizzer Williams to make a hundred in golf, he can clear close to a quarter of a million in World Series gate receipts, himself—so he figures it's a worthwhile proposition, although it is hard for us to believe that Mr. Lonnie McBride will risk five G's, even if it is a sure thing.

McBride hires Sammy Meade, although Sammy's asking price is not five but seven G's, figuring that teaching Whizzer how to hit a hundred in golf will make him miss several very large golf tournaments. Most of us figure that Sammy must be pretty good in the business-department too; getting seven G's out of Mr. Lonnie McBride is a lot tougher than winning any golf tournament.

Sammy Meade works with the Whizzer every night after the ball-games and Crane takes a chance on the Kid by pitching him against the Braves.

#### 4



**N**ATURALLY, we are anxious for Whizzer to make good and as he warms up, Mule McGovern, our backstop, reports to Sy that Whizzer has good stuff.

Whizzer gets by the first inning, although Levy, our third sacker, makes a backhanded grab

of a line-drive that is beautiful to see. Woody Grable, the Braves right-hander, disposes of the first three Buccaneers without much trouble. In the second, the Braves fill the bases with one out and score a run as Woody Grable flies out to Wilson in deep right field. Whizzer gets the side out with no further damage.

The kid's fast one is working pretty good and we got into the last half of the sixth behind one to nothing. Levy opens the frame with a nifty bunt that he just beats out. Bat Gerson, on a perfect hit-and-run, drops a looper over second and Levy easily makes third. Up comes Morgan, our best hitter. Woody Grable is taking plenty of time and gets too cautious and loses Morgan. Now the sacks are crammed with nobody out. Grable slips McGovern a change up and Mule is fooled and pops it up to the infield. An automatic out.

I'm up next and damned if that blind umpire, Beans Montana, doesn't call a third strike on me that must be at least a mile wide. Anyways, that leaves them still crammed and the Whizzer coming up. Right away, the wolves begin to howl at the Kid.

"Come on Chopper," yells Regan, their first-sacker, "let's strike out in a hurry and get it over with."

But what the Braves don't know is that the Whizzer has a lot of his old confidence back; and as the first pitch rides in, he pickles it off the centerfield wall. Levy, Wilson, and Morgan are flying around the bases like the sheriff is after them, and all three score with Whizzer winding up on third. The Buccaneers are leading three-to-one. Woody finally retires the side and the game moves along into the top of the ninth, with the score still the same, three to one.

**W**HIZZER retires the first man on a grounder to Levy and then Bernie Turok, their reserve outfielder, pinchhits for Grable; but the best he can do is a loud foul popup behind firstbase, which is a can of corn.



Whizzer loses Harris, their leader, and walks him. Crane is biting his fingers down to the elbows by this time. Then Randolph, the shortstop lays off a three and two pitch that misses by inches and the Braves have two men on, with Timmy Regan, their slugger digging in at the plate.

"Take it easy, Whizzer," Mule McGovern says as he walks out to the mound, but it is not hard to see that we are worried. This is the best the Whizzer has looked since his collapse in St. Louie on the fourth of July, but he's tired, and that look of uncertainty is on his map.

Whizzer delivers and Regan cuts and whistles one back to the box that is labeled basehit all the way. However, the Kid reaches over, spears the ball barehanded, and just does get Regan at first for the game.

Naturally, we are all excited and elated but in the dressing room, the only thing bothering Whizzer is whether his hand will swell and prevent him from gripping a golf-club. However, the doc assures him he'll be okay, and Whizzer is all smiles.

The Kid's win gives us a new life and we begin to snap out of it. Del Marks shuts out the Braves in the next game and Lou Warren cops the finale of the series. Three straight from the Bostons and the Buccaneers are on the way back.

All the while we are battling to get back into the race, Sammy Meade and the Kid are working on his golf game. The more Sammy teaches the Whizzer, the better he pitches. The season rolls into late September and on the last day of the season, we tie the Giants and go into a play-off game. Naturally, Sy figures on using the Whizzer for the big game and approaches him on the subject.

"Well, Kid," Crane says, "tomorrow is an open day, so get plenty of rest, as you are working the big game the following day."

"I will rest right after my round of golf with Sammy Meade," the Whizzer says.

"How in hell can you think of golf with the pennant and maybe the Worlds Series riding on that game?" Sy explodes.

"It's no use," the Kid says; "my mind is made up. Tomorrow is the day that I see if Sammy Meade has taught me to break a hundred."

"Well, Sy pleads, threatens, cajoles but it doesn't help. Nothing will do but the Kid must play golf on the open day to see if he can bat a hundred. We all realize that this can be a very expensive game of golf for us all, if the Kid does not bat a hundred—since we know the Kid will be no good at all in the big game under these circumstances.

**SO** THE FIRST thing the next morning, the whole team accompanies the Kid and Sammy Meade to the golf-course; in fact, Mr. Lonnie McBride hires a bus for the occasion. It is a very tough-looking golf-course to us all, although most golf-courses probably would look tough to us under these conditions. Besides, what all of us knows about golf wouldn't fill a clip-joint shot-glass.

We get the old frost treatment from the assorted-looking characters who are hanging around the golf-club, wearing all kinds of funny, colored outfits, but we are all so nervous, we don't notice them too much—although Old Horse Reilly almost belts out one guy for making some crack about us reporting to the caddy shack.

We hang around the club for some three hours and pretty soon we see Sammy and the Kid coming towards the club house from a distance. We all surround the last hole and wait for them. Finally Sammy and the Whizzer are both near the hole and they begin to do all kinds of funny antics, like getting on the ground on their hands and knees and looking at the ground etc. After ten minutes, the Whizzer holds up his hands for us to be quiet and hits the ball into the hole. With that, he lets out a

loud yell and starts yippeeing all over the joint.

Naturally, we are anxious to know if the Kid bats a hundred or not, but we can easily see that he must have, judging from the smiles on both his and Sammy Meade's kissers, although for the life of me, I can never see what's so great about hitting under a hundred. In fact, I see plenty of guys in our league hit a hundred and all of them wind up down in the minors.

"I do it, boys, I do it," the Kid yells, jumping up and down. "Ninety-nine. I must send Hortense a telegram right away."

I don't mind telling you we are a happy bunch of guys on the way back to the city that night because we all know that we are a shoo-in for the pennant, now that the Kid has batted a hundred in golf. And if you'll check the record-books, you'll see that the Whizzer pitches a two-hitter and we cop the flag. The Worlds Series is also a snap and we beat the Yankees in five games, with the Whizzer winning two games, one righty and one as a southpaw.

**A** COUPLE of months later, a bunch of us are sitting around Al Horn's joint in downtown Pittsburgh when who should walk in but Sammy Meade, the pro golfer.

"You know," I says to Sammy, "I often think of how lucky we are that the Whizzer bats under a hundred by just one point; I hate to think of what will happen if the score is a hundred and one."

"Well," says Sammy Meade, "I'll tell you something in confidence, but you must promise that it will never leave this room."

Naturally, we are all anxious to promise Sammy, although I know that Reilly is a poor risk indeed when it comes to secrets, as everyone knows how easily Scotch loosens the tongue.

"The first time I see the Whizzer swing a golf club, I think that you boys are playing a rib on me; he has

as natural a golf swing as I ever see. But when McBride gives me a check on account, and promises the balance when the Whizzer breaks a hundred, I figure rib or no rib, the cash is on the level. I work on the Kid's stance, grip, swing, etc. and finally, we go out to play, as you will recall.

"After fourteen holes, the Kid is hitting the ball squarely, but getting practically no distance.

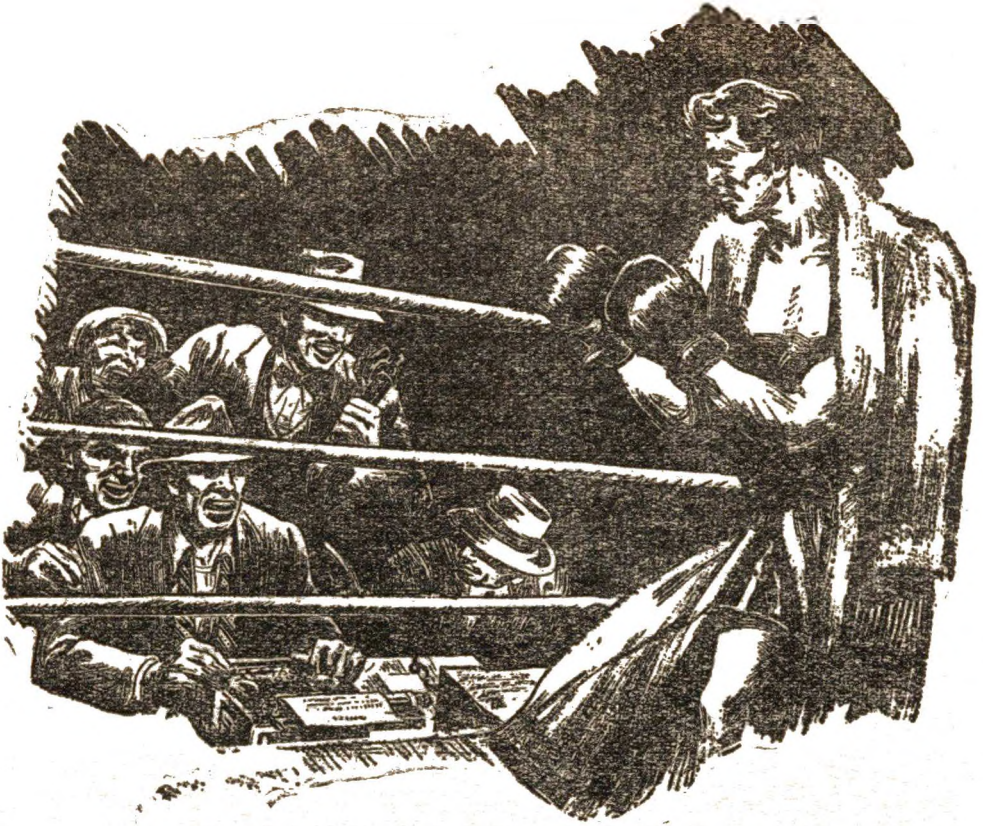
"Finally, on the fifteenth tee, I pick up his ball and get the shock of my life. The ball weighs a ton. Naturally, I do not say anything to the Kid but I casually inquire as to where he buys his golf balls. He tells me he buys them from a sports store in his hometown. The guy mails him a dozen every month or so. I inquire further, using great discretion, of course, and I learn that the sports store is owned by a man named William Vale, who is none other than the uncle of the Kid's rival, Bob Vale.

"Naturally, I put two and two together and it adds up to the old double X. Vale must be slipping the Kid weighted golf-balls, and since the Whizzer never plays too much golf before and keeps pretty much to himself on the course, no one ever discovers this foul play. Well, I figure the balance of my fee is riding on this round of golf and I fear to tell the Kid as it may blow him up, so I quietly replace his ball with mine.

"The result is that the Kid begins belting the ball a mile and birdies the last four holes, just breaking a hundred."

"It still is lucky," I say, "that the Kid just does it by one stroke."

"Well," says Sammy with a twinkle in his eye, "as I say, if the Kid doesn't break a hundred, I figure I am out the balance of my fee, so I do not think it is too far remiss when I accidentally forget two strokes when I am adding up the score—especially since the Kid is getting the double-X all this time from his rival. See you around, fellows."



# THE CRAZY RIGHT HAND

By Christopher Fleming

"We've got to beat Cortez—and doing footwork in a nightclub, and setting-up exercises at the bar, won't put you in condition for a win!"

I WAS WORRIED; I tried to hide it, though, because worry is sometimes contagious. Not that Joe Dawson was the worrying type. Big and bulky, he sat there on a table in his dressing room in the Garden, stripped for battle—naked except for a pair of white boxing trunks with black stripes. There was a dreamy, almost vacant, expression on his battered face. "No brain—no pain," I muttered to myself. I was sore; I didn't want this fight.

Somebody poked his head inside the dressing room door and shouted, "You're on next, Champ!"

Joe Dawson, middleweight champion of the world, slid off the table, exhaled his breath twice through his nose with loud, quick snorts and took a couple of swings with his bandaged hands at his shadow.

"Let's go," he mumbled.

I wrapped his bright blue bathrobe across his wide shoulders like I had done before for nearly a hundred

previous fights. I patted the middle of his broad back, right where *Joe Dawson* was spelled out in flaming yellow letters.

"Let's go," I echoed.

It was all so routine.

But I was ready to gnaw my fingernails; you didn't need twenty-twenty vision to see that the Champ didn't look like a champ tonight. Too much night-clubbing and too much Blonde from Cleveland. There was a bulge of flesh across his middle and a couple of dark bags below his eyes. The Champ wasn't in condition for this one.

The fight was strictly his idea. He said he needed the dough. He did all right; Uncle Sam and that Blonde from Cleveland had eaten up nearly every penny he had.

"This one's for the Uncle," he told me when Oscar Hoban, the promoter, asked us if we wanted a ten round go with a guy named Manuel Cortez, who was fresh up from Cuba. "I have to pay the Uncle—the gent with the whiskers."

Reluctantly, I let him sign up for the match. But all he did was build up some more bills on the strength of his purse for the forthcoming fight. He practiced footwork in the night clubs with the Blonde from Cleveland. His workouts—in the gym—were few and far between.

I'm an old man. Maybe I've seen my best days. And maybe Dawson realized it. My control over him had been slipping more and more as the years rolled by. The sports scribes had built him up as an "invincible fighting machine" and he believed it. I was his manager in name only; he was managing himself. He forgot I picked him up when it looked like he was going to wind up as a small-time club fighter or, maybe, a punch-drunk stumblebum.

**T**HE ROAR of the crowd was almost material in density as we walked down the aisle toward the

ring. Dawson was popular all right. The crowd loved him.

When we climbed into the ring, Manuel Cortez was already in the other corner. He looked a little lean and tall for a middleweight, and had kinky hair the color of black ink. He was sitting nonchalantly with his legs stretched out in front of him while one of his handlers massaged his back.

This surprised me. Dawson's opponents were usually nervous, because Dawson was both a cutie and a knockout artist. Not this character, though. He looked as though he were getting ready to watch a bout instead of fight one.

The worst part of the whole deal was we had never seen this boy in action and knew him only by reputation. He had done all his fighting outside the States. His record was good, but not impressive. All his fights were with guys with Spanish names that I could barely pronounce.

Somehow, I began to feel afraid for Dawson. Maybe it was only imagination, but I cursed myself for letting him talk me into this one. I thanked my lucky stars it was an over-the-weight match.

Cortez tore out of his corner at the bell and I knew, then, that he hadn't read Dawson's press clippings. Later, I learned, he read no English and only a smattering of Spanish. Most fighters were afraid of Dawson, tried to keep away from him, tried to box him. That was their downfall. Dawson played around with them until he got the opening he wanted and then—wham!—the lights went out.

But not Cortez. He whaled right into the Champ. He landed a couple of unorthodox rights on Dawson's jaw when they met in the center of the ring and, for the first time in his career, I saw Dawson's eyes go glassy in the first round. Cortez followed it up by keeping on the top of the Champ. He never gave him a rest. He kept jolting Dawson off balance with that screwy right that he swung

sometimes almost from the floor, other times almost from the ring lights.

Cortez was especially murderous in the clinches. This surprised me, because Dawson was usually very effective in a grab. But this guy had a habit of bringing his right over Dawson's shoulder and hitting the Champ high on the temple or even the top of the head.

The Champ was breathing a little too heavy when he came back into the corner after the first round.

"This...guy...must...think...he's champ," he wheezed when I relieved him of his mouth-piece.

"Maybe he's good," I suggested as I swabbed the Champ's face with a sponge.

Dawson sneered. "Good? I'll murder him. He's just lucky so far."

I almost clouted him in the face with the sponge.

**T**HE FIGHT got worse, for us, as it progressed. Dawson couldn't solve that crazy right-hand. He ignored every bit of advice I gave him. The advice, I guess, was none too good, though. I have been around the ring for nearly half a century but I never saw anybody who could use his right hand like Cortez. Sometimes he looked like a contortionist or an India-rubber-man as he slapped it at Dawson.

The Champ got as mad as a bull. "I'll knock him out! I'll knock him out!" he raged during the rest periods. And he looked like a mad bull as he charged around the ring, trying to put the convincer on Cortez in the last few rounds.

It was no use. When the gong clanged for the end of the fight, Dawson's face looked like somebody had chopped at him with a cleaver. It was red with blood and puffed up like he had walked into a hornet's nest.

Dawson, as I said, had been a popular champ. But the roar that the crowd sent up when Cortez's hand was raised in triumph was deafening.

The crowd loves to see an underdog win, and Cortez had been just that before the fight. I was mad at the Champ but I pitied him as he stood there, unbelieving, as he watched Cortez parade around the ring in victory. There were tears as well as blood in Dawson's eyes. He looked like a whipped hound. It was his first defeat since prelim days.

The usual after the fight crowd was absent from our dressing room. I managed to give a statement to a couple of stray reporters who wandered into the room and told them the Champ—maybe it was a helluva thing to call him now—would fight Cortez again when he rested up a bit.

"'Rest up a bit?'" Dawson snarled. "I can't rest up. I won't rest up until I beat that ape. Anyway, I need the money."

It was my turn to mock him. "Need money? What for? The bright lights? You're not going to fight again until you train. Not while I'm your manager."

"Well, maybe you won't be my manager!" he shouted and strode with angry steps toward the shower.

And he sounded like he meant it.

**T**HE NEWSPAPER accounts of the fight had nothing but praise for Cortez.

The sports scribes made it sound as though Dawson, at last, had come to the end of the road, all washed up—a has-been.

This puzzled Dawson. He had always been the fair-haired boy as far as the press was concerned. The unfavorable publicity hit him hard. All of which soured Joe, made him bitter at defeat. He took it very hard. He refused to leave his hotel suite while his many cuts were healing. That was smart. But after the wounds were bitter, he still refused to go out of the suite and sat around brooding.

I tried to shake him out of it. But it was no use. I tried to persuade

him to start training but all he would do was shake his head and say, "What's the use? I'm all washed-up. I can't fight. I couldn't even beat a bum like that."

I went into a saloon where I wasn't too well known and watched a film of the fight on television. I wanted to study Cortez's style and try to figure out a way that Dawson could beat him. It seemed hopeless. Cortez looked like he had no skill at all. He was so awkward. But, whatever he had, it would be tough for any fighter along conventional lines to give him a battle.

The papers started a clamor for a re-match that would give Cortez a crack at the title. But Dawson had no urge to fight. Cortez fought Joey Sands, a very good colored boy, and whipped him, too, all with that same crazy style. I watched and I shuddered from the ringside. Dawson refused to come along.

I thought maybe the Blonde from Cleveland would be able to pull him out of it. I hated her but I went hunting for her, anyway. I found her at the Crystal Bar, where she sang as part of the floor show. Good, too, I had to admit, though I loathed the very sight of her. She was good-looking, too. What they call a honey-haired blonde.

She wasn't very friendly when I went back to her dressing room.

"Not seeing much of the Champ these days, are you?" I asked. "What's the matter? No money—no blonde?"

It was the wrong opening. I thought, at first, that she was going to tear in and claw my face with her nails like a wildcat.

But, then, she sort of wilted. "That's what you think?" There was no sarcasm in her tone. "And he, too? Isn't it?"

There was something wet in her eyes but I figured she was faking.

"Well, it is, isn't it?" I made my voice cruel, because I wanted to hurt her like the Champ was hurt.

"Where is he?" she asked. "Why doesn't he call? I don't care whether you believe this or not. But the night of the fight I sat up until four o'clock in the morning waiting for him to phone. I don't care whether he's champ or not. I like the guy—see? If I had my way, he'd quit the ring. I had a brother who was a boxer. He died after a fight, I never told Joe that. Tell him I want him to quit fighting, find another job. I'll take him. Champ or no champ. Tell him that."

She sounded sincere. So I believed her. But what good did that do me? Frankly, I hadn't expected to be a Dan Cupid and patch up a romance. I went there to bawl her out. Now what? Maybe she would talk him into quitting the ring for good. Having a champ on your hands should be like a gold mine. I didn't want my gold mine to peter out so suddenly. Anyway, to my way of thinking, Dawson would never amount to much unless he beat Cortez.

**T**HE PAPERS kept yelling for Dawson to come out of his retirement and give Cortez a chance to knock the crown off his head. The Boxing Commission began to more than hint that Dawson would be deprived of his title if he didn't fight the Cuban.

To state it briefly, I was in a quandry. Dawson didn't want to fight any more—even though Dawson didn't know it. So what should I do?

I'll admit I had to agitate the gray matter somewhat. But, after thinking it over for a while, I went to Marge again.

"Look," I told her, "Dawson's like a shell. He ain't got the will to live almost. Let him fight again—just till he licks Cortez. That's all I ask. Let him get back his self-respect. I know Joe—longer than you do. He can't stand a licking. It'll kill him. Besides, he needs the dough."

"Does he?" Her blue orbs were all concern now. "Look. He gave me a

lot of expensive jewelry. I'll sell it—every present he gave me. I like the guy, see? I don't want any money from him. I just want to marry him, settle down and, maybe, raise a family. I'll let him fight—till he beats Cortez—if it means so much to him.”

Then I went to him.

“What happened between you and Marge?” I asked.

He was eating lunch and he slapped his napkin down on the table so hard that I thought he would break the table legs.

“Who wants a guy without money?” he said and started to walk away.

I grabbed his arm.

“Here's a few grand,” I said.

“Where did it come from?”

“Marge.”

I thought he would murder me at first.

“Look, Joe,” I said. I was talking fast, because he was clenching those big fists of his. “Marge loves you. She doesn't want your money. She wants to marry you. But she wants you to beat Cortez, too. She's like me. She knows that the biggest thing in your life is beating Cortez. You got to fight again, Joe. You got to lick Cortez. It's the only way out. You'll hate yourself forever if you don't.”

I talked on and on and on. Finally, he was convinced. He and Marge kissed and made up.

And that ended, happily, one phase of Dawson's life. But not mine. There was a guy named Cortez that had to be beat. Besides, I needed the dough. I had plans.

I grew to like Marge. She gave orders to the Champ that I was the boss as far as fighting was concerned. He had to listen to me. And I was cagey. No Cortez, I insisted, until the Champ had some tune-up fights.

**I** MUST give the Champ credit. He trained faithfully. It was tough to send him to bed early when Marge was out singing until the wee hours. But it was me that got no sleep. Daw-

son insisted that I chaperone Marge home every night after her chores at the Crystal Bar. I'm an old man I told you. Training Dawson by day, herding the wolves away from Marge at night, my twenty-four hours were full. I was the guy who was out of condition when Dawson fought his first warm-up fight.

This time it was Tony Lucino. Dawson had beat him three times before. I was taking no chances. Dawson won, not too handily, however. The lay-off hadn't done him too much good—his timing was off.

His next fight was against a battered old hulk named Sailor Edwards. Dawson won that one, too. I think I could lick Sailor Edwards myself.

So it drew near. The time to throw Dawson to the lion—in the person of Cortez—for the title.

I hate to tell you how many times we ran off the film of the first fight between the Champ and Cortez. I hate to tell you how we sweated it through when we sat at the ringside and watched Cortez practically slaughter Johnny Cummings in Cortez's own tune-up fight before the championship go.

We were convinced of one thing, however. Cortez was effective because he landed those unorthodox rights at the start of a fight. We formed a plan.

The Garden was crowded to the rafters when Dawson walked out to face Cortez at the start of the fight. When I say walked, I mean *walked*. Dawson practically strolled out with his chin extended. A big target for that lethal right of Cortez. But when Cortez swung his right, Dawson's chin wasn't there. Cortez's wild right missed by a mile when Dawson weaved and Dawson landed his own right like a sledge hammer.

The glove smashed full into Cortez's mouth and he crashed, with a bounce, on the canvas. It looked like he was out cold. I jumped up and down with glee. I was ready to pick up the marbles.

But Cortez had the resiliency of youth and he was hungry for fame and the Yankee dollar. He wobbled to his feet at eight.

I saw Dawson lost some of his confidence when his Sunday punch failed to do the trick. No other opponent of his had ever survived a right like that. I grew a bit bewildered myself, because Cortez grew stronger as the round went on and was able to weather the storm until the three minutes were over.

Dawson was in better shape than the last time. He was able to give a better account of himself than before. Cortez landed fewer of those wild punches than the last time, he was less deadly in the clinches; but the fight was still a toss-up as it wore on. I was afraid of Cortez's youth. If the fight went the limit, Cortez would be far the stronger in the late rounds. I began to realize, reluctantly, that our only hope was a knockout.

But how?

**WHEN** THE ten second buzzer sounded for the ninth round, Dawson told me, "I'm goin' out there and punch till one of us drops. It's the only way."

I managed to nod as I slipped in his mouth-piece. From there on in, I could only pray.

They met in the center of the ring and started to flail away at each other. Right! Left! Right! Left! For nearly two minutes, they stood toe-to-toe and slugged it out. The fans went crazy. Both guys were out to murder each other.

Punishment was dealt out without mercy. It was Youth and Strength against Age and Experience. Ad I dreaded the result. It was the extreme in roughness. Thumbs and laces were

used without quarter. But the Champ was starting to solve Cortez's right. He would hold it with his left and bang away with his own right.

But Dawson was tiring. His breath came in gasps. Then he went down. More from exhaustion than the force from Cortez's fists.

Slowly and painfully, Dawson lifted himself to his feet. It was an exhibition of sheer guts and fighting instinct. Cortez moved in for the kill. But he met a fighter that was battling with raw courage. Dawson's left hand, one of the best in the business, was working like a jack-hammer, pounding away at Cortez's face. Finally, Cortez began to miss. He grew wobbly. Dawson was lashing out with both fists when Cortez, covered with blood, collapsed in a corner. The referee had to drag Dawson away.

There was one thought that chilled me as I pushed myself through the ropes. This was Dawson's last fight. Marge was sure to never let him fight again. Not that I blamed her, because this was the goriest fight in years. But I hated to quit the ring myself. It was in my blood. I couldn't quit.

I was right. Dawson never fought again. He and Marge named the day and I was the best man.

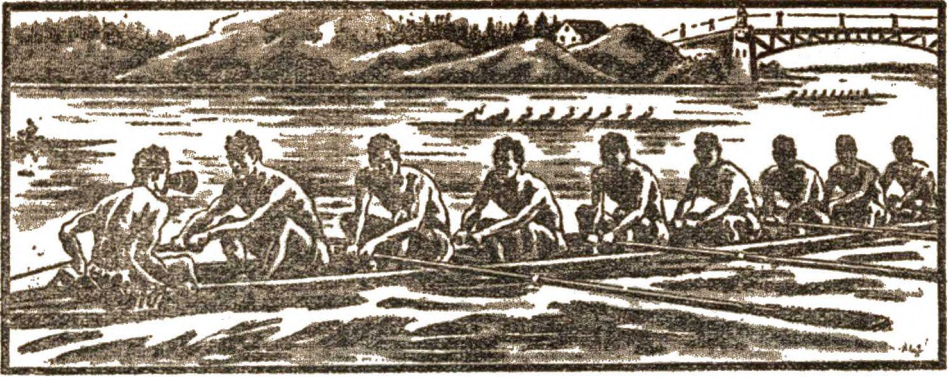
But me? I'm still in the fight game. How? Well, you see, I saved every penny I could out of my share of Dawson's tune-up fights. Besides I had taken a Brody and staked a sizable chunk on Dawson in that last fight. I made so much money I was able to buy Cortez from his handlers. How were they to know Dawson was retiring? Now this Cortez—well, I expect to make him the middleweight champ before the year is over. With Dawson out of the way, it'll be easy.



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# KNOW SPORTS?

**Special Quiz**  
By Harold Gluck

1. Little Elaine was puzzled. Her brother seemed normal, and yet what he said to his friend seemed to make no sense at all. In an excited tone of voice he remarked, "An exchange of pawns opened the queen's file and in the struggle for possession, the four rocks disappeared from the board. When the exchange of queens followed only pawns and minor pieces remained. A draw was agreed upon." *About what sport are they talking?*

2. Frank likes to listen to the radio. One day he got a strange station and was puzzled when he heard the announcer say the following: "Navy's varsity hit the final marker in ten minutes 21 seconds—ninety seconds ahead of Yale. The time wasn't bad in the face of strong head winds, which in earlier races lashed up whitecaps. The Annapolis plebes set the pattern for the day in the opening pace. They won by about four lengths." *About what sport are they talking?*

3. Helen went to visit her Uncle James. She listened to him speak to a man and then rushed up to her mother. "Something is funny, I think Uncle James can talk with worms."

She then repeated word for word what Uncle James said to a friend. "I don't like sandworms. Can't tell me they will last. Best thing in the world is bloodworms. Yes sir, nothing better

than bloodworms. Why do you use night-crawlers? It isn't easy getting them at night with your searchlight. When I was a kid I used plain garden worms."

*About what sport are they talking?*

4. Mrs. Phillips had been listening to her husband speaking over the phone. She only heard his side of the conversation and it went like this. "You can argue until you drop dead. I know the correct dimensions of the table. It must be nine feet in length and five feet in width. Take it or leave it! Can't be more than one inch thick and not less than three quarters of an inch thick. Whose thick? I'm not thick. You are if you don't buy that table." *About what sport are they talking?*

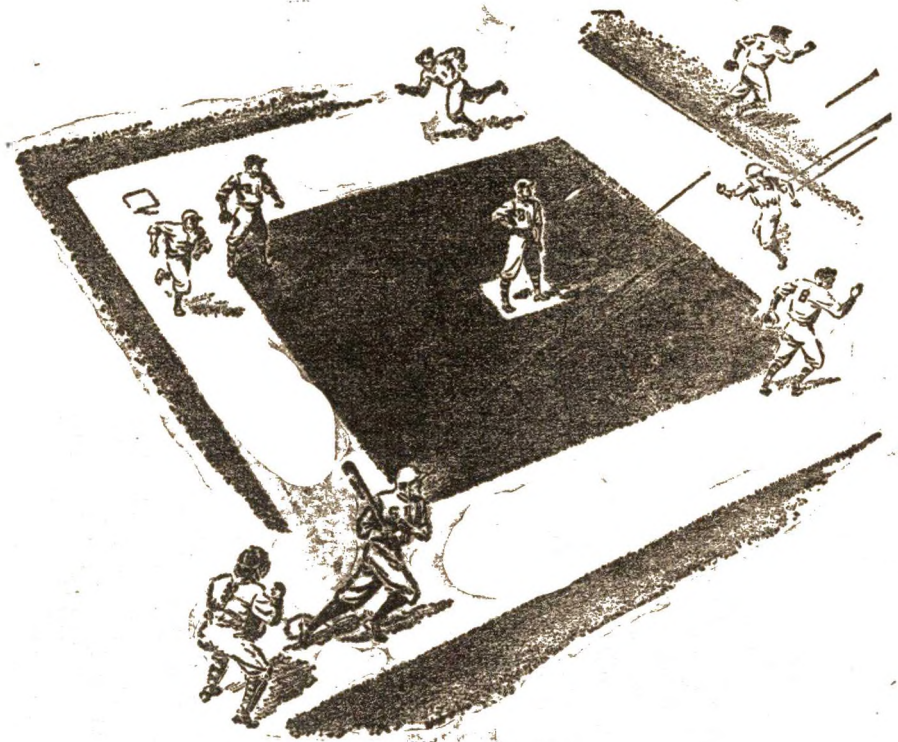
5. There was a big grin on Pete's face as he talked to his brother. "What a dame! I could go for her any day! She turned in a 71 to give her a 140 total for the thirty-six holes. And that was enough for top money of 750 bucks. The other dame held a firm grip on the lead with a 73 to make her seventy-two-hole total 288, six strokes ahead of the pack."

*About what sport are they talking?*

Answers: 1. Chess. 2. Rowing. 3. Fishing. 4. Table Tennis. 5. Golf.

# The Bonus Bust

by Glen Monroe



He was good, and he knew it, but he didn't know how bad he was, too, and didn't want to learn — not the easy way!



COACH CRANDALL said, "You're the only one who can win this one for us."

Young Buck Haley nodded. He got up off one knee, and walked to the plate, swinging two bats. There were Cougars on first and third, and they were two runs behind in the last of the ninth. He was a lean, lanky kid who slouched up like Babe Herman, the onetime idol of Flatbush. But he wasn't worried. It

was just another time at bat, another chance to stand up there and swing from the heels. He didn't know that a lean, sharp-eyed man in the stands back of first was watching him like a hawk. He didn't know that the same man had been watching him for two years.

The first pitch was in there for a called strike. Haley watched two balls miss the outside and then the hurler's arm came around again. The ball sped over letter high and Haley swung hard.

There was a *crack*, and the short-stop flung himself into the air. The ball rocketed out over his head, going on a line for the wall. Around the base-path came the tying run. Ahead of Haley the winning run came across home plate. Haley jogged over third

and cut across the field for the gymnasium. The man in the stands said nothing, but he grinned slowly.

In the locker-room the team congratulated Haley. The Cabot college nine had taken thirteen out of fifteen games for the year and Buck Haley was chiefly responsible. Batting in the clean-up spot he was socking the apple for a four-hundred-and-forty batting average. In his sophomore year he had hit three-ninety. As a junior his average had been four hundred and one.

The second-sacker, Tiny Martin, slumped down beside him. "You can go places in this game," he said. "You'd make a big leaguer, Buck."

Haley laughed. He had a friendly grin. "Professional ball is a different game," he said. "You have to be really good to click in the big time."

"You'd like it, wouldn't you?" Martin pursued.

Haley sighed. "Like it?" he said. "Boy if I even thought I had a chance."

He dressed and went back to his dormitory room. Graduation was just a month away. Already Buck had cast out a few lines for a job, but nothing had come back to him. His marks weren't bad, but there were plenty of students ahead of him. And things had been tough for his parents. Some way he had to start paying them back for helping put him through Cabot.

*If I only could be a ballplayer,* he thought. *A major-leaguer.* But the prospects weren't encouraging. Cabot was a small college tucked away in the hills. The box-scores of Cabot games didn't ever get in the city papers.

**B**UT BUCK HALEY didn't know his baseball scouting. And that evening, when he was poring over a history text, someone knocked at the door. At Haley's call a lean, stoop-shouldered man ambled in. He was deeply sunburned and his eyes had a permanent squint as though he had

been looking into the sun for too many years. But they were still as keen as a knife blade.

"My name's Sackett," he said. "How'd you like to play pro ball after graduation?"

"Huh?" Haley was staggered for a minute, then he came out of it. "I sure would like it," he said, "if I thought I could make the grade."

Sackett dropped into a chair. "I've been watching you," he went on, "for the past two years. I run the Danville Tigers. It's a Class B team and we have a working agreement with the Hawks. You've heard of them."

Who hadn't? The Hawks were a National League outfit that hadn't finished worse than third in seven years.

"You got a lot to learn," Sackett said. "But the Hawks will be needing a first-baseman in two years. By that time you might be ready for them. I'm offering you three hundred a month for the rest of this season."

He tossed a contract to the desk. Haley reached for it, then withheld his hand. "I'd like to sign it right now," he said, "but—if you don't mind—I want to show it to my parents first."

"You can mail it to me," Sackett told him. "I have to take a train out tonight." He looked searchingly at Haley, then held out his hand. "I'll be seeing you," he said.

The Cabot Cougars played again two days later. Buck Haley, with a job sewed up, had no worries on his mind at the plate. He collected three hits that afternoon, a single, double and triple, and his average skyrocketed to four sixty-seven. After the game he got talking with a sports writer on one of the local papers.

"Ever consider pro ball?" Haley was asked.

"I'm thinking of it," Haley said. "I have a sort of offer."

"Who with?" the reporter snapped. "How much?"

Haley stopped then, shook his head and walked away. But the next morning, the sports page carried headlines. *Cabot clouter to sign pro contract.*

*Buck Haley, socking first-sacker of the Cougars revealed last night that he has been approached by baseball scouts. One of the greatest Cougar players in history, Haley is expected to add to the role of luminaries who have stepped from college halls to major league stadiums*

**T**HE FIRST of the following week there was another game. Buck made three-for-four, and when he went into the gym after the game he found a stranger waiting for him, a man who introduced himself as Tucker.

"I'm from the Barons in the American League," he said. "I'm offering you a contract at five hundred a month and giving you a twenty thousand dollar bonus to sign. Here and now."

Haley was staggered. His feeling of modesty about his accomplishments began to fade. He saw himself as a star. "I'll let you know," he said. "See me in a week."

He went back to his dormitory and there he found Sackett waiting for him. "I've come back for an answer," Sackett told him.

Buck just grinned and waited.

"I get it," Sackett said. "We'll offer you ten thousand for signing."

"And how much salary?" Haley asked.

"The same. It's more than you're worth. You're a lousy first-baseman; you still don't know where the bag is; you don't know how to play a bunt, you can't catch foul flies."

Haley grinned to himself. A week ago he would have believed it. Now he recognized it as a gag, trying to get him to sign. "Listen, Sackett," he said, "I was green when you first

talked to me. I'm wise now; I know I'm good. What's your top offer? I'm selling myself to the highest bidder, so that talk about my being a bad ballplayer doesn't go. I'm not fooling with any minor league ball."

"You're making a mistake, Haley," Sackett barked. "You're a long way from the majors. I've watched you for two years and I know. I'm offering you a chance to learn the fundamentals, to move up the hard way and build yourself a career."

"No thanks," Haley said. "I'm ready now. The deal's off."

Sackett put on his hat. "It's funny," he said, "what a hunk of dough can do to some guys. Well—I'll be seein' you."

"Not me," Haley said. "I'm heading for the big time; I'm going up."

Sackett grinned queerly. "I'll see you on the way down," he said, and the door closed behind him.

Buck Haley grinned to himself; somebody else might give him more. He'd sit tight and play both ends against the middle. Hell, he was good. Two teams were running after him. There might be more to come and he was smartened up, now; he knew what to do.

Two weeks later the headlines burst again. On the eve of his graduation, Buck Haley signed a contract with the Shamrocks. He was paid a bonus of thirty thousand dollars to sign and guaranteed a salary of seven hundred a month to start. Six major-league clubs had been in the bidding. "And to think I might have signed in a B league," Buck laughed.

Three days after he graduated, Haley appeared at the Shamrock ball park. He was interviewed by every paper in town on his arrival and the next day manager Kilgrow notified him that he would start that afternoon. The Shamrocks were in second place, two games behind the Hawks.

Thirty thousand bucks in the bank

for a nest egg. Seven hundred a month. Next year he'd double that. There was plenty of heavy sugar in this game and Haley was determined to get hold of it.

At three o'clock, that afternoon, he trotted out to first and grinned as the fans yelled for him. He was batting fifth and he came up in the second inning with neither team having a hit as yet.

He took his stance at the plate, calm and unruffled. The pitcher studied him cautiously. *Why shouldn't he, Haley thought? He knows who I am. He knows I'm tough.*

The first pitch was a curve outside. The second one came in and Haley teed off. The ball hit to the right of the shortstop and spurted out into centerfield for a solid single.

Haley perched on first. He went to second on a sacrifice and came home when Arnold singled sharply to right for the first run of the game. The fans gave him a big hand when he went out to the sack again. In the seventh he bagged a double and the final score was three to one with Haley scoring one of the three runs and driving in another one.

At the end of a week Haley was set; he was hitting three fifty and he was a find. The president of the club called him in that day. "I was wondering," he said, "if you'd like me to tear up that contract and write out a new one for the rest of this year and next. We're willing to offer you six thousand now for next season."

Haley reached for the pen and then hesitated. "No thanks," he said; "I'll wait until the end of the season."

The president's eyes widened. "It's a fine offer, but suit yourself."

"Sure," Haley answered. He grinned and walked out. Six grand, he thought contemptuously. He'd drag down ten at least. They couldn't pull the wool over his eyes. He was smart.

fielding. The Shamrocks were two runs ahead in the ninth with two out and the batter lifted a fly back of first. Haley raced over, set himself and then let the fly ball bounce out of his glove. On the next pitch the batter laced one over the wall for the ball game. Haley didn't care much; he was hitting three fifty and leading the league. Those fast balls were right down his alley.

The next day they were playing the Sox and old man Peterson was pitching against the Shamrocks. Peterson had won two hundred games and all he had left now was a brain. He had control and he floated the ball over the corners. Haley watched him and went up to the plate all set to knock those cabbages over the fence. He swung mightily at the first pitch and plopped it down to the shortstop for an easy out.

The game went along evenly until the seventh when a Sox batter homered to give them a one-to-nothing lead. In the ninth Peterson began to weaken. Agnew walked after one out and went to third on a line single.

Haley came up to the plate and the crowd roared. The rookie hadn't put one out of the infield all afternoon and he was due; a long fly would tie the score.

Haley set himself in the batter's box. He looked at a strike, then watched two that missed the corners. Peterson came in with it. Keeping his eyes on the seams, Haley swung at that dumpy slow one. His bat came around hard and then he was sprinting for first base. The ball bobbed back to Peterson. The pitcher scooped, whirled and fired to second. The shortstop covered, took the ball, pivoted and lined the peg to first. Haley dove head-first at the bag, but the umpire's arm was up; the game was over.

It was Haley's first real bad day, but it didn't bother him; everyone had a bad day now and then. It wouldn't happen again. He went out the next afternoon to slug the fast one all over

**I**T WAS a week later that the newspapers found a flaw in Haley's

the lot.

The opposing pitcher was a hard ball thrower, the kind he murdered. In the second Haley came up with one man on and no one out. He had watched the hurler burn them through and he was set to kill it.

The pitch came in across the letters. Haley swung lustily. The ball bounced twice on its way into the hands of the second baseman. Over to second. Back to first. Twice in succession, young Haley had hit into a double play.

He went none-for-four that day and none-for-five the next afternoon when everyone other than himself collected one or more hits. He was dropped to seventh in the batting order. Four days later a pitcher fired a fast ball letter-high through the middle at him and Haley put it in the bleachers to break out of his slump.

"Now I'm going," he said to himself, "now I'm out of it."

**B**UT IT was the last fast-ball he was to see for a long time. The next afternoon in a scoreless tie, the Bruins put a man on first with no one out in the seventh. The infield moved in and Haley crouched at the bag. The batter bunted on the first pitch, sending a wobbler down the first-base line.

It was a good sacrifice bunt. Haley raced in, grabbed the ball, whirled to fire it to second. It was going to be close. He hesitated on whether to play it there or at first.

"First," someone yelled from the infield.

Haley slammed a throw at the bag; the batter was a foot away. The pitcher went down in the dirt for the peg but the ball shot through him and on out into right field. The runner on second romped home to break the deadlock. The game ended that way.

"Do you know," Kilgrow grated at him in the locker room after that game, "that in the last twenty-seven times at bat you haven't hit a ball out of the infield except for that lone homer."

"Don't worry about me," Haley said. "I'm just in a slump; it's temporary."



When the team came home again Haley was hitting two seventy-six and the writers were after his scalp. *Haley may be a twelve-thousand-dollar lemon. His fielding is not of big-league caliber and the pitchers seem to have found his batting weakness.*

"Nuts to them," Haley snorted. "I'll snap out of it any day now. I'm good. Didn't they give me twelve grand as a bonus? Didn't six teams bid for me?"

A week later he was hitting two fifty-one and after a game Kilgrow called him into the office and handed him a strip of green paper. "You're out on option to Buffalo."

"What do you mean?" Haley snapped. "I'm a big-leaguer. I won't play for Buffalo; I'll quit baseball."

"That's your privilege!" Kilgrow said. He walked out of the room and left Haley staring at the railroad ticket.

Two days later Buck Haley reported at Buffalo. He looked down on his teammates. They were going up the hard way and many of them were already as far as they would ever get. He'd be back again within a month.

But something went wrong. At the end of the season Haley was still with Buffalo; he had hit two-ninety-seven. Haley crossed it off as a bad year. The breaks had gone against him. Next year he'd come back with the Shamrocks and show them all.

Back home that winter, he was on a hunting trip when he ran into somebody who looked familiar. A tall, stoop-shouldered man with keen blue eyes.

"Hello, Haley," the man said.

Haley stared at him. "Sackett," he said, "how are you?"

"I'm fine," Sackett said. "Too bad you're not the same."

Haley laughed. "I had a bad year," he said. "I'll make up for it. What a laugh that I ever thought of signing with you. I didn't have to waste time getting to the top."

Sackett grinned slowly, studied him shrewdly, then shuffled away. "Well," he drawled, "I'll be seein' you."

Haley went home and waited for his contract to come though. It came a few days later. Six thousand for the year. Haley laughed and sent it back unsigned. What were they trying to do, pull a fast one on him? He'd take twelve thousand, not a cent less; he waited confidently for the new contract to come through.

He got it two weeks later—the same contract. Haley tore it up and waited. He didn't hear anything for a month. The Shamrocks were down in Florida and Buck Haley was itching to play ball. He picked up a paper one day and read an interview with Kilgrow. Kilgrow was asked what he was going to do about his one holdout, Buck Haley.

"He'll sign at what we offered or

stay out of baseball," Kilgrow was reported saying. "And I don't care much which he does."

Haley read the item grimly and caught the next train to Florida. "I'll take ten thousand," he told Kilgrow.

"Sign now for six, or stay off the field," Kilgrow barked.

**H**ALEY signed. He was hot all through spring training. He opened the season with the Shamrocks and got two triples in that first game. He was hitting three-sixty until the pitchers began giving him soft stuff again. By the first of May, he was under three hundred. Kilgrow benched him and Haley saw service only as a pinch-runner. Then he was called into the office one day.

"You've been sold," Kilgrow said, "to Saint Paul. Outright."

"Afraid to sell me to another club in this league?" Haley rasped. "Afraid I'd beat your ears off with another club?"

[Turn To Page 121]

## Our Big, August Issue's Feature Novelet



*"The ultomaton will come up with something, and that something will be far closer to a successful plan than anything a mere human, or group of humans could conceive. And out of what it gives us, we may be able to get something that will bring about the successful conquest of the entire Federation."*

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"Every club in both leagues waived on you," Kilgrow said.

Haley's face whitened. Slowly he went to his locker and collected his belongings. He gave one last look at the Shamrock regulars, then he walked out of the major leagues.

A week later Buck Haley played first base for the Saints. He went three-for-four that first day and the fans gave him a hand. He was on the way up again. He played the rest of the year with the Saints and ended with a two-eighty average.

"I'll show them," Haley said. "I'll show them next year. I'm only twenty-four. I'll still make good."

That winter the Saints offered him a contract for three hundred dollars a month. Haley turned it down, then went to the training camp without signing his contract. They had a kid playing first base, some hick from the backwoods with a mouthful of teeth and a silly grin. A kid whose eyes bugged out whenever anyone talked about how to make a certain play.

"He's a pushover," Haley laughed. "I saw you play in college," the dope told him one day. "Gee, Buck, you sure could hit that ball; too bad you can't hit a slow one."

"What are you talkin' about?" Haley growled. "Do you know what the Shamrocks paid me to sign? Thirty grand."

"I read about it," the kid said. "The thirty-thousand-dollar lemon."

Haley started to sock him and then he didn't. Maybe the hick wasn't such a dope. Getting his goat. The two of them alternated at the first-base sack for three weeks and Haley still hadn't signed his contract. He was going to outsmart them. As soon as they realized that they needed him on first he could make his own terms.

The team was starting north when Haley was called into the manager's hotel room. He grinned to himself. They were worried now. Going to make the first move, offer him a contract.

(Turn To Page 123)

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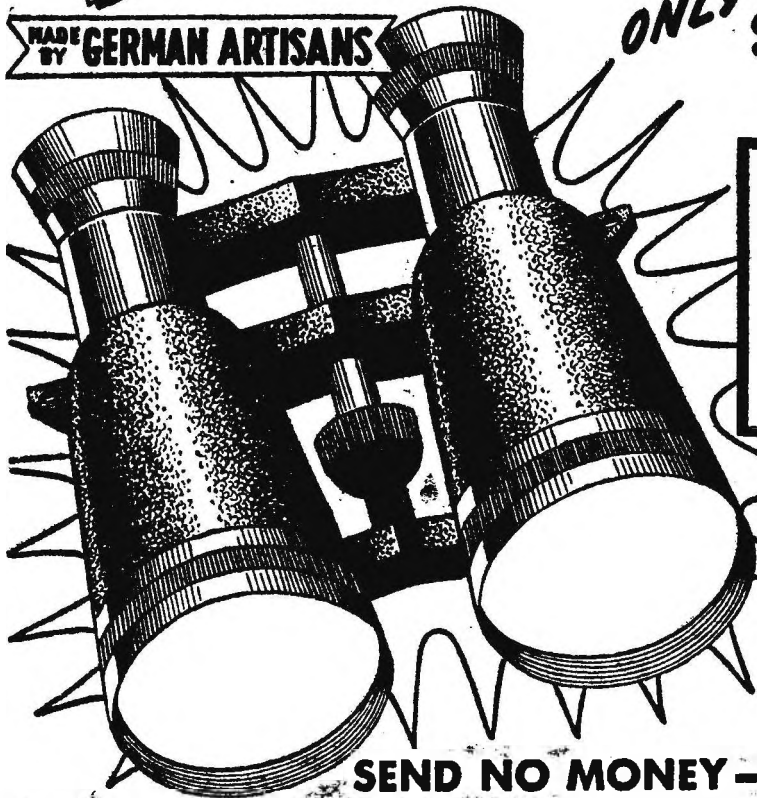
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"Well," he started out, "what's your top offer?"

The man looked oddly at him. "You've been sold, Haley."

It took him a moment to get it. "The Shamrocks again," he said. "Back to the big time."

He stuck out his chest. He knew it. They couldn't keep a good man down.

"Wait a minute," the manager said. "I sold you to the Danville Tigers. They're in a Class B league."

"You and Danville can go to hell," Haley said, and walked out. In the lobby, the kid first baseman grinned at him. Haley doubled his fists and then walked on. He'd quit baseball, make a living in another business. He could make good in another line.

He went back home and had a job a week later. Thirty bucks a week and a good future if he worked hard. He had an office job sitting at a desk all day. The window beyond his desk looked out over a playground, and afternoons the kids played ball out there. Haley began to watch them. His legs and arms itched. They felt cramped. He stood it for two weeks, then quit cold, went home and got out some road maps. He looked for Danville. It was a jerkwater Pennsylvania town. He climbed into his car, started out and arrived in Danville a day and a half later. The ball park was rickety-looking. Haley went into the clubhouse, found a uniform, dressed and went out on the playing field. Out in front of the dugout a tall, stoop-shouldered man with a quid of tobacco in one cheek was watching the team limber up.

Haley walked up to him. "I'm Haley," he said, "reporting—why, blazes, you're Sackett."

"That's right," Sackett said, and Haley laughed bitterly, "I'll sign with you for three hundred a month."

"You'll sign for two," Sackett said.

"You offered me three, before," Haley snapped.

[Turn Page]

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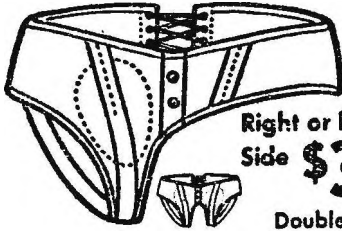
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"You were worth it, then," Sackett drawled.

Haley signed, and played in the opening-day game before a bunch of fans who had forgotten ever reading about the thirty-thousand-dollar recruit. He got one hit, a scratch single.

Sackett came into his hotel room that night. The manager strolled in and sat down on the edge of the bed.

"Well, Haley," he said, "what are you going to do about it?"

"About what?" Haley asked him.

"You're a busher," Sackett said.

"You were a thirty-thousand-dollar lemon. You're getting two hundred a month now and it looks as though it's more than you're worth. You've sunk to a Class B league, gone from the top to the bottom. In another year maybe you'll be sweeping out some barroom for a living."

"You're a liar," Haley snapped. He started for him but Sackett only laughed. "Think it over," he said.

**F**OR THE first time in his life Buck Haley thought it over. And every word of it was true. He was a ball-playing bum; he had failed with every ball club, muffed every opportunity.

"You still think of yourself as a thirty-thousand-dollar player," Sackett said. "Do you know what I paid for your contract? Five thousand dollars."

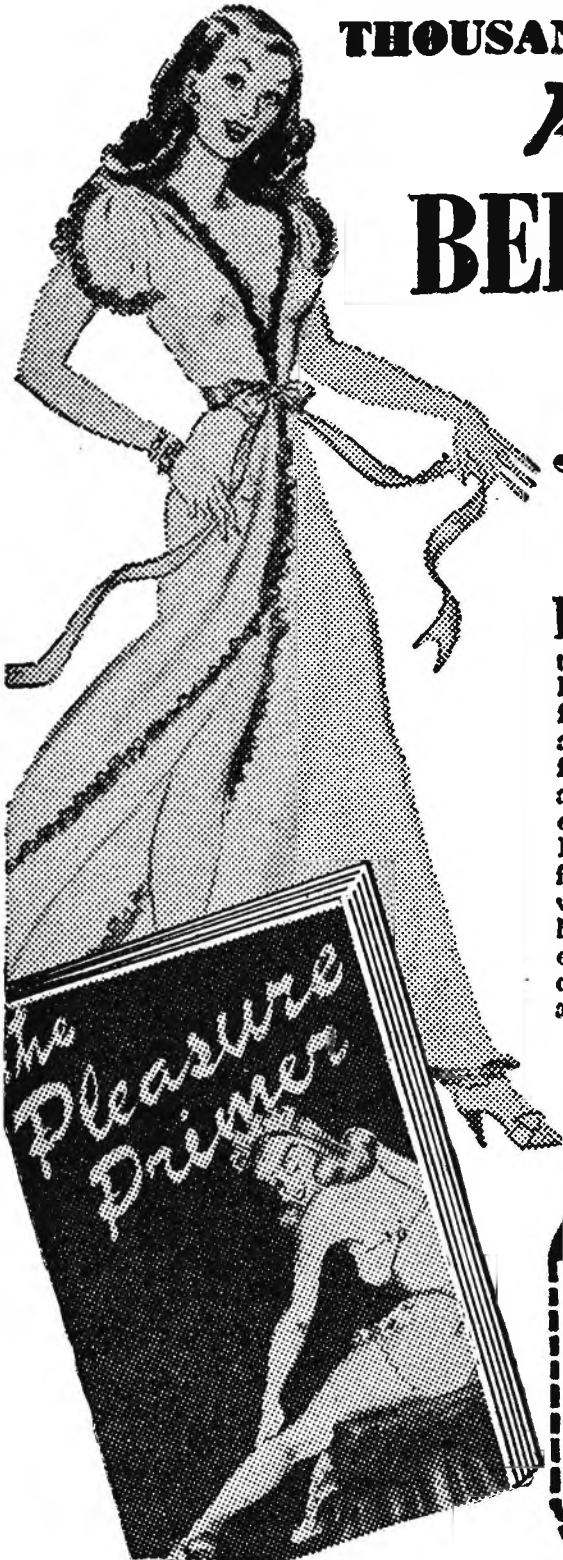
Haley's eyes were deep shadows in his face.

"When I first saw you," Sackett went on, "you were a nice kid. You were modest and hard-working. Then you changed overnight because they hung a price tag on you; you got cocky and confident. Now you're still trying to live up to the past. You're a lousy first-baseman, Haley. Remember, I told you that once."

"I still don't believe it," Haley flared up.

At the end of a week Haley was hitting just over three-hundred. In a Class B league. They were still feed-

[Turn To Page 126]



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**TEN-STORY SPORTS**

ing him slow balls and he was still tripping over his own feet. He went to Sackett the next day. He looked different. He was humble and yet proud and he'd been thinking. He had been looking at himself with the price tag removed.

"Mr. Sackett," he said, "you were right; I'm a lousy first-baseman."

Sackett's eyes gleamed. "Be at the ball park at ten in the morning."

For an hour and a half the next morning Haley practiced fielding bunts and going after flies. He did that every day for two weeks, and then he alternated fielding practice with batting practice. "I can't seem to hit those slow balls squarely," Haley told Sackett.

"That's because you're swinging from the heels," Sackett told him. "Shorten up on the bat; punch the ball."

The fielding and batting practice continued. Haley learned to know just where that bag was. He got so he could stab it with either foot, without looking for it. He began to shorten his hold on the bat when he was up at the plate. He stopped hitting long balls, but got so he could time those slow ones and punch them out into right field. The Danville team began to climb in the league standings. When the hit-and-run was on Haley was on ace at hitting behind the runner, at punching that ball between first and second. His average climbed to three-twenty; he could wallop slow ones and the pitchers began to give him speed. Haley shifted his grip, swung from the heels again and began bombarding the fences. With a month of the season to go Haley was the Danville hero. He was batting three seventy-six and he was the best fielding first sacker in the league.

He went up to Sackett on the last day of the season and shook his hand. "Thanks," he said, "I'll play better ball for you next year, Mr. Sackett."

Sackett gave him a queer smile.

[Turn To Page 128]

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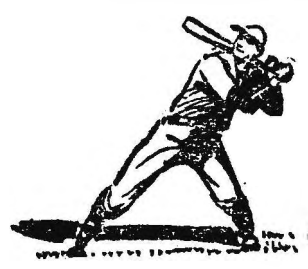
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**TEN-STORY SPORTS**

Haley didn't figure out the reason for that smile until the next spring when his contract came in. The contract was from the Hawks, for six hundred dollars a month. Haley put it in the mail that same day—signed. He hoped he'd be worth it, this time.

**DUSK ON THE DIAMOND**  
(Continued From Page 54)



him in there, after all those failures?"

"Playin' a hunch, maybe."

"No, Dutch. It was more than that. I know it was."

"Well, I kind of had to, Jamie."

"What do you mean, *had to*?"

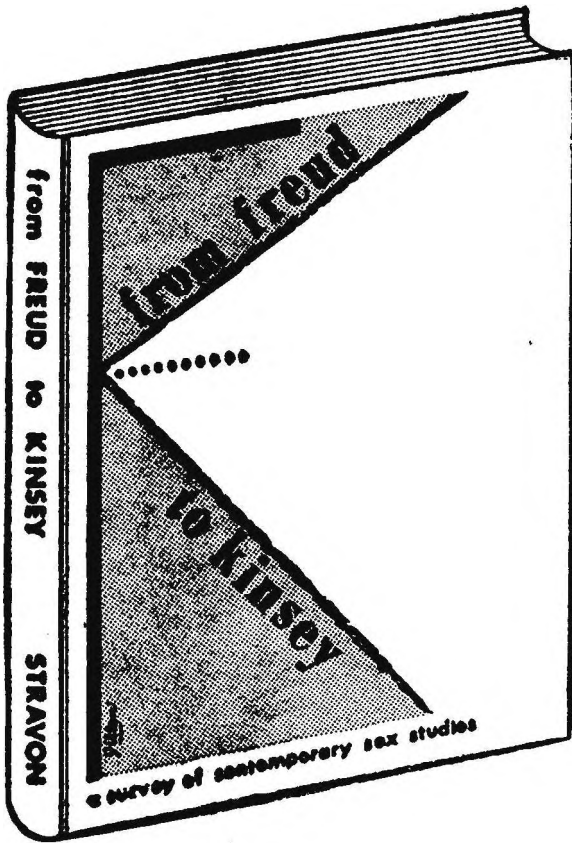
"I owed it to him," the Dutchman said softly. "That boy in the water, I told you about. The one Corry held up that time... He was my kid brother."

"I see," murmured Jameson, and they were silent for an interval, watching the tumult before them, the hysterical screaming fans and the ball players dancing and yelling like kids, mauling old Congo Corriden and cursing him with great affection. Keith Pollard was in it too, whooping it up with the loudest of them, all his smug superiority gone. And Ordway, Kennelly and Fenner were close around Frank Corriden, closer than the older men who had been with Corry for years, winning and losing.

"Well, maybe Corry's wrists will be all right now," Jameson said. "I certainly hope so."

"With a heart like Corriden's got, he doesn't need wrists," the Dutchman said with quiet reverence. "He doesn't need anythin' else."





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## Dope From The Bugout

(continued from page 8)

the St. Louis Browns: About five years ago, when you first came up with the New York Yankees, you worked out with Al Frazin, then the Yankee announcer, at 6 p.m. An arc-light tilt was scheduled at 8:30 p.m.

While about fifteen feet away, you threw a fast-ball at him—unwittingly, of course. Al put up his left hand to protect his face; the ball caught him on the second finger of his hand and hurt like the devil.

Al picked up the ball, said nothing, and continued to play catch with you.

The next day, his finger hurt so much, he had it ex-rayed; it was broken.

Just thought you'd like to know,

because Al never got around to telling you. He's in the army.

### YEAH, WOT?

At Toots Shor's the other night, two baseball fans were discussing the relative merits of the various American League clubs.

One of the fans said he liked the Yankees very much, and in the very next breath, 'lowed as to how he favored the A's.

He kept changing his allegiance so often that the fellow he was debating with finally roared, in exasperation, "For the luva Mike, what are ya—a Yankee fan or an Athletic supporter?"

## The Four-Handed Passer

(continued from page 65)

signals were barked and Antie was a profusion of arms. Hunched over his back toward the goal line, he began to skid down the field. The brown jerseys of the Bison line came charging through like a tidal wave. As he turned, Antie slipped and fell!

But then he threw up his arms—all four of them. He didn't have the ball. Ostrowski had carried the ball across himself on the old center-rush bootleg play. The Yellowjackets had scored the extra point. Time elapsed on the next kick-off. We won, 7-6.

we went out to California and lam-basted the Lambs. Out in that warm sunshine, Antie romped around the field in a performance unequalled in professional football history. He threw six touchdown passes and ran thirty yards for another six-pointer. We won 45-13.

So now the Yellowjackets, once the lowly outcasts, are now the football champions of the world. Thanks to the funny-looking guy with four arms.

And—oh, yes—I gave Hogan a sizable bonus. I don't know who was the most surprised—him or me.

I guess you read in the paper how

★

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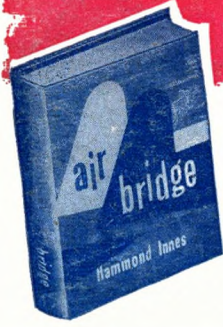
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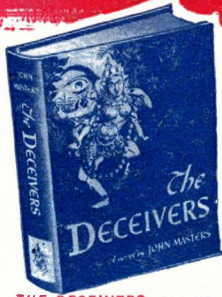
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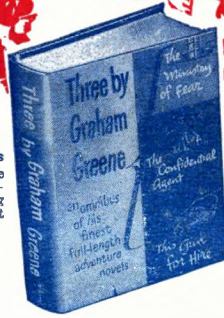
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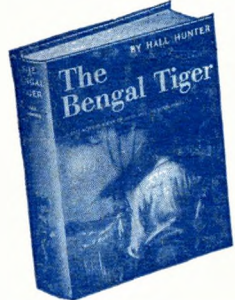
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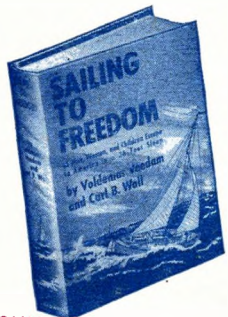
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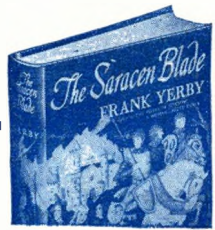
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