

THRILLING SPORTS

15¢

WINTER
ISSUE

THRILLS
IN SPORTS
By JACK KOFOED



Rudolph
Belarski

**CRAZY
FOR
TROUBLE**
*A Football
Novelet*
By WILLIAM J.
O'SULLIVAN

A THRILLING
PUBLICATION

**UNBEATEN
SEASON**
A Gridiron Novelet
By TRACY MASO

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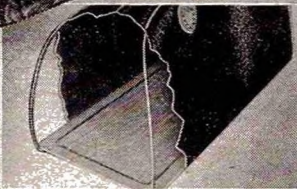
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THRILLING SPORTS

Vol. 18, No. 2

A THRILLING PUBLICATION

Winter Issue

A COMPLETE GRIDIRON NOVEL



UNBEATEN SEASON

By TRACY MASON

The boys at Klamuth College thought that football was just a game—and not a business proposition—until they found themselves among the big-time leagues!

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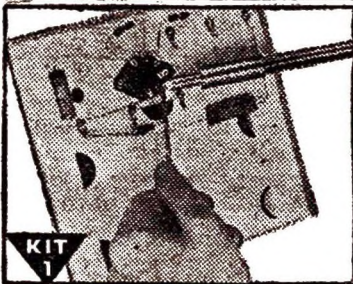
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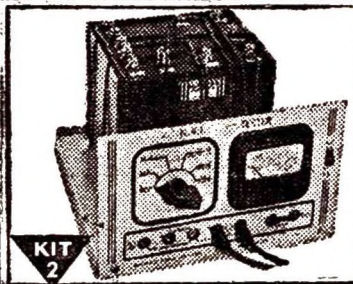
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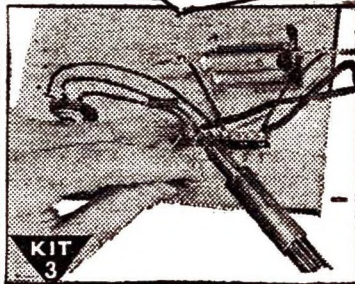
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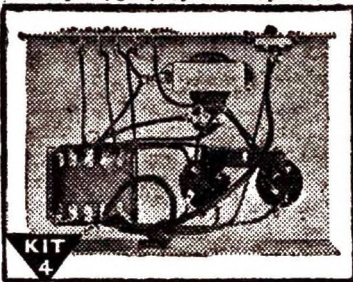
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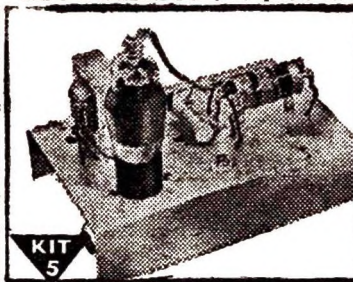
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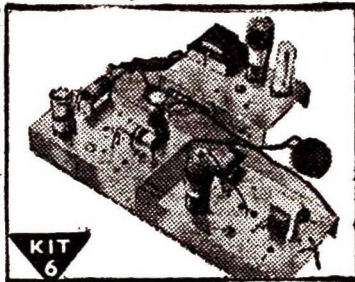
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The SIDELINE



A DEPARTMENT FOR SPORT FANS CONDUCTED BY CAP FANNING

IT HAS become something of a custom for the Cap to sound off with some of his own opinions in this space before exposing himself to the opinions of his readers as expressed in the letters that keep rolling in. However, when he took a crack at last year's multitudinous and (in many cases) meaningless Bowl games, he seems to have touched off a controversy that demands immediate attention.

Most telling of the missives received on the subject stemmed from a sailor in the United States Navy employed as a Hospital Assistant, Second Class, on the hospital staff at Shoemaker, California. So here goes with his cerebral ideation on the subject before the Cap takes off on his own.

BOWL BLAST

by Joe A. Earp

Dear Cap: I just got through reading your comment on the New Year's Day Bowl Games in the Spring issue of **THRILLING SPORTS**. I have been reading your articles in **TS** for quite a while and I have enjoyed them very much. But I just couldn't go for what you had to say about the Bowl games.

Sure there are lots of great football players in the service, but I can't see why that should hurt football so much. It has given boys a chance to become great football players who otherwise would probably not have had a chance with so many "greats" stepping on them.

I am in no way glad that the war came along! What is sport coming to when they let the pros have all the spotlight? Most of the pros have been playing for years and know and use all the dirty tricks in football. I can honestly say that I would rather see twenty-two boys on a field who couldn't play worth a darn, fighting for what football stands for, than two pro clubs battling each other's brains out with all their razzle-dazzle and dirty tricks just for money.

Maybe I am just a bit old fashioned as far as sports go, but that is the way I feel about it. I still enjoy reading your department. As the old saying goes, "Everyone has a right to his own opinion." In case you want to answer this, as I am sure you wouldn't publish such a disagreement, here is my address—Unit 3 Bx. 1, U.S.N. Hospital (Staff) Shoemaker, California.

Well, Joe, that's your opinion, and thanks for giving us a chance to run it. However, in teeing off on pro sports, you seem to be trying to masticate quite a mouthful. And allow the Cap to point out one apparent contradiction.

You say, "Most of the pros have been playing for years and know and use all the dirty tricks in football." Now you and I both know that football, especially big-time pro football, is indeed a rugged game. So how could these fellows play out their full

span if the game were as dirty as you seem to think it is?

The answer, of course, is that it isn't. It's rough—yes. Plenty rough, as it should be. But the professional team that gangs up on an opposing star to eliminate him from a game (a practise which has long and not always tacitly existed in the college game where big gate money and coaches' jobs are at stake) would be an invitation to team suicide.

The mere fact that professional players are in there to make a living is the best protestation the rule book can have. A player or a team that acquires the reputation of using bone-breaking methods to win its games is invariably in for a strong and bitter dose of its own medicine from all the other teams in the circuit. In the big-time game, it's play for all you're worth to win your salary and live and let live otherwise.

Furthermore, team spirit exists, just as it does in big league baseball. No group of men can work together as a unit under half-way decent management and playing conditions and not acquire a certain esprit de corps. And the boys do play better football than the college variety, just as professional baseball players top the campus nines.

But with the space allotted to us, let's stick to football. The development of the amateur-professional controversy in this country is so typically an American growth that it merits the attention. In virtually every other country in the world where sports flourish, the amateur athlete must be a "gentleman," thanks to the caste system, while the man who is forced to work at it and becomes a pro rates as little more than one of the hired help.

In America, however, many of our so-called best people are pros. Fellows like Chris Cagle and Shipwreck Kelly and others get around with the upper crust. Playing for money carries with it no social stigmata. For which, praise Allah!

But football, like just about everything else around, has become so highly specialized that, to master it completely, a man must give up almost as many years of his life as he must to become a qualified professional man. When a player finishes college, he has just about learned how to play.

(Continued on page 8)

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THE SIDELINE

(Continued from page 6)

Because a number of such men wanted to keep on playing after receiving their diplomas and vast numbers of people wanted to watch them perform, the professional game has reached its present heights. Actually, there isn't a great deal of difference between your twenty-two kids on a home-made grid-iron and two professional teams fighting for a National Championship in a huge stadium.

Both gangs love the game or they wouldn't be out there taking their lumps.

Having settled this issue, probably to no one's satisfaction, let's take a look at some of the other loot from the mailbox.

OUR MAILBOX

An old (or rather not-so-old) contributor has returned the following missive:

HOW BAD WERE THEY?

by Jackie Patalano

Dear Cap: I just bought the Spring issue of THRILLING SPORTS and it's a beauty! But the reason I'm writing is that I'm not nineteen years old, but fourteen (14), or was when I wrote that letter. Thanks for the story on how the Red Sox got where they are now. I never thought they were as bad as that before Tom Yawkey bought them.

I'm a bit sorry they sold or traded Skeeter Newsome and Jim Tabor. They'd be better off if they had kept them, especially Tabor. Well, thanks for answering my letter and keep publishing those good stories.—12 Washington Terrace, Somerville, Massachusetts.

Why, thank you, Jackie. You can thank the stars for your tender years because, had you been born a bit earlier, you would have suffered, bled and died as a Red Sox fan. They weren't bad before Yawkey bought them. They were terrible.

For the sake of the record, following the season of 1921, when the Frazee-Barrow regime finished peddling all of its real top-flighters (Ruth, Schang, Everett Scott, Waite Hoyt, Herb Pennock, Carl Mays and Joe Bush) to the Yankees, the shorn Sox took a dive to the cellar and made it their almost exclusive property for a matter of an even dozen years.

In that dismal duo-decem, they finished eighth nine times, seventh twice and sixth once, the latter in 1931 when Detroit and Chicago finished beneath them in that order. Such a dismal era has been matched only by the Philadelphia Nationals of 1918-45 and even they managed to stick their nose once into the first division. You're lucky, as a Boston fan, that you weren't alive while most of this ivory famine was going on.

As for the sale or trading of Tabor and Newsome, neither deal seems to have affected

(Continued on page 111)

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*S. E. A., Kansas City, Mo.



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*C. S. Lucien, Okla.



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*R. F. MAXEYS, Ga.

*Actual pupils' names on request. Pictures by professional models.

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UNBEATEN SEASON

By
TRACY MASON

The boys at Klamuth thought football was just a game—until they found themselves among the big-time leagues!

CHAPTER I

They Wanted to Play

EVER hear of Klamuth College before that day they came out of nowhere to make the football headlines? Didn't think you did. Not many people had heard of Klamuth before that Saturday afternoon, not too long ago, when we took the sports world by the ears and turned it upside down by holding State University to a 7-6 score.

Maybe you read about that game, or perhaps you didn't catch up to Klamuth until we beat Duchess, 20-0, in the big school's opening game the following year. Lord knows, there were reams of newspaper copy written about those games, and darned near every sports writer in the country came up with the original lead that compared Klamuth to the Praying Colonels of Bo McMillin's day.

I don't know much about Centre. They were hot a little before my day. I dimly recollect that they beat a big Harvard team or threw a scare into the Crimson, at least, but that's about all. Football fame is the fleetingest of all, if there is such a word as "fleetingest." Of course people remember the Four Horsemen and Red Grange, but just ask somebody who isn't a complete bug about football to name the Four Horsemen and see



The passer saw me coming and hesitated a second too long

A GRIDIRON NOVEL

if they can get all four.

Chances are they'll get Crowley and Layden—bingo—like that. They might get a third man, but it's a good bet that they'll have trouble remembering Miller or Strudeler—and I'm not even sure about the spelling of that last guy.

But as I was saying, I don't know much about Centre College of the days of Bo McMillin, the team that Klamuth was compared to by a thousand sports writers after we walloped Duches. But I do know the real story behind the Klamuth squad. I ought to. I helped build the team and I played against State and Duches, and in the Orange Bowl later.

Maybe you'd be interested.

A good place to start would be when Bing Thompson and K. P. Juges and Rocky Massone called on Prexy Tait to ask the Old Boy if he had any objections to a bunch of us getting up a team. It was like that. We got up the team like a bunch of kids who'd grown tired of sitting around the shack on some vacant lot. Somebody popped out with, "Let's get up a football team."

Only we weren't tired of sitting around, not at Klamuth. You just didn't sit around at that place.

Maybe you know the set-up at Klamuth. If you don't, I'll tell you that Klamuth College is a non-denominational place that has a system whereby a guy or a gal studies during the morning and works on a farm during the afternoon, or vice-versa.

You've heard of Antioch, of course. Well, Klamuth was somewhat similar to Antioch, only smaller. It was a new school, founded by a philanthropic farmer who happened to hit oil on the south forty and wanted to give a break to guys and gals who couldn't go for the dough that a more established old-line school would demand.

You got the break at Klamuth, but you had to work and work hard to stay there once you got in. The initial outlay was practically nothing and the entrance exams weren't too tough. Klamuth was more interested in whether or not you were sincere about getting an education than in whether your I.Q. was higher than a coach's temperature after he watched his team pass on fourth down on their own ten-yard line.

They gave you the books and a place to hang your hat and they pointed at the classroom and then at the fields and they said, "Go to it, kid, and good luck."

After that, it was up to you to put in your hours sweating over a textbook or a disc harrow or in the canning factory we had and if you slipped consistently in either field they took back the books and gave you back the hat you'd hung up and said, "So long, kid, nice to have known you." They used different words, but you get the idea.

That's why the bunch of us—Bing, K.P., Rocky and the rest—had our doubts about Prexy's reaction to a football team. We'd been having a bull session and, after the talk had run its regular course about wimmen, how we won the war, who'd be the next heavyweight champ and such, somebody—I think it was Rocky—brought it up absently.

"I sure miss football. I wish we had a team here at Klamuth."

WE DIDN'T say much, but we all wished the same thing. We had a basketball team that was pretty good, but I wasn't so hot on basketball and was even cooler toward college baseball. But football, that was right down my alley.

The average guy at Klamuth is big and strong. He more or less has to be, to stand the gaff. About eighty percent of us, I guess, had been born and brought up on farms, and none of these five-thousand acre jobs where the machinery does all the work, either. Most of us had gone through a toughening up process that started when we were about six or seven and the old man decided it was time we started carrying our own weight on the place.

There wasn't a weakling among us because, while it might have been a cruel proposition in some cases, the weaklings, the misfits, couldn't stand the pace they set at Klamuth. It was root, hog, or die—scholastically—at the school and we rooted until we got plenty strong in that department.

It was the same with the co-eds. The girls at Klamuth worked as hard as we did in their own way, and the giddy mouse who had the idea that college life was meant to be one prom after the other and the only worthwhile book the date book soon transferred her activities to some other campus where a slick line and a new hair-do were more appreciated than an ability to cook with one hand and read Applied Logic from a book held in the other.

I don't want to make Klamuth sound too grim, because it wasn't really. I'm just trying to give you the idea that we were a



We shoved them up and down the muddy field with Mel Roragen carrying on three out of five plays

serious bunch of kids, getting an education the hard way.

Getting back to football, Rocky's wistful thinking about a football team took hold. Somebody dug up an old, scarred ball that had been kicking around, and we went out one early Autumn evening and played a game of touch-ball, just for the devil of it.

Then, when we got tired of making tap-tackles, we tried a little scrimmage and that was all right too. After the session, we sat around, puffing like a bunch of foundered horses, and cooked up the idea of asking Prexy Tait about organizing a real team and booking some games with some of the little schools close by.

We picked Rocky Massone as spokesman for the group because, if the idea got Prexy's okay, Rocky was a natural to act as captain and coach of the squad. Rocky had played football ever since he was big enough to walk. He was the only son of an Italian-American who had made a lot of dough at one time in the contracting business (Rocky was one of the few non-ex-farm boys) and Rocky had gone to a very good prep school and had spent one year at an excellent university before he went to war.

During the war, Rocky's old man had a brainstorm and went haywire, lost all his dough and ended up in the wrong ward of a state hospital. Without any other family, Rocky had come to Klamuth.

The point is, Rocky knew more football than any of the rest of us. Some of us had played high school ball, and some of us had played while we were in the Army, but Rocky had the best background as a prospective coach-captain, so he was elected to do the talking for us when we called on Prexy Tait. He was a smooth talker too, was Rocky.

We stood there in the Old Man's office like a bunch of kids caught hooking apples, first on one foot and then on the other, while Rocky stated our case. Prexy didn't say anything. He just kept rocking back and forth in that old, high-backed chair of his, with his hands spread on his chest and his glasses sliding further and further down his nose as he rocked.

When the glasses finally dropped off, as they always did, Tait caught them with one hand without looking at them, put them back up at the bridge of his nose and began rocking again.

Massone finally ran out of words and there was a silence that seemed about to run into

Leap Year. Finally Prexy straightened up in his chair, leaned forward and gave it to us.

"Personally," he said, "I have no objection to your putting together a football team. I used to be a pretty fair halfback myself too many years ago. (That was one on us!). I still go back to my Alma Mater for home-coming and"—he smiled wryly—"watch my team inevitably take a licking on the grid-iron."

We all relaxed. Experience should have told us that it was too early to call ourselves in, although we never learned.

"But . . ."

We winced. Here it came, the old gimmick. We'd heard Prexy say "But!" before.

". . . our schedule here at Klamuth," he said, "is a pretty tight proposition. Personally, I don't see how you gentlemen are going to find time to practise without detriment to your studies or your field work."

Rocky had the answer for that one.

"Sir," he said, "we had the idea that perhaps the men who went out for the team might be allowed to do the night work in the field. In that way, we could get in our class work in the morning, our field work at night and practice, say, three hours a day. It would take some schedule revision, but not much."

PREXY pondered that proposition. The night work at Klamuth was the least desirable instant and that was saying something. The plant we had required a certain number of men to work the night shift and these duties were rotated regularly, so that nobody could holler that he was getting the dirty end of the stick with a lot of night work.

If Tait okayed our plan, it would mean that we'd be in our classrooms from eight until noon—in the field from one until two-thirty—on the football field from two-thirty until dark—and on the night job off and on the rest of the twenty-four. Sleep? We'd have to pick that up when we got a chance. Most of us had learned that trick anyway, in Belgium or Italy or the New Hebrides or aboard some ship or other.

We waited tensely while Tait ran over the idea in his mind. One thing about the Old Man—he never asked questions that he knew we had answers for—not often, anyway. He thought out the question and figured out the answer and then filed it away. The minutes ticked by until Tait cleared his throat.

"I suppose you've figured out how you'll get your equipment. I imagine you will have

to buy your own. But if you can't get all that you need, you will have to do without it. Borrowing is out! About the playing field, my guess is that you've already selected the field we're letting recuperate this year for that. The stands shouldn't be too hard for you to build."

We nodded like a line of toy mandarins. Prexy looked up at us and his face was serious.

"There is one thing, though," he told us. "If I approve this idea, there must be this understanding—the regular work of each member of the team must stay at its present level or improve. If any man shows signs of slipping because of his football activities the entire team will be disbanded."

He waited to let that sink in. Then he added—

"And the team will be a good team, of its caliber, or there'll be none. I don't want Klamuth to be the laughing stock of other schools, by reason of its football squad. I don't demand a string of victories—far from it. But I do demand that Klamuth put a creditable team on the field.

"We've worked hard here to make the name of Klamuth worthy of respect and I don't intend that a football team should reflect discredit on that name by reason of sloppy play. If you want to go ahead with your plans under those conditions, you have my approval. That's all, gentlemen."

It was a solemn bunch of would-be football players that filed out of the Old Man's office. We all wondered if, perhaps, we hadn't taken on more than we could handle. It would be tough enough, we knew, to get any kind of a team together with the hours we'd have to observe.

We knew Rocky had been taught football by some of the best coaches in the East, but we all—including Rocky—didn't know whether or not he could coach us. And if we were going to lay out our dough for equipment, build the field and the stands, work those back-breaking hours to train and then wind up with a broken-down eleven we wouldn't dare put on the field—well, the outlook was rugged.

Prexy had said it would be up to every one of us to keep our school work up to par or all our work would be for nothing. If Joe Blow couldn't stand the grind and flunked a course on account of football, it would be "that's-all-brother" for all of us. Suppose Rocky himself found out he couldn't

take it, working day and night, and had to resign from the team rather than bust out of a course? Where would we be then?

We gathered for a bull session in the first free time we could phenagle and we talked it over. Everybody put in his two cents' worth—some for, some against. Finally, we put it to a vote with the understanding that the majority would rule and those who were dead-set against it could quit before the vote and still have a chance to come into the team in the future after they saw how it worked out.

CHAPTER II

First Combat

THAT was the spirit at Klamuth. I don't want to beat the drum for the school too much, but that's how it was. Ordinarily, in such a situation, it would be either you voted for the team or you voted against it, and went in if the majority voted yes. Ordinarily, if you dropped out before the vote, it would be on the condition that you stayed out. The word would be no hopping on the bandwagon after the other guys started it rolling.

At Klamuth it was different. I don't know what you'd call our theories, but they were not run-of-the-mill stuff. If a man dropped out without voting—and a few of them did—and later saw that the rest of us were making a go of the team, he would be perfectly free to join the club and nobody would accuse him of being a Johnny-come-lately.

After all, what would be the sense of barring a good football man from the team simply because, in his considered judgment, he had thought it wasn't a good idea at the start? So later he decided he'd been wrong? Okay, then come on in, the water's fine and we're glad to have you because we can use you.

Get the idea?

We put it to a vote and the ayes got it by about two to one. We had twenty-six men, an old football and an idea. Rocky was elected coach-captain, of course, and we talked over how much dough we could throw into the pot to get the stuff we needed.

It wasn't much, but Rocky knew of a firm in his home city that would give us a break. He thought we could get by. No satin pants and maybe most of the stuff would be of the

"slightly used" variety, but at least we'd have uniforms.

We made up a set of simple rules. Anybody who found he was slipping in his studies or his field work would have to resign to protect the rest of the team. Mel Roragen was made manager and told to book games with some of the schools around about, but please not to come up with a Notre Dame tilt just yet. Mel and Rocky drew up a schedule of work-study-practise hours for Tait's approval. Then we got busy leveling off the field.

That job and the business of building a little stand took up the first week's work of the Klamuth College football team and left us time for only a scrimmage or two in our overalls. When we had that done, the uniforms had come from the city—Rocky got things moving fast—and we held our first regular practice.

It was pretty dismal, that first scramble. Those of us who had played football discovered we'd forgotten everything we'd ever known. Rocky found out that, while he might know what to do, he had trouble telling us how to do it.

A couple of us decided we'd make better coaches than Rocky and argued about doing things our way. Towards the end of that practise session, it began to look as though the Klamuth College football team was going to be defunct before it played its first game.

I was the smart guy who finally brought on the showdown. I'd played high school ball and a little in Germany, after V.E. Day, and whereas I wasn't any whiz, I still thought I knew better than Rocky how to fall on a loose ball. I started sounding off and the argument got pretty hot until finally Rocky held up his hand and cut me off in mid-syllable.

"Wait a minute, Mike," he told me. "We're not getting anywhere this way."

The other guys were grouped around us and Rocky turned to them.

"Look," he said, "you fellows know I don't want to be head man around here. But somebody's got to be. We can't have a team with eleven captains any more than we could have a squad with thirty-two sergeants.

"How about deciding now, once and for all, who's running the club. It doesn't have to be me. I'd be glad to let somebody else have the headache. But we're headed for the can the way we are working now."

I got some sense back into my thick head.

"You go ahead, Rocky," I said. "I was as wet as a river. You're the boss from now on."

Everybody made mumbling sounds, like those you hear in the background of a radio playlet, approving what I'd said. And that was the way we met Crisis Number One. There were to be plenty more.

AS THE practise sessions went on, three stars—if you could call them that—emerged from our nondescript ranks. Rocky was one, of course, and the other were K. P. Jorges and Mel Roragen. K. P. might have earned his nickname by working in the kitchen, sweating out extra duty as company punishment, but he was a natural football center.

And Mel was a big Dane—yeah, I said Dane in spite of his name—who was a tough fullback to stop, once he got his piano legs churning. At least, he was a tough man for the rest of us to stop. When we got a game, we realized, we might find out that it was the fact that we were poor tacklers that made Mel look so hot.

Rocky was our running, passing, kicking back and he called the plays. The only trouble with Rocky was that he wouldn't call for himself to carry the ball or pass enough. He was afraid we'd think he was hogging the ball until we told him for the love of mud to do as much work as he could without exhausting himself.

I was put in the tackle spot, which was all right with me. I had sort of fancied myself as a back, but I took Rocky's word for it that I was a better tackle and I soon found out I was. I got to be a pretty good country tackle before I got through.

We weren't long in finding out that the schedule we'd arranged for ourselves was tough. At first, of course, we were all carried along by the flush of enthusiasm that comes with any new venture—I was even enthusiastic about the Army when I was a recruit—but as time went on that enthusiasm sort of wilted under the hours and hours of work, classroom, field and football.

Several fellows fell by the wayside, but they went the right way. They saw they couldn't keep up in their classes and play football, so they went to Rocky and quit. We all wished them luck and hoped they'd be back, and we meant it. With the size of our squad, the loss of every man was a blow—especially when our best end, Maury Kadish, had to turn in his number—but it was better

that way than to have some instructor go to Prexy Tait and have the Old Man blow the five o'clock whistle on the whole team.

We struggled along with what we had and we kept our eyes on the calendar, watching the date of September 17th with not too much pleasure. That was the day of the first game Mel Roragen had arranged. We were supposed to meet Reed Agricultural on that afternoon, provided, of course, we had

his stuff. They're not as heavy as we are, but they work smoother when they're running signals. I couldn't tell anything from the scrimmages."

"Well," we asked, "what's your opinion about our chances of putting up a decent showing?"

"I dunno," Curley admitted. "About fifty-fifty, I'd say."

That was a great help, wasn't it? We dis-



Toward the end of the practise session it looked as if the team would be defunct before it played its first game

a team by that time which could put on a creditable performance. The Reed club booked the game with the understanding that it would be called off on twenty-four hours' notice if we decided we weren't ready.

The day before the Reed game came around and we had a meeting to vote on whether to go ahead or cancel the game. We had sent Curley Higgins, who was out with a bad ankle, over to Reed to size up the Aggie squad in practise and report back, but that wasn't much help.

"They've got a regular coach," Curley said. "One of the teachers, but he seems to know

cussed the situation as solemnly as a United Nations conclave and finally put it to a vote. It was a tight squeak, but the affirmative side won. We kept our fingers crossed when we travelled to Reed Agricultural that Saturday afternoon in a couple of stake trucks.

WE DO get weekend breaks at Klamuth. Of course, the live stock has to be cared for and there are other jobs that need tending, but there are no classes after Saturday noon and no field work until Monday morning. So a sizeable bunch went to Reed with us. And Prexy Tait was one of

the first we saw on the sidelines when we came out of the Reed gym before the game.

I guess all of us wished right then that we'd followed our unspoken inclination and called off this game. We knew we weren't ready and we knew, also, that if we disgraced ourselves in this little tea party there'd be no more games.

That had been Tait's warning and he was not one to say something he didn't mean. He might be smiling as he talked with the head of Reed Agricultural, but he wouldn't be smiling when he saw us get pushed around the field like the bunch of dubs we really were.

We went through our warm-up drill and tried not to look at the Reed club when it came out on the field. Curley might have said they were smaller than we, but they certainly didn't look like refugees from Mooney's Midgets. And they had a kicker who sent punts soaring for what looked like a hundred yards with each try.

We finished up our pre-game play acting and went to the sidelines, where Rocky got us together.

"Listen, guys," he said. "We don't want to try too hard, just because this game means so much. If we overdo the old college try we'll probably press too much and make apes out of ourselves. Take it easy."

And he was probably the most nervous guy on the squad.

"They look awful smooth out there," somebody said.

"Pre-game stuff doesn't mean a thing," Rocky said, trying to sound like he meant it. "We've got the weight and we know enough basic plays to get along. Maybe we'll get a break. But even if we don't, let's give the Old Man a good game. He said he didn't demand wins, just a good try. Well, we can give him that."

He went out to shake hands with the Reed captain and call the flip. Reed won and elected to kick off. We trotted out into position, every one of us, I guess, wishing he were someplace else.

There are a lot of things I remember thinking while I was waiting for the kick-off. The Reed rooting section had cheer leaders and regular organized yells and our bunch was just a scramble of hollers. I hoped that some of our co-eds would get together and organize a cheer-leader squad for our next game—if there was a next game.

I remember I alternately hoped the kick-

off would come to me and dreaded the thought that it might. I had visions of myself running the length of the field and then I saw myself fumbling the kick-off and letting Reed recover.

It was a sunny day, really too warm for football, and I had to shade my eyes to watch the Reed kicker run forward to boot the ball. The ball went over me toward our goal line and the Reed men were converging on whoever had caught the pigskin.

I went to my left and threw a block at a Reed runner. It was a sloppy block, but it took him off his feet and the jar of the collision helped me get back to normal.

Roragen had been thrown on our twenty. We all felt better as we went into the huddle. At least, we thought, we hadn't lost the ball on the first play. At least we had one man who could take a kick-off and run it back a few yards.

Rocky called for Mel to take it through center. Between Mel and K.P. we went for seven yards. Rocky sent Mel through again and it was a first down.

Well—this, we thought, was all right. This was apple pan dowdy for us, to say nothing of shoo-fly pie. The Klamuth rooters thought so, too. They were making quite a racket as the linemen carted their sticks to the new position.

Rocky called himself around right end, my side of the line. I went for the opposition tackle and missed him completely. Rocky got smothered at the line of scrimmage. Mel tried center again and got four. Bing Thompson speared at left tackle and didn't make an inch. Rocky went back to kick.

I missed my block and my man hurried Rocky's punt. It went about thirty yards and when that little Reed safety man got his hands on the ball, he took off. Four guys missed him before I made a lucky reach and got him. The ball, when he finally hit the dirt, was about one yard beyond where it had been before the punt—not so good.

We lined up defensively, with Rocky going up and down the line, swatting us on the fanny and telling us to stay low.

Reed, we discovered, had a lot of trick stuff. They were fast but, we soon found out, they were not good. Whatever instructor coached them evidently came from Texas, the home of razzle-dazzle ball, which is all right when it's done properly but is pretty terrible when the timing is off. And Reed had all the trimmings except timing.

CHAPTER III

Taste of Glory

IN THE first play the Aggies tried a reverse after jiggling their line around like a bunch of chorines. We were too dumb to try to keep jiggling around with them and stayed opposite our own man, so the attempt to throw us off balance didn't work. We just stood there and when the play finally got started, there we were.

We stopped that play for a gain of about a yard and, when they started jiggling on the next play, we still stood there. It must have been aggravating to the other fellows, who'd spent so much time learning those steps, but it worked all right for us.

On fourth down Reed tried a pass, and if it had been anywhere near the receiver they would have scored, because we didn't have a man within twenty feet of him. But the pass was about twenty feet from the receiver, so that was all right.

We settled down, then, gaining more confidence with each play. It was Mel through the center, Rocky around the end, Mel through the center and punt. Rocky was getting his punts off now, and he was getting better distance than the Reed kicker.

That game must have been the world's dullest to everybody but us. To us, it was the most crucial football encounter ever staged, and if the heat slowed everybody to a walk and the mistakes both sides made would have sent a bona fide football expert raving to a padded cell, it didn't make any difference.

We were playing for the life of our precious football team. We were playing to keep all those hours of extra work from going for naught. We were playing our version of a good game because there was a lean-faced man on the sidelines who had warned us that if we disgraced Klamuth, there just wasn't going to be any more football at Klamuth.

If we didn't disgrace Klamuth that afternoon, it was only because Reed Agricultural disgraced Reed. We floundered around doing everything wrong, and Reed floundered along with us only more so. Once in awhile Reed would get over the midfield stripe and have the ball in our territory, and then they'd promptly fumble.

We got into Reed's back yard a couple of times and lost the ball on downs, after our attempts at field goals went wide by margins that honestly could be called "considerable."

The game dragged on. The heat got worse. According to the book, that lighter Reed team should have benefitted by the unseasonable weather, but they didn't seem to. They had decided upon an aerial game by then and they were flinging passes on every down. They completed four out of nineteen by actual count, and only one of those four completed heaves was good for a first down.

All of us were feeling pretty well beat up by the middle of the last quarter. I think any one of us would have been very happy to have settled right there for a scoreless tie—at least I know I would have been glad to, and have thought I had been given a bargain. Time was running out when it happened. I got to be a hero.

It happened this way. Reed had the ball on their own twenty-four yard line, third down. The Reed quarter took the ball and faded back for one of the inevitable passes. The man assigned to me gave a half-hearted lurch in my direction and flattened to the turf with an exhausted sigh. I lumbered through the line, dragging my feet in the general direction of the fading back.

He couldn't find a receiver—not that he could have hit the receiver if he had found one standing alone with a bushel basket in his hands. He dodged this way and that and I tramped after him, hoping he'd throw the ball away so I could stop running. He did, finally—straight into my arms.

FOR a long second, I had trouble realizing what had happened. Then I heard the squeals of the gals in the Klamuth stands and I decided that I'd made an interception. I turned toward the Reed goal and began to run faster than I had ever thought possible.

I'm no speed merchant at best, my legs being about as thick and slow as my head, and I was knocked out by the heat when I intercepted that pass. But when I tucked that ball under my arm, I found a pair of wings suddenly attached to my heels.

I galloped, I cantered, I flew. I was making time that would have been respectable at the Millrose Games in the 100-yard-dash when I rambled over the Reed goal line. Once over, I fell flat on my face and stayed there for awhile.

I was quite the boy, then. The other guys

gathered around me and hammered me on my aching back and told me what swell stuff that was. I managed to stagger out to watch our try for extra point go wide by a good five feet and then I wobbled up the field to get ready for the next kick-off.

The game ended not long after that, with the score 6—0. When the last gun went off, nine men out of the Klamuth eleven sat down, then lay down and fought for breath. Maybe somebody remembers the crowd of rooters streaming down onto the field and half-carrying us toward the Reed gym, but I don't.

We were slowly climbing into our clothes, feeling the bruises and sprains that would be much worse the next day, when a Reed student came in the locker room and asked who our manager was. Somebody pushed Mel Roragen forward and the Reed fellow handed Mel a slip of paper. Big Mel looked down at it and then at the Reed student.

"What's this for?" he asked.

"It's your share of the gate receipts," the other guy said. "It isn't much, but every little bit helps, eh?"

He went heh-heh while we all stared at him. Then he made with the business of it being a "great game, fellows, and hope we get a chance to get our revenge next year, heh-heh" and walked out. We all crowded around to look at the slip Mel held in his big hands.

It was a check for eight dollars and ninety cents, so help me. And attached to the check was a statement that showed how many dollars had been taken in at the gate—my goodness, people actually *paid* to see that game—and how much the referee had been paid and the umpire and so on.

The balance was seventeen dollars and eighty cents, which had been split two ways. The check was made out to "The Klamuth College Athletic Association." That, as far as I could make out, was us.

It might sound ridiculous in the retelling, but that little check sure made us feel good. Not the amount—we'd kicked in over three hundred bucks of our own dough among us to get our equipment—but the fact that we had organized a football team out of nothing and had practised on our own time and had gone out and won our first game, by hook or crook. Now we were being given dough, dough that we could turn over to the college, for our efforts.

Klamuth, like most schools, had a lot of

funds. It was a young school, so we didn't have a scad of alumni who'd graduated and gone out to be millionaires who could write checks for big amounts for the school. Klamuth, matter of fact, won't produce a millionaire in its existence, if it holds to its present system.

We Klamuth guys and gals don't aim at the real heavy sugar. We're trying to learn how to live so—wait a minute! There I go again, getting off the track. I keep forgetting that this is a football story, pure and simple—and more simple than pure.

Anyway, Klamuth had some funds that were set up to help students who had had a particularly tough row to hoe before they came to the college and who, perhaps, needed dough in a hurry while they were in school—sickness at home or dental work or maybe a bum appendix—things like that. So, we decided right then and there, that this little check would go into that Student Fund along with all checks like it we could manage to collect.

I SUPPOSE, if we'd wanted, we could have arranged it so that we could have gotten the money we sank in the equipment back, without being accused of professionalism. Professionalism—that would have been a hot one, for more than twenty men to be accused of turning pro for a total of eight dollars and nintey cents.

Anyway, we didn't consider it. We'd spent our dough because we wanted to play football. We'd made up a team and, by golly, we'd won our first game! And we'd had fun, too, even though we had played a terrible brand of ball in horrible weather and were now a mass of aches and pains.

Even if we had lost that awful game it would have been fun. We'd get our money's worth out of playing football. The Student Fund could have whatever money we brought in.

Maybe you've gotten the idea by now that we were a bunch of starry-eyed idealists or long-haired socialists, or something. Well, we weren't and we still aren't. We were and are a bunch of fellows who could gripe as loud as anybody when we thought we had a gripe coming, who liked the country and the world pretty much as it was and had no intentions of changing any of it around.

But living and working at Klamuth ground certain ideas into a man or a woman, if he or she were ready for them or big enough

to accept them, and giving the guy who was down a hand was one of those accepted ideas. To help a less fortunate guy was considered a privilege at Klamuth and I'm not at all sure it wouldn't be a worthwhile idea to be accepted pretty nearly every other place you could mention.

So much for that. Brother Mike is not going to lead you in prayer, so keep your seat.

We sort of strutted around back at Klamuth after that first game. We did, that is, until Prexy Tait gave a little talk at supper. The faculty ate with the students, at a long table at the end of the room, and after the evening meal we had what we called "The Knock-Around," when anybody could get up and air his or her particular gripe or make a recommendation or maybe even say something nice about somebody else.

All disciplinary bets were off during "The Knock-Around." A fellow could get downright abusive if he felt like it and the faculty would never tag him for it. If a man went out of bounds, the other students could cool him off later and show him where he wasn't flying right, but the faculty never blinked an eye.

Well, that night's Knock-Around was cramped with a lot of hooley—mostly on the part of the girls—about what a wonder team Klamuth had and how everybody should rally behind the squad and all that. Some wit got up and asked if we'd received our bid to the Rose Bowl yet—that's funny now, eh?—and somebody else came up with the suggestion that we get up some organized cheering and a cheer-leader for the next game.

Mel announced that we would meet State Teachers the next Saturday and said he hoped everybody who could would make

the trip. Rocky got up to thank the rest of us for all the work we'd put in and to thank the student body for their support and to say that Reed Aggie played a good clean game and to say that I was one grand football player. You'd have thought we were just winding up an unbeaten, untied, unscored-upon season, instead of celebrating the fluke winning of the first game we ever played!

Then Prexy Tait got up to talk.

He began slowly, saying nice things about the school spirit and commending the team for their work. And then he gave it to us.

"I," he announced, "cannot qualify as a football expert. And I realize that the young gentlemen on the football team did not have much time to prepare for today's game.

"But lest you begin to take seriously what seems to be the general idea that we have one of the crack teams of the nation, let me say right here that I have seldom if ever seen a game containing more misplays, more stupid mistakes, more football sins of omission and commission than I saw today."

BINGO—right between the eyes—you could almost hear us deflate in the silence that followed his opening remarks.

"This," he went on, "may seem callous of me. I don't mean to be cruel, but I do mean to be honest, as you should be. Most football teams have a coach, whose job it is to guard his men against false optimism, overconfidence and complacency. Our team has no outside coach.

"Mr. Massone is acting coach of the team, and let me say right here that he has done a commendable job with his material. But Mr. Massone can't talk to his fellow-students as a regular coach could talk to them. Therefore, with the team's permission, I'm taking

[Turn page]



that task upon myself."

He paused. From different parts of the dining hall, members of the team yelled at Prexy to go ahead. He smiled and reached into his pocket to pull out a long slip of paper. He looked over his glasses at it.

"I have," he announced, "jotted down a few of the faults I witnessed from the sidelines—faults which I, as a person far removed from an expert football fan, could perceive. They follow."

Believe it or not, the Old Boy jotted down something about every man who had played that afternoon. For instance, I changed the position of my feet and shoulders to signal which side of the line the play was coming through. Mel wiped his hands on his pants when he was going to get the ball.

Rocky looked toward the end he was going for before he moved. P. K. had been offside eight times without the backwoods referee catching him more than twice. Ollie Bergstrom tried to make every tackle a shoestring job. Bing Thompson backed away from a runner before tackling, instead of charging. Et cetera.

We sat there with our mouths open. We all had sort of regarded Prexy Tait as a man who sat in his ivory tower and consulted the planets, and here he was turning out to have a pretty sharp eye at picking out the faults we undoubtedly possessed.

We sat there, transfixed, until the Old Boy had finished the list. Then he looked up with a smile that was almost apologetic.

"If Mr. Massone would like to have this list of personal views," he said, mildly, "I'd be glad to give it to him."

Rocky was on his feet with a bound.

"Sir," he said, "would you consider spending a few hours a week in personally coaching our squad?"

"I'm sorry, Mr. Massone," he said, "and very flattered, but it really would be impossible. My schedule is very full right now and after all I have a rather—ah—exalted position. One which might suffer if my students were to see me in sweat shirt and football pants, exhorting some lineman to 'sock him in the middle with that shoulder'."

He waited for the laughter to subside.

"However, I expect to attend every game we play and—ah—will be happy to make observations and recommendations as I see them."

That was the best we could do, but it was something. And the list Prexy had turned

over to Rocky was immensely helpful during the next week, when we practised. The Old Man's attitude was helpful, too. We knew now that all we had to do was to keep our grades up to par and turn in an effort each week that was better than the preceding week's to keep our team.

CHAPTER IV

Ironing It Out

SO WE worked liked the devil. Whenever anybody on the squad gave the word that he was slipping, either in the classroom or in the field, a couple of us best qualified to help him would rally round. Personally, I started to go sour in Applied Economics—always my bugaboo.

I had only to peep before Bing and a guy named Murphy, who wasn't even a member of the squad, were right beside me, showing me where I was going wrong. And because Manny Weisberg had banged up his shoulder pretty badly in the Reed debacle, I put in a couple of overtime hours getting his assigned work in the dairy up to date.

We worked on the practise field, too. I'll bet a lot of big-money coaches for high-bottom colleges would have given their left hand to have squads that were as willing as ours. Each man was told what was wrong with him and had to cure himself.

If you think it's easy to cure yourself of the habit of switching your feet and shoulders unconsciously to brace yourself for a play, you're wrong. It took me a couple of days and a lot of sweat to even modify that bad habit. I finally got it licked by a system that might not be orthodox, but still worked.

When I came back to the line out of a huddle, I began shifting my feet around until I looked like a tap dancer. If anybody was going to watch my feet after that he was going to get dizzy trying to figure out which way I was going. It took considerable practise to time it so that I'd be set when the ball went back, but I mastered that, too.

We all worked to iron out our own faults and we all tried to help each other as much as we could. Toward the end of the week, we had a much smoother-working squad—not that we had much hope of beating State Teachers.

They had a fairly new squad—it had been started about five years before the war and suspended during the war years—but they played some teams on their schedule who wouldn't let us carry water buckets and the idea of meeting a team that actually trod hallowed turf with State University sort of awed us.

We sent Manny Weisberg "scouting" that week. His shoulder kept him out of practise, and Manny turned in a better job than Curley Higgins had done. He came back and told us that when State Teachers threw a pass it was liable to land in the hands of the intended receiver and, unlike Reed Agricultural, the Teachers went in more for power plays, or, at least, had concentrated on straight line bucks during the practise he had watched.

The line stuff, we thought, wouldn't be too tough. We had a strong, slow line, sort of dumb with plenty of weight. The passing attack idea wasn't so good. Our idea of a pass defense was to wait until the ball was in the air, look around to see who was going to get it and then make a bee-line for that guy.

As a thrown ball travels faster than a running man, it looked as though we were going to find out too late who the receiver was going to be. But there was no time to do anything about that.

When we woke up that Saturday morning, all of us, I guess, lay in bed an extra couple of minutes listening to the steady beat of rain on the dormitory roof. I don't think I've ever heard a sweeter sound.

We had been working most of the night, of course, and had turned in with the rain coming down steadily, but the wind had been wrong for a prolonged downpour then. However, just before dawn the wind changed and it came beating in out of the northeast for what looked like an old-fashioned three-day storm—we hoped.

It turned out to be just that, and don't ever try to tell me that the little tin gods weren't watching over Klamuth. The field at State Teachers that afternoon was a cross between a swamp and a pool of molasses and the ball was as slick as a greased eel two minutes after the kickoff.

That, of course, blew up State Teachers' passing attack. They tried four passes in the first quarter and when we managed to intercept one—after the ball had been in and out of at least a half dozen pairs of hands—they

decided to stick to straight line plays.

That was right down our alley. We had the weight and our slowness didn't hurt and we shoved them up and down the field with Mel Roragen carrying the ball three out of five plays. You couldn't tucker out Mel if you let him run every play and this was his day to go to town.

THE rain came down and the mud splash-
ed up in our faces and nobody knew who anybody was after the first few minutes. It was a wallowing mess of a game. But we won it. We threw Mel into the Teachers' line from our twenty-five to their goal line and over, right before the half ended.

In the third quarter the Teachers' safety man let that slippery ball through his hands on a punt and we covered it on their sixteen and sent Mel over for our second touchdown. We missed both conversions, but why worry about that?

When the gun sounded, we slogged off the field with our second straight victory and a batting percentage of 1.000, which is pretty hard to beat. Unbeaten, untied and unscored on, we were, and if we had won both games by flukes—one an interception and the second a cloudburst—the record books wouldn't have an explanatory footnote about that, could they?

Prexy Tait made his remarks at the Knock-Around that night but his list wasn't as long as it had been after the Reed game. In the first place it had been hard to tell which of the mud-coated players was which, and in the second place it had been so much Mel Roragen through the middle of that line that the rest of us couldn't make too many mistakes.

"We must realize, however," Tait wound up, "that the weather and the condition of the field favored us this afternoon. Had it been a clear day with a firm field I don't doubt the result would have been quite different."

More of the cold water treatment, but we didn't mind. We had turned over a check for more than a hundred bucks to the Student Fund because, although the weather naturally kept the crowd down, it seemed that State Teachers included in their receipts a part of the season tickets that students there signed up for.

I was working in the stables the next day—Sunday—when Bing Thompson came in, hollering and waving a newspaper around.

"Read this!" he yelled excitedly. "We're famous!"

It was a big city paper and Bing turned it to the sports page. And there, in big black type, was the headline: **KLAMUTH, A REALLY NON-COMMERCIAL FOOTBALL TEAM.**

We dropped whatever we were doing and gathered around while Bing read the whole article. It was quite a piece, by-lined by one of the biggest names in the sports writing field.

The story told all about how we had sunk our own dough for the football equipment and how the school was run and how we practised on our own time—all that stuff.

It had an account of the Reed game, slightly colored but basically true, and it went on to say we deserved to get a lot of credit for proving in this day of huge stadia and high-pressure publicity, business executive coaches and general commercialism, we had built a team along the lines that the founders of football intended, using methods that would meet the approval of the greats of old-time football.

"The football world," I remember one paragraph stating, "would do well to keep its eye on this little team of true gridiron heroes—the boys who play the game because they love it, not because they have hopes of attracting the eye of a pro football scout—the boys who work overtime at their regular tasks so they might carry their little school's colors out onto the barred turf.

"They'll never play a Bowl game, probably, and they never will attract record crowds, but they will and have injected a refreshing breath of clean fresh air into an atmosphere that too often has been fouled by ugly threats and, sometimes, proofs of sordid commercialism and professionalism in college football."

At the end of the article, set in heavier type, was a brief story that said Klamuth had beaten State Teachers, 12—0 the previous day.

You can imagine how that set us up. We'd have been something less than human if we hadn't felt pretty good about getting that kind of recognition from a big shot in the sports writing game. We tried to laugh it off, but inside of us we told ourselves that, by golly, we *had* worked hard and *had* made some of the sacrifices and maybe we did deserve the nice things this columnist had written about us.

LATER we found out that Rocky had a friend in his home city who was on this paper and Rocky had written him about the team, just intending it as a chatty letter, telling him about the Reed game and all. His friend had shown the letter to the big shot because this particular columnist was always taking pot shots at the "football factories", as he called them, and probably was stuck for a column that day, he had gone to town.

Of course, if the big shot had had his column all written up and hadn't been scratching for material, nobody ever would have heard of Klamuth's football team. But that was another break, and who were we to sneer at breaks?

Taking the lead of the big-shot columnist, the state papers picked up the story and the place was crawling with sports writers on Monday. The Old Man didn't like it much, I guess, but so long as these reporters didn't interfere with the routine, he couldn't object openly.

Of course he was a little hurt when these sports writers looked at our prize Hereford bull, Klamuth's Kin McMurtee, during their tour of the place and said: "That's a lotta steak, brother!", but he was a philosophical gent and smiled it off.

It was while the sports writers were watching us practise and talking to some of us that I met Hilda.

Ever hear of a girl—a little girl, five feet two, with black hair and brown eyes and a miniature Venus build—covering football for a big daily paper? I never did until I met Hilda. I learned later that she was the daughter of one of the biggest coaches in the Midwest and she had practically grown up on the sidelines of a football field.

She knew more football than a lot of highly touted experts and she was a good newspaper woman too. She'd had a struggle to get herself accepted as a football writer, but when she proved that she could get a lot more out of a big, dumb guard or a high-strung, nervous halfback just by giving them the old one-two with those brown eyes, she earned herself a place in the press boxes of pretty nearly every big game in the country. And she hadn't had to play eyesies with the sports editors to get there, either.

We had finished practise and were trying to answer the questions they were throwing at us when Hilda cut me out from the herd and started her own quiz program. I answer-

ed what I could and told her she'd better ask Rocky about the others, but she just wrinkled her little nose at that suggestion.

"Rocky's giving the same answers to everybody else," she said. "I want something different. I think I'll concentrate on one member of the team and you're it."

I shied away like a giddy colt, but in the end I let her know everything she wanted to know. She was a mighty persuasive talker, was Hilda, and before I knew it, I'd given her the story of my life, complete with the tale of how I won the Silver Star. Lord knows, I'd never told anybody about *that* before—which goes to show you what a girl with brown eyes and a cute little snub nose can do when she sets her mind to it.

I'd been through the mill in my day and I had thought that I was dame-proof. I had told myself that I had too much work to do to get where I wanted to go without bothering much about gals. Of course there was Marcia Romney, but she was just another co-ed whom I'd taken to a couple of dances and had a couple of campus dates with, because she didn't seem to mind an ugly puss with its broken nose, but Marcia didn't really mean anything. We were good friends, that's all.

But this woman sports writer, this Hilda, hit me right in the solar plexus the first time I saw her. I didn't admit it to myself that first afternoon. It was some time later, in fact, that I gave in and told myself that I was in love with the gal.

CHAPTER V

The Woman of It

THAT wasn't so long after the first time I saw her at that, come to think about it. It was right after the State game.

Hilda really arranged that game although she never took any credit for the job. Anybody who would have told us that we would be playing State University on the third game of our first season would have been labeled nuts. But we did, and this is how it happened.

We had an open date the Saturday after the State Teachers game. Mel had scouted around, but the best he had been able to come up with was an open offer from the Forestville Tigers and they were a bunch

of semi-pro's, in a manner of speaking. I mean, they passed the hat between the halves and divvied up the collection among them.

We were serious enough about our football by that time to steer away from any professionalism, so we turned down the offer. I've always wondered what would have happened if we had played the Forestville Tigers that Saturday afternoon. I don't know exactly why, but I've always had the feeling that those guys would have walloped the tar out of us and that would have been the end of Klamuth College in the headlines.

With the Forestville game turned down we had a free Saturday and I don't think any of us were heartbroken about the fact, either. That was before Westmore U. was quarantined because of an outbreak of spinal meningitis. That was another break, if a pretty grim one, that helped us on our way.

Westmore was booked to play State that Saturday and, when the quarantine was clamped down, they had to cancel the game. Of course it was too late for State to book another game in their stratospheric league, so they were slated to be idle that week, too.

Little Hilda spotted the set-up and went to work. She braced State with the idea of playing Klamuth, all proceeds to go to the Red Cross, as a sort of a football oddity. The people at State must have hooted aplenty when she first explained her idea but, as I've mentioned, Hilda was a pretty convincing talker.

State finally gave in and said okay after—as I heard later—Hilda happened to mention the fact that State still was wearing a black eye for refusing to go through with a post season game one season for a U. S. O. benefit after she had fought like mad for a Bowl bid. I don't guess Hilda said as much in so many words, but I've an idea she sort of hinted that if State turned thumbs down on this proposition, the heat would be on again.

Anyway, State said yes and Hilda raced her five feet two up to our place, as hot as a two-dollar pistol over her idea. First, she had to convince Rocky that we would be massacred in a good cause and then she had to go to work on Prexy Tait. Tait kept shaking his head and maintaining stolidly that he would not permit Klamuth to be made ridiculous on the football field.

The more often he said no, the more often Hilda reached into her bag of arguments to come up with a new one. The interview lasted for two hours and Hilda came out of

the President's office wearing a grin of triumph.

So we were booked to play State—Klamuth playing State!

Of course the papers made a big holler about the whole thing and the story was picked up elsewhere. All the columnists lauded our courage and called us martyrs to a splendid cause. We went on the field the next Saturday afternoon, half expecting to find Nero sitting in a box and a bunch of lions at the other end of the huge stadium.

AS WE came out of the field house, which was half again as big as the biggest building at Klamuth, not counting barns, Hilda was waiting beside the concrete ramp that led to the field. Her eyes were shining and she was bubbling over with excitement, all hepped up over the turnout that this weird game had attracted.

The big stadium was almost full at game time, believe it or not, and the sight of those packed thousands was enough to give better men than we stage fright. We clacked up the ramp and stopped at the top, a mighty little bunch of guys, compared with the young battalion State had out on the field warming up.

"I wish," Rocky groaned, "we hadda stayed in bed."

"Nonsense," Hilda said, brightly. "This is a great opportunity for you, Rocky. Everybody in the sports world will have his eyes on Klamuth this afternoon. You can give them a good game and you know it. And think of all that money for the Red Cross."

"I'm thinking of all those points State is going to make in the first quarter," Rocky said, faintly.

Hilda turned to me.

"You're glad we arranged this, aren't you, Mike?" she asked.

"Uh-huh," I said. "I haven't felt so happy since I was pinned down by a Jerry burp gun near Livorno."

She gave a little giggle and laid a hand on my arm—a little hand, that fitted with the rest of her.

"You boys are going to be all right," she said, but she was looking straight at me. "I know you're going to play a great game out there today."

The way she said it and the way she looked at me lifted the short hairs at the back of my neck. I guess it was right there I started falling in love with Hilda—admitting it, that is.

"Come on, guys," Rocky said. "Let's get this over with."

We trotted out on the field and the crowd gave us a tremendous hand. That helped, but not much. Our pre-game warm-up was sloppy. We were all so nervous that we messed up signals and ran around in circles and Rocky's punts angled off and dribbled along the ground and went straight up in the air. I guess some of the customers who'd paid good dough for their tickets were wishing they'd stayed home and listened to a decent game over the radio.

The State cheering section nearly knocked us over with its booming howl of welcome. They could afford to be hospitable, I told myself. We ambled around the field for awhile and then went to our bench. Rocky tried to give us a pep talk but it didn't make much sense, so he quit.

He went out to the middle of the field, shook hands with the State captain—a man who looked about nine feet high with shoulders to match—and the coin glinted in the sun. State won the toss and elected to receive. They were going to test our defensive power.

We lined up and went down with the whistle. Rocky's kick was good, plunking into the hands of a State back down in the coffin corner, and we were off to the races.

I was going down the field, watching the swing of the runner, and all of a sudden I found myself talking out loud to nobody in particular.

"Listen," I was saying, "They've only got eleven men, the same as we, and they go down when they're tackled. Stop being scared of these mugs, Mike, and get the guy with the ball."

I wasn't the only one on the Klamuth team who felt that way, once they started to move. Later, nearly everybody on the team admitted that he had gotten sore at himself for being scared as he went down the field to get that first runner.

A State man threw a block at me and missed. "Hah," I told myself, "they miss blocks, too." The State back tried to reverse his field and he came right into me. I threw the hardest tackle I ever made in my life and we went down with a crash. When I got up, I guess I was grinning. State backs, I'd found out, grunted when they hit the ground.

STATE hit at the center and K. P. didn't budge. They threw out a flanker and

banged into us for five. The next play they threw at me, and I bulled through to grab the State man in his own back yard. Our little band of rooters, plus the sizeable bunch of State-haters and underdog-lovers made a big fuss out of that. State went into punt formation.

That State line held solidly as the back got his kick away, but it wasn't a particularly good boot. Rocky caught it on the dead run and was up the field like a flash. I cut over toward him and dumped a State man just as he was about to grab Rocky. Another State man got the ball carrier a couple of steps later, but it made me feel good to know I had done my job.

We huddled and it was Mel through the center. But K. P. gave Mel a bad toss and the ball squirted over his shoulder. It landed in the arms of Rocky, who was cutting around as a man-in-motion. It was without doubt one of the dizziest plays seen on a gridiron, but by its sheer insanity, it worked.

Mel, completely befuddled, whirled for the loose ball—he thought—and started searching for it. Bing Thompson squealed "Ball!" and cut out of the line to cover it. The rest of us milled around like frightened sheep in a thunderstorm and Rocky took off by himself.

Seeing that we didn't know where the ball was, it was little wonder that State was baffled. The secondary finally woke up after Rocky had covered fourteen yards and they took care of Rocky in a hurry. But we had a first down on the first play.

Up in the press box, they must have been wondering out loud if this was the kind of game we played all the time and, if so, whatever had happened to that fine old sport known as football? The stands, however, didn't care how we made our first gain. They whooped it up as though we had really planned the play that way.

I won't say that first dizzy play of ours unsettled State, but it helped. Remember, State had steamrollered its first three opponents—their season opened a week before ours—by scores that read like fever patients' temperature charts. State had taken this game only after a lot of convincing arguments and maybe a few veiled threats by Hilda.

State had expected to make us look farcically weak in a hurry. And what had happened? We had held them on their first thrust, run back a punt nicely and had scored

a first down the first time we handled—or mishandled—the ball.

Sometimes a little thing like that will make a big difference in a team that is a thousand per cent better than its opponent, so perhaps that first scramble did the trick that afternoon. Or maybe State was due for a bad day and we just happened along. Maybe over-confidence really does wreck teams. Anyway, State took it on the chin that afternoon.

On our second play Mel kept the ball and cracked the center, bulged through and kept going. They had to bring in the sticks to measure it, but it was another first down. State called for time out while our supporters in the stands rent their tonsils.

We sat around, not daring to look at each other. We knew this wasn't possible. We knew that at any minute we'd wake up and find that this was a dream.

Time was called in and we huddled.

"Me to Howie," Rocky said. "Pass."

We crouched—charged. I went through and cut over into the secondary. Howie caught his pass and I took out a State tackler. It was good for six yards although it looked like more to the stands, because Howie made a long slanting run toward the sidelines. But six was good enough. We sent Mel through the middle for a first down on the State thirty-six.

After that it was almost easy, that first half. State got flustered and began drawing off-side penalties. Then one State man lost his temper, sort of, and held me down on the ground when he should have been going past me at the runner. I never could figure out why he suddenly went wrestler on me. Usually it's the offensive guy who's guilty of holding, but not in this case.

CHAPTER VI

Rugged Going

THE referee came in and made wild motions with his arms before he paced off fifteen yards. Before I knew it, I looked up and there were the State goal posts, right over us.

State called time out and a flock of subs came in. They weren't much better than the starting squad. It was Mel through the line, until State started using a six-three-one—

and still not stopping him for long. The big Dane bulled his way through and—whammo—we had scored!

Rocky missed the extra point as usual, but we didn't care. We went dancing back up the field and the sun was extra bright. It got brighter as the first half proceeded and State hammered at us with everything they had without crossing our last stripe.

I'll admit that penalties helped us and I know you're not supposed to rejoice when the other guy gets five or fifteen yards, but show me the winner who isn't glad. Furthermore State was afflicted with a serious case of fumblyitis in the second quarter. We recovered three of the five—count 'em, *five*—they made and we sure could use them, too.

We didn't cross the midfield stripe offensively after that touchdown, but between the penalties and the fumbles and Rocky's fine kicking, we weren't in what you'd call real danger of being scored on either. State kept throwing in subs, but nobody could seem to click for them that first half. The gun banged and the half was over and Klamuth was leading mighty State, 6—0!

We didn't have any illusions about how long we could keep that lead. We knew that State's coach would have a few things to tell his boys between halves and we knew they'd come out smarting from his talk and out for blood. But we felt swell, just the same, and I guess we had a right to.

Even Prexy Tait had a genuine grin on his face when he visited us between the halves. He told every man, personally, about what a fine job he had done and how proud he was of us and he gave us a warning we didn't really need, to wit, that State would be a lot tougher in the next half.

He had a little list of errors and we listened to them and resolved we wouldn't make the same mistakes again. But mostly we just lay on the rubbing tables—of course we didn't have any rubber, but the tables were nice to lie on—and basked in our glory.

Every one of us, I imagine, could see those quarter-by-quarter score boards in a hundred different stadia, and we could hear the roar going up from crowds everywhere when they saw or heard the half-time score of this game.

State University nothing—Klamuth College six.

It had a fine ring to it, that announcement.

Hilda was waiting for us at the top of the ramp when we came out for the second half.

If she was excited when we first saw her that day, she was almost delirious with happiness now. And it was me she made for instead of Rocky, the captain-coach of the team.

"Oh, Mike," she cried. "It was—it was wonderful!"

I grinned and mumbled something. I thought it was wonderful, too, but I couldn't go around blating about it.

"And you were splendid," she said. "You played a terrific game."

"Wait a minute," I cautioned. "It was Roragen made the touchdown, remember?"

"But your defensive work," she told me. "I was watching you. You played like three men in that line."

WHAT does a guy do when a pretty girl feeds him that stuff, a girl who has a name for herself as a sports writer at that? Just what I did, I guess—blush and mumble and try to think of something clever to say.

"I'll be watching you this next half," she told me. "Don't let 'em scare you, Mike. You've got them on the run."

Uh-huh, we had them on the run all right—running after us. It was a new team that came onto the field for State from that half-time rest period. It was our turn to receive and Rocky got it back to the twenty before they piled on him—and I mean piled on him. At least three State men jumped Rocky after he was completely down.

It might have been that the State coach had used the whip a little too hard, but in any case that was an unnecessary pile-up and the referee thought so, too. He shook his finger in the face of a couple of the late comers to the pile-up and told them that if there was any more of that stuff he'd call an unnecessary roughness penalty.

The crowd didn't like it anyway. They began booing and kept it up until Rocky had to motion for quiet so that we could find out what he was trying to tell us to do. Rocky had an ugly bruise on one cheek-bone, but he insisted that he was okay as we huddled.

We tried an end run with Rocky carrying the ball around my side of the line. I went into my man, checking him hard, and then there was a cute little knee coming up to take care of my chin as Mr. State Lineman pushed my head down with both hands. I saw a lot of stars and went over on my back to watch the constellations whirl.

I was dizzy for a couple of seconds and then my head cleared. The others came over to me, but I got to my feet without any help and walked around awhile to get my buzzer collected again.

"I saw that guy," somebody said. "We'll take care of him."

"Can that stuff," Rocky warned. "We're playing our kind of football in this game. Let Tait see us pull a fast one and it's good-bye team, win or lose."

That was straight stuff. If Prexy ever saw the slightest hint of dirty work on our part it would be curtains for the squad, but permanently. I told the others I felt all right and we went into a huddle as they called time in again.

It was Mel through the line and the big boy hadn't lost any of his drive during the halftime period. He went for seven and a first down—Rocky had made three or four on his try—and State piled on him again. This time, the ref did call unnecessary roughness and the stands counted out the penalty in a chanting roar.

The State captain was arguing with the referee, his face red and his hand going, but the official just kept walking along with the ball tucked under his arm. Finally the State guy lost his head entirely.

"What's the idea?" I heard him yelp. "Your kid brother go to Klamuth, or something?"

The referee was a bantam rooster, but he swelled up to turkey gobbler size when he heard that. He finished counting and then he spun on the State captain.

"One more crack like that," he warned, "and I'll put you out of the game. And tell your men to play it the clean way or I'll give them half the distance to the goal line until I'll have to measure it in inches."

With that he tooted his whistle and we huddled. We banged at the State line and got nowhere and a fourth-down pass didn't quite make it. State took over on their own forty-five.

That's when we took it, but hard. Those State backs crashed into our line until we were one mass of bruises from end to end, personally and collectively. They tried nothing fancy. They just kept shooting those big backs at us, tackle, guard and center—tackle, guard and center—and we went back and back.

We played hard, but after all we were from Klamuth College and no match for that

State team, with its spring training and its line and backfield coaches, besides their head coach and their movies and blackboard work, to say nothing of an endless parade of substitutes behind them.

SO WE gave ground steadily until we got to our five-yard line. And there, somehow, we held. I took one of the plays square on the kisser. Three guys piled into me before the ball carrier came along, but I managed to grab the man I wanted, don't ask me how.

They wasted another down on K. P. and he spilled State's fullback with a loss of two yards. They banged into the other tackle, Phil Slater, and he held them to a gain of two yards. And all the time the stands were hollering; "Hold that line!" You'd have thought we were Army or something by the size and volume of our support.

State huddled. They had a system whereby their signal-caller stood up and looked over the defense setup before he ducked to call the play. He looked at us now and we glared back at him, a mighty frowsy lot, and beat to the shoes. He looked at me and then at our ends and then he ducked. And I got a hunch.

Don't ask me where it came from. Maybe Hilda, in the press box telephoned it down to me, she knowing football better than I ever would. Anyway, it was as though somebody had whispered, "Pass to the man in motion" right in my ear.

State came out of their huddle and crouched. The ball went back and my man threw a block at me that I sidestepped. I went through, wide open for a mousetrap if it was one, and into the secondary. The man in motion was out to my right and I was between the passer and the receiver.

It was intended to be a flat lateral, I guess, but whatever it was, it never came off. The passer saw me and hesitated a second too long. When he made up his mind K.P. was on top of him and the two of them were flat on the ground.

You should have heard the stands then! The man who was to pass got to his feet and ripped his helmet from his head to slam it down on the ground and the stands jeered louder. A State man was down on the ground, hurt, and they called time, but the hollering and yelling kept up throughout the time-out period. That stadium certainly was a Klamuth crowd that day.

The injured man was replaced and Rocky went back to punt out. It was a beautiful kick, helped along by the wind, and we grabbed the State man on his forty-eight. Then it started again.

The end was never in doubt from then on. We had shot our bolt and we knew it. Not that we let up, because we didn't. We kept the third period scoreless, even if it did end with State on our eleven-yard line.

But a constant stream of substitutes gave State an advantage we never could match. We used two subs throughout the game, not because any one of us wouldn't have given our left leg for a rest, but simply because we didn't have anybody to put in.

State went over for her first touchdown right after the last quarter started and, even if we knew we'd done the impossible by holding the lead for three quarters, we all felt as though somebody had stolen our all-day sucker. State's placement for the extra point went over neatly and we trudged out to receive the next kickoff.

We took an awful beating in that last quarter. Most of the period is hazy in my mind to this day, but I stayed in there somehow and made my share of tackles. It seemed that every time I got to my feet there were a lot of State men running at me and I'd grab blindly and go down again. Up and down, up and down—once in awhile we'd get a rest for a couple of minutes as State sent in some more fresh-faced full-of-life substitutes.

We sure envied those kids. They looked as though they'd never been dumped on the ground hard in their lives. Their uniforms were spick and span and their faces were clean and they looked as though they were out to have a lot of fun. This game had been fun—plenty of fun—until that last quarter. But then it wasn't fun at all for any of us.

State kept pounding into us and we began to fall apart at the seams. The big team was on its way to another touchdown, and probably two or three more before the game ended when one of the kid subs on the State squad went berserk.

left to tackle him hard and he bounced when he landed. The ball squirted out of his hands and when the tangle was unpiled there was good old K.P. huddled over that precious pigskin. We were on our own eighteen at the time.

That was the bracer we needed. We staggered back to a huddle and then sent Mel at the line. The big squarehead still wasn't as dog tired as the rest of us. He chipped off four yards. We sent him at center again and doggone if he didn't make a first down.

The haze began clearing and from somewhere came a breath of new life that took the ache out of our muscles and gave our legs some strength we didn't know we had. Good old Mel didn't have imagination enough to know that it was hopeless for us to do anything but give up the struggle and let State score touchdowns. There were people who called Mel dumb, but he had the kind of dumbness we needed that day in the big stadium.

Rocky might be the star of the team, and its brains, but it was Mel Roragen and K.P. Jorges who won the game for us that day. I say "won the game," although we didn't, actually. We shoved the ball up the field a few yards at a clip and we still had possession of it when the last gun banged and the crowds streamed down onto the field.

The scoreboard read—State, seven—Klamuth six—but there wasn't anybody in the place who wouldn't say we hadn't won. You could tell that ours was the victory by the way the State team trooped off the field with their shoulders sagging and their heads down. We hadn't spoiled their unbeaten record in the books, but we'd spoiled about everything else for them.

The Klamuth students went absolutely mad. They ganged up on us and there was a lot of back-slapping by the guys and kissing by the gals. I came in for my share of it and it was right pleasant. The co-eds were smacking me on my sweaty, mud-stained puss and I was enjoying it when, all of a sudden, there was Hilda standing in front of me with her arms outstretched and her eyes bright and warm.

"Mike," she told me, "you were marvelous!"

And darned if she didn't reach up and take my head in her hands and pull my face down to kiss me bang on the mouth. And then I was a goner on Hilda.

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CHAPTER VII

Moral Victory

HE was a third-string back and he misplaced his interference somewhere and came right at me, all by himself. I had enough

TERRY TRAPPED THE ALIEN SMUGGLERS AND THEN . . .

HURRYING TO REACH HER UNCLE'S CAMP ON LAKE HURON BEFORE DARK, BETTY ADAMS STUMBLES UPON MYSTERIOUS DOINGS IN WATKINS COVE



HERE'S YOUR CUT, CORBETT... THREE HUNDRED BUCKS. GUIDE 'EM TO TONY'S SHACK AND YOU'RE THROUGH

OKAY, LOUIE. ANOTHER LOAD TOMORROW NIGHT?

HANDS UP!

YOU CAN SEE WHY I HAD TO COVER YOUR MOUTH... ONE PEEP WOULD HAVE SPOILED OUR SHOW

GRACIOUS! AND THE "SIGNALER" IS YOUR MAN!

SENATOR CONGDON'S CAMP, MISS? WHY YOU'RE THREE MILES OUT OF YOUR WAY

COME BACK TO BORDER PATROL HEADQUARTERS AND I'LL DRIVE YOU OVER



DO YOU MIND IF I USE YOUR PHONE? UNCLE HARRY MAY BE WORRIED

GO RIGHT AHEAD. MEANWHILE, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I'LL CLEAN UP

THIS BLADE'S A MONEY... THREE DAYS' WHISKERS GONE LIKE MAGIC!

THIN GILLETTES ARE PLENTY KEEN AND EASY SHAVING, TERRY



WHY, UNCLE, DO YOU KNOW MR. CORBETT?

KNOW HIM? WHY MAJOR CORBETT WAS MY BEST INTELLIGENCE OFFICER

I'D BEEN PLANNING TO VISIT YOU AFTER I CRACKED THIS CASE, COLONEL... I MEAN SENATOR

YOU GET SMOOTH, REFRESHING SHAVES IN JIG-TIME WITH THIN GILLETTES. THEY'RE THE KEENEST, LONGEST-LASTING BLADES IN THE LOW-PRICE FIELD, AND BECAUSE THEY FIT YOUR GILLETTE RAZOR ACCURATELY, YOUR FACE IS PROTECTED FROM THE SCRAPE AND IRRITATION OF MISFIT BLADES. USE THIN GILLETTES



"Hurry up and get dressed," she told me. "I'll drive you back to Klamuth in my car. By the time you're ready I'll have my overnight lead in the office and maybe we can stop off and eat somewhere on the way back."

That's what we did. Hilda knew of a place about midway between College Park, where State was situated, and Klamuth. It was a small place, and quiet, beside a little lake that must be pretty in the summertime. There was a big open fireplace at one end of the dining room and you could tell by the clothes the people wore and the way the waiters walked that it was expensive.

Maybe she read my pan when I took a look at the menu.

"This is on the expense account, Mike, so don't spare the appetite."

DID I make a fuss about that? Don't be silly. I had about six bucks in my pants and that wouldn't last long in this place and I knew she was telling the truth about the expense account. So I ordered a mutton chop, instead.

We talked about this and that. She told me how she happened to get into newspaper work and I filled in some of the few pieces of my life that she hadn't got from me the first time she met me. We talked about Klamuth and what we were trying to do there and she seemed plenty interested.

She told me she'd been married once but it didn't work and there'd been a divorce. Funny, it struck me kind of hard to hear she'd been married. She looked so much like a kid just out of high school, but from things she told me and hooking up dates here and there I figured she must be about my age, or maybe even a little older.

It was a good meal and a good talk. Hilda had a couple of cocktails before dinner and a couple of highballs after she ate and she rattled on a mile a minute. I don't mean she was tight, or anything, but she was feeling good and was chummy and talkative. It was a lot of fun, being with a girl who had been so many places and who knew so many people and who had a lot of really funny stories to tell about things that had happened in her work.

We drove back to Klamuth the long way with me at the wheel, because Hilda said she felt sleepy, with all the fresh air and the drinks and the big dinner. There was a hunter's moon that night and a light haze hanging over the countryside and the smell of burn-

ing leaves. Hilda fell asleep about halfway to Klamuth and I tried to dodge the bumps in the road so she wouldn't wake up.

Mingled with the smell of the burning leaves was the scent of the perfume she wore and the combination was perfect. Her head was on my shoulder like a sleepy baby's and I was feeling very tender and protective as I drove along.

I began getting ideas on that drive. Hilda had said that she was tired of newspaper work, that she'd be glad when the time came to leave her job and settled down with the right man. Of course she hadn't said I was the right man, but I'd been right there across the table from her when she'd said it, and she'd been looking right at me.

I started dreaming a dream that had me first managing a big place and then getting enough dough together to buy it and marrying Hilda and everything just the way it ought to be. That's what a good dinner and a hunter's moon will do to you after a moral victory over State University.

She didn't wake up until we were outside the gates to Klamuth. Then she stirred and yawned like a kitten and looked around her, trying to size up where she was.

"We're back," I told her. "This is where I get off."

"Uh-huh," she said, in a small voice. "That's right, darn it."

"Why darn it?" I asked her.

She made a little gesture with one gloved hand.

"Oh, if Klamuth were like other schools," she said, "you'd have until Monday to play around. We could go to the city and dance and meet a lot of interesting people together and enjoy a lot of laughs, instead of you leaving me here to drive in alone, just because you have to have the lights out at nine o'clock."

"Eleven," I reminded her. "This is Saturday."

She gave a short laugh and ran her fingers through her black hair.

"Pardon me," she said, and her voice was different. "I forgot this is the night you fellows paint the silo red, isn't it? Stay up till eleven and drink cider and have doughnuts, by golly."

I couldn't get the quick change. She'd been everything I could ask for at dinner and now she was playing the heavy hick routine on me. It made me sort of sore and I guess she saw it in my face.

"I'm sorry," she said, quickly. "I'm always grumpy when I wake up and those drinks I had have worn off and—really, that was a rotten thing to say, Mike."

SHE leaned over and her lips were close to mine and I reached out and grabbed her. I've kissed a good many gals from time to time, but I never had a kiss like that. My brain did a quick spin and then she was leaning back with her hands on my chest, laughing in a sort of breathless way.

"Goodnight, Mike," she said, softly. "I hope you don't think I'm an awful hussy, practically kidnaping you for a dinner date, the way I did, and then making you kiss me—oh, yes I did, Mike. But—well, I like you a lot. And now I really do have to go. I've got a late date in town."

I stood there at the edge of the road, watching the tail lights of her car grow smaller as the machine swept down the highway. I watched the light disappear around a curve and turned toward the drive that led up to the school buildings, silhouetted against the moonlit sky at the top of the hill. I wondered who Hilda's late date was. Whoever he was, I hated the guy.

I guess that was the only time till then that I'd felt sorry I was at Klamuth. What Hilda had said was true—if I'd been a student at a "regular" university—and maybe I could have swung it by working my way through—I'd have been able to go dancing with her, laughing with her, meeting people who counted.

But here I was, stuck in a little college that had some strange ideas about the students sticking pretty close to the campus so that the stock would be fed and watered on time, weekend or no weekend.

The gang were holding a bull session in the men's dormitory when I walked in. We lived in a communal barracks with wall lockers and foot lockers that were dead ringers for the kind we had in the Army, albeit a little roomier and there was no Saturday morning inspection.

As in the Army the favorite sport at Klamuth, after the guys came back from the library or the Study Hall, was gathering in somebody's room and talking over the state of the nation. When I walked in the boys stopped telling each other how the atomic bomb should be handled and all swung their eyes in my direction.

"What happened to you?" Rocky asked.

"You went out of that locker room at State like a bill collector was after you."

I grinned and sat down on a bunk beside Bing Thompson.

"Heavy date," I told Rocky.

"Uh-huh," K.P. put in. "I saw you driving off with that bee-yoo-ti-ful gal reporter, that Hilda dame. And that was some smackeroo she gave you when we came off the field too."

Ordinarily I can take as much kidding as the next guy. I'd learned that in the Army and if I hadn't learned my lesson well Klamuth had taught me what I needed to know about taking kidding. Either a guy took it and grinned or he wouldn't have much of a time at that school. We all slept together and ate together and worked together and we had to learn to get along together if we wanted to stay happy—and healthy.

I'd dished out plenty of kidding, myself, and thought nothing of it. It was part of the game. A right guy didn't get sore and I never had until then. Before, when I'd dated Marcia Romney and we'd gone moongazing, I'd come in for plenty of stuff from the boys and it had never bothered me. But somehow that crack about the kiss Hilda had given me on the field got my goat.

"At ease," I told K.P. "Never mind any slants about the young lady."

The tone of my voice made them open their eyes. It was mighty seldom that anybody put himself in the position of being fair game for a ragging session by burning up and they all took advantage of it. I'd led with my chin and they started swinging.

Don't ask me what was the matter with me. Maybe it was the moon, or that goodnight kiss Hilda had given me, or maybe I was more tired than I realized because of the beating I'd taken in the State game, but anyway I blew my cork.

CHAPTER VIII

Out of Order

BEFORE I quite realized what I was doing I was yawping around like a high school kid and getting off some nasty cracks that didn't have any place in a Klamuth dormitory.

Rocky put a stop to it finally when he saw it was getting serious. By that time I'd made a couple of the other fellows sore and it

wasn't kidding any more.

"All right," Rocky said. "Break it up. You all sound like a lot of congressmen."

He managed to smooth it over and the talk got swung around to football and all our tempers started to cool, gradually. Not that we stuck out our hands and said, "Soddy, old man," or anything like that, but we let each other know after awhile that we realized we had been all wrong. By the time we turned in most of us had forgotten the argument.

The Sunday papers made a heck of a big thing out of the State-Klamuth game. Of course State wasn't one of the biggest football schools in the country, but it was right up there, close to the biggest, and the idea of little Klamuth holding her to a 7-6 score intrigued the sports writers enough to give the game about three times as much space in the papers as it deserved.

Hilda went to town in her column as she had a right to, having more or less arranged the game single-handed. Instead of panning State for playing a terrible game, she made the lot of us a bunch of superhuman football men who took the best State had to offer and very nearly won the game.

Of course the story she wrote was spoiled a little by the statistics on the game, which showed State way ahead in every department except scoring, but to read Hilda's story you'd have thought that we handled State like a terrier shaking a rag.

And she gave me all the best of it. All the members of the squad came in for their share of the praise of course, but it was Little Mike, the left tackle, who was the real star of the game according to Hilda. After I read the piece, I wondered why I hadn't realized that I'd stopped about five State drives single-handed and made a monkey of the entire State line.

Personally, I had thought I was doing a good job by staying on my feet, toward the last, but there it was in black and white that I was a roaring demon on defense and a coldly calculating driving force on Klamuth's offense. I, according to Hilda's story, was quite a boy. And I thought the first rule of a good newspaperman was objectivity. But may be that doesn't go for women newspaper writers.

Prexy Tait read the papers too and called us into his office on Sunday afternoon. There he gave us a little talk on the dangers of a swelled head, individually and collectively. I guess Tait was starting to get a little worried

by then, and, looking back on it, he had reason to worry, at that.

Until this football business came up we had been rocking along on our chartered course, attracting little or no attention from most of the outside world, working hard and getting where we wanted to go. We weren't cloistered monks by any means, but we had been content to do our job and realize our modest ambitions and complete our work at Klamath before going out into the world and putting what we had learned into practice, trying to make an honest dollar.

And now, bingo, we were national figures overnight, with some of the newspapers making Klamuth sound like a refuge for underprivileged children and others picturing the place as a never-never land where giants were bred who could excel in any field they chose. Prexy Tait didn't like either dizzy description of his cherished school.

HE told us that too, waving a disgusted hand at the pile of sports sections on his desk.

"At times," he stated, "I'm forced to regret that I ever acquiesced to your request that a football team be formed here. The publicity which the team has attracted is not—ah—entirely to my liking. At first I feared that the team would draw ridicule down on the school. Now, to my dismay, I find that just the opposite is true—and an unattractive opposite it is.

"I read articles which are positively maudlin in their plaudits. Not one of the stories explaining the nature of this place has accurately defined our aims and objectives here at Klamuth. Some of the stories are positively revolting."

We waited while he paused to get his sliding eyeglasses back where they belonged.

"I'm not blaming *you*," he went on in a milder tone. "You've all conducted yourselves admirably on the football field and your work here at the school has been all that could be desired. I put down certain conditions when I agreed to the team and I'm not going back on my verbal contract with you gentlemen.

"The team will survive just as long as you continue to be a credit to the school and your work here continues at its present levels. But I must impress on you gentlemen the fact that it is downright dangerous to accept any of the fancies expressed in these"—another gesture toward the pile of papers—"newspa-

pers as truth.

"I—ah—find particularly objectionable the article written by the young lady who convinced me, perhaps against my better judgment, that a good cause would be served by permitting the team to play State University."

He looked us over and I could swear that his eyes lingered on me just a little longer than on anybody else.

"The young lady," Prexy continued, "is not only inaccurate in her description of the game, but she indulges too greatly in personalities to conform to my idea of a journalist. I hope that what she has written will be disregarded by whomever might be affected by it. That's all."

We walked out and I fought a losing battle against letting my face get red. The others were looking at me out of the corners of their eyes and I heard a couple of snickers. Dog-gone that Hilda, I thought. Wait until I saw her again!

I didn't have long to wait. It wasn't more than an hour after the little session in Prexy's office that the word came howling up the stairs of the dormitory that Mike had a femme waiting for him outside. It was Hilda, seated behind the wheel of her convertible coupe, looking like a million dollars in a fur job that drew envious glances from the co-eds who happened to be passing.

"Hi, Mike," she called. "How's for a ride in the country? I was a bad little girl last night after I left you, and I've got to get some fresh air to blow the hangover cobwebs out of my brain."

I went up to the car and put my foot on the narrow running board. Just standing beside her, I could get a whiff of that perfume she wore and it took me back to the previous night, when I'd kissed her.

"Not a chance," I told her, as gruffly as I could. "I've got to climb into my overalls in about ten minutes and play nursemaid to the prettiest herd of cattle you ever saw."

She wrinkled her nose at that.

"I smelled them, coming up the drive," she said, "and they didn't smell pretty at all. Seriously, how about a drive?"

"I told you," I said. "I've got to work."

"But this is Sunday!" she protested.

"Don't tell anybody," I warned her, "but those dumb cows never have learned to read a calendar right."

It didn't make her laugh. She sat there, frowning and drawing at the cigarette she

held between two slim, red-tipped fingers.

"Can't you get somebody else to do your work?" she asked. "Seems to me I heard something about this being an all-for-one-and-one-for-all sort of a place."

I CONSIDERED. I could get somebody to do my work, I supposed. There was hardly a man on the campus that day who wouldn't have been glad to take over the chores of any member of the team that had played State the day before.

But the idea didn't appeal to me, not entirely because I didn't want to slough off some of my work on somebody else, but because it would look a little too much as though all Hilda had to do was drive up and whistle for me and I'd drop everything and come running. So I shook my head again.

"No can do," I told her. "Strict rules against anything like that."

She threw her cigarette past me with an angry gesture.

"Rules, rules, rules!" she complained. "What is this, a jail or a college?"

"Sometimes we wonder," I said as easily as I could. "You should have told me you planned to drive up this afternoon. I could have steered you off and saved you that wasted trip."

Her pretty face was sulky as she looked down at her hands on the wheel of the car.

"I don't make plans that far in advance," she muttered. "I thought—well, I don't usually ask somebody to go driving with me and get a brush-off like this."

"It's no brush-off, Hilda," I said. "I've explained how it is."

"And I don't like your explanation at all," she said, bluntly.

I felt my anger rising slowly. The name Mike never went with too steady a temper and I'm no exception.

"Maybe," I told her, "you can get the guy you had the late date with last night to go driving with you."

She shot a dark look at me and said nothing.

"And another thing," I said. "That story you wrote, making me out a hero. That was a lot of bunk, you know."

"And since when have you started telling me how to write my stories?" she asked. "Do you want me to pull proofs of my stuff and send them up here for you to okay?"

"No, but—"

She put the car in gear with a vicious snap

of the lever under the wheel.

"So long," she said, with false sweetness. "I'm sorry I've kept you away from your cows so long. I won't bother you again."

"Hilda—" I said, but I had to take my foot down from the running board in a hurry as the car leaped forward. Gravel snarled under the tires of the convertible as she spun the machine around the circle and streaked down the drive. I looked after her.

"Goodbye, Hilda," I said to myself.

I felt pretty low while I was working in the barns. The first girl who ever had meant anything big to me had walked into my life out of nowhere and I had let her walk right out again. She had chosen me, a big guy with an ugly puss, working in a jerk college, to pay some attention to, and I had fluffed my chances.

She was a well-known, if not a famous newspaper woman and I was a guy who never had amounted to much and, without her, probably never would amount to much and she had come more than half way to offer me—well, love—and I had sent her away because I had to manicure a herd of cows.

CHAPTER IX

High Pressure

THE other guys left me alone. Maybe they knew I'd taken one on the chin but, anyway, there wasn't any kidding and they let me pursue my own gloomy course that afternoon. On Sundays we football guys had to make up for some of the time we couldn't pay in during the week, even with our stepped-up schedule and we were kept pretty busy during the late afternoon and early evening. Until then I had never minded the extra work much, but that afternoon I began feeling sorry for myself. Here I'd beaten my brains out on the football field the previous afternoon while the others sat in comfortable seats and cheered. Now the ones who had done the cheering were taking it easy while I was wielding a pitchfork and working on the milking machines and doing the other jobs that had to be done.

It's a great thing, self-pity. It can make a snivelling cry baby out of the toughest guy alive if he gives into it as I did that day. By nightfall I was ready to cry on anybody's shoulder. In the study hall that night I

couldn't keep my mind on what I was trying to read.

That was before somebody tiptoed up to me and said there was somebody outside who wanted to see me. I didn't dare hope it was Hilda, but it was.

She had parked down the drive, under a big tree that hadn't lost all its leaves yet, and the shadows were thick. Her face was just a dim blur in the darkness, but her perfume was still as sweet as it had been and my heart did a couple of one-and-a-half's when I walked up to her.

"Get in, Mike," she said, in a low voice. I got in the car.

"I've come to apologize," she said, abruptly. "I was nasty this afternoon and I'm sorry. I've felt miserable all afternoon and I had to come back and tell you to forget what I said."

"Sure," I told her, gulping.

"I—I don't suppose you can go for a drive now, can you?" she asked.

I couldn't. I had a flock of studying to do and besides it was getting close to lights out. If I went for a drive and was grabbed coming in it would mean plenty of trouble, not only for me but for the rest of the team. I knew all that. So we went for a drive.

Rocky was awake when I slipped into the dormitory.

"You big ape," he hissed. "What're you trying to do—get heaved out of this place?"

"Take it easy," I whispered back. "I'm okay. Nobody saw me. It's time I got down to the creamery anyway, and if anybody checks me I'll say I was out ahead of time."

"You're half an hour late," Rocky said. "I sent Manny down there to cover up for you."

"Thanks, pal," I said. I felt good. Hilda loved me and the night had been beautiful and everything was okay.

"Thanks, your uncle," Rocky said, bitterly. "You straighten up and fly right, Mike."

"I will," I promised. "It won't happen again."

"It'd better not," he whispered. "We're not going to let you wreck the team just because you've gone whacky over a dame."

I had to let that one go. I climbed into my work clothes and beat it for the creamery. Manny was all right about it as he was about everything. Nobody except every guy in the dormitory knew I'd pulled a sneak that night to be with Hilda.

I saw her off and on the following week. She'd drive up in the afternoon and we'd

have a few minutes together between football practise and the time I'd go to work. They were mighty fine minutes. And she worked it so that she covered the game, that Saturday, when we beat Andrews Theological, 18—0, in a game that wasn't marked by anything except the awe Andrews felt toward us.

SHE was there, too, when we knocked over Brice Institute, 14—12, in a game Brice really should have taken, or at least tied. But we'd given up the idea of trying field goals after touchdowns and now we sent Mel through the center and he scored both times.

We ended our season against Forbisher, a little Methodist school that, like us, was just starting out to build a football team. Forbisher never should have put a team on the field at all, but they had booked the game and we wanted to play one contest at home, so we urged them to go through with it.

That was the first time we had the luxury of easing up on an opponent. With the score 36—0 at the end of the first half, Rocky called in all the substitutes who hadn't had a chance to play much and we saw the second half from the bench. Forbisher scored in the last quarter but our subs managed to score too, so the final marker was 42—7.

So the Klamuth College football team ended its first season in a blaze of glory. We didn't have an unbeaten year, but that State game rated in our minds as a victory, regardless of the score.

We had a football "banquet" after the Forbisher game, the "banquet" part of it being the school colors in crepe paper that decorated the dining hall. Prexy Tait made a little speech about how glad he was that the team had come through the season so splendidly

and all of us came in for a share of the praise that was being handed out with lavish doses.

"And now," Tait said at the end of the dinner, "let's all forget the football season and get back to work. Perhaps some of us have slipped a little in our schoolwork or in the field in our excitement over the football season. But now that the season's over, we can all go on to new honors in the scholastic field."

Uh-huh—but Prexy Tait hadn't reckoned with Hilda when he said that.

By that time Hilda and I were engaged, I guess. Of course I hadn't given her a ring, hadn't even gone through the formality of asking her to marry me, but we had one of those understandings. All the free time I could get and some time that wasn't really free I was with her.

Her job on the paper had elastic hours and she'd either drive out to Klamuth or I'd hitchhike into town and there were movies and dinners and, once in awhile, a couple of drinks in a cocktail lounge—for her, that is.

She drank more than I liked, but she could handle the stuff. She never got silly or sloppy and she explained that her years on newspapers had trained her how to take care of Old John Barleycorn, so I didn't squawk.

We were in a place one afternoon just after the football season closed, chinning about the Rose Bowl game, when she popped her question.

"How about next year?" she asked me. "Has Roragen got any games lined up for next season yet?"

I SHOOK my head. I knew that Mel had dropped his managerial duties with a big sigh of relief after the Forbisher game and as far as the next season went—that could

[Turn page]

Can't Keep Grandma In Her Chair

She's as Lively as a Youngster—Now her Backache is better

Many sufferers relieve nagging backache quickly, once they discover that the real cause of their trouble may be tired kidneys.

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When disorder of kidney function permits poisonous matter to remain in your blood, it may cause nagging backache, rheumatic pains, leg pains, loss of pep and energy, getting up

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Don't wait! Ask your druggist for Doan's Pills, a stimulant diuretic, used successfully by millions for over 40 years. Doan's give happy relief and will help the 15 miles of kidney tubes flush out poisonous waste from your blood. Get Doan's Pills.

(4 in.)

take care of itself when the time came.

"You ought to be lining up games for next season," Hilda told me. "Real games, I mean—not dates with the two-bit schools you've been playing."

"Were sort of two-bit ourselves," I reminded her.

She frowned and sipped her drink.

"You may be," she admitted, "but you're one of the biggest drawing cards around here, or could be if you were handled right. The papers have made Klamuth an outstanding name on the sports pages. You ought to cash in on that, while you can."

"De-emphasis," I told her, "is the word at Klamuth. You know Prexy Tait."

"That old goat!" she snorted. "There ought to be a way to get around him. I'll have to give some thought to the matter. I'll dig up something. I don't want all the hard work I did this season to go for nothing. I want Klamuth up there with the big timers next year."

"Who'd book a game with us?" I jeered. "Not State, certainly."

"No," she agreed. "State wouldn't touch you with a ten-foot pole. But there are some business brains at some of the other big schools—brains that would see the gate a Klamuth team would draw. And maybe I can arrange something."

I didn't pay much attention to what Hilda said that day, because I didn't know Hilda as well then as I do now. I came to realize that when Hilda set her mind to something, it took a mighty immovable object to stand in her way. She was a girl who never talked about any of her plans until she was ready to act.

Once she was ready she made her move and behind that move was a full set of plans figured down to the *nth degree*. I'd had a couple of experiences with that cold calculation of hers and I'd thought it was cute. Uh-huh!

I guess it was the middle of February when Hilda's father showed up at Klamuth. I think I've told you that he was one of the biggest-shot coaches in the Midwest, in his day, and he was. You who follow the sports pages and read about the career of the Klamuth football team know his name, so there wouldn't be any point in repeating it here.

Later, after everything was over, I tried to figure him out and I came to the conclusion that he was basically an honest man. It was only that he had chosen a profession, if you

can call it that, which calls for certain ideals or lack of them—ideals which didn't fit in with Klamuth's. But that came later.

Hilda's father was a heavy set man with a thatch of gleaming white hair and the expression of a retired clergyman. He could talk like a minister too when he wanted to, or he could rip them out like a drunken longshoreman when the occasion demanded. He could be gentle, benign, wistfully sorrowful. And he could be coldly cutting, blazingly angry and sadistically cruel as well.

He was using the gentle, benign makeup when he first appeared at Klamuth. Hilda brought him to the campus and we showed him around the place. He was entranced with the work we were doing. His questions were intelligent and his observations—the few he made—struck the right note.

He met Prexy Tait and complimented the Old Man on what he was building there at Klamuth, using just the right words. Prexy beamed. We all beamed. Yeah, Hilda's father scored a touchdown the first time he ever appeared at Klamuth.

He was back a couple of weeks later with a proposition for Tait. Of course I didn't sit in on that little talk he had with the Old Man, but I got the gist of the conversation later.

Hilda's father, it appeared, had been deeply impressed with the work done at Klamuth, the goals the school was aiming at. He had been so deeply impressed that after that inspection tour he had asked himself if there wasn't something he could do for Klamuth, some contribution he could make to that splendid work.

He was not, he told Prexy Tait, a wealthy man so an endowment was out of the question. But he had saved enough from his considerable salaries in the past to live comfortably without resorting to servitude to the crass commercialism of the big colleges any longer. He, Hilda's father, frankly was disgusted with the depths to which big time football had fallen.

The game had been intended as a sport to be indulged in by the student body as a whole, not as a money-maker, a business participated in by only a handful of players imported from everywhere for the sole purpose of making the turnstiles click. Hilda's father mourned the whole thing. It was refreshing to find that Klamuth, at least, had found the basic principles of football as it was intended.

Everything he said was right down Tait's

alley. He had the Old Man bobbing his head with each word he spouted.

"Quite right," Tait said. "Quite right, indeed."

CHAPTER X

The Big Time

AND so, it came out, Hilda's father had arrived at a decision. He knew that Klamuth was financially unable to put a physical director on the payroll. But he needed no salary. He offered his services as physical director, gratis, in exchange for the opportunity to help these splendid young men enjoy their sports to the fullest. And what did President Tait think of that proposition?

Don't get the idea that the Old Man was a sap. He was as shrewd a man as you've ever met, but Hilda's father had a way of presenting his case that was hard to beat. With that angelic puss of his and his gift of gab, he could sell anybody anything, I know.

Prexy Tait was only human. Here was a chance to get a famous coach for nothing, because said coach had seen the light and wanted to help Klamuth. Prexy Tait thought the proposition was wonderful.

So football at Klamuth entered its new era. Hilda giggled a little when I told her how thunderstruck I was at the idea of a coach as famous as her father working for nothing at Klamuth.

"He's a real generous guy," I told her. "I've heard a lot of people say they'd love to help Klamuth somehow, but he's the first one I ever met who put it right on the line."

"Father's sweet," Hilda said. "He's got a heart as big as all outdoors. Or, if you prefer another cliché, of gold."

Her voice had a funny tone when she said that, but she didn't explain further. She just said she was glad her father had gotten the place because he had had his heart set on it from the start and he really ought to do wonders for the team and now that we had some real coaching we could book games with some big-time schools.

This was in February, mind you, and Hilda still had her guns sighted on getting Klamuth into big-time football. She was looking months ahead while the rest of us were regarding the next football season as something a couple of ice ages away.

"I want Klamuth to get up there with the headliners," she used to say. "When I introduce you to people and tell them you came from Klamuth I don't want them to give us a blank look and ask whether Klamuth is a county or a Balkan state."

She kept saying little things like that.

"When we do such and such" and "When we meet so-and-so". The two of us—it was always the two of us—in anything she said about the future. It was no wonder that my feet were about six inches off the ground most of the time I was with her. I used to keep pinching myself to make sure that this was real—that this wonderful, talented girl really had fallen in love with Mike, the guy with the face that looked like it had been stepped on and had.

By that time, I'd asked her to marry me and she'd said yes, as soon as I graduated from Klamuth, which would be a year from that June. I couldn't afford a ring, but she said she didn't want one anyway just yet, so everything was just as it should be.

Prexy Tait got his first jolt, I guess, when Hilda's father called spring practise. To Tait, football was something associated with the fall and the leaves turning gold and crimson and corn being shocked in the fields. Spring was for baseball and young men's fancies as far as the Old Man was concerned.

BUT no, Hilda's father explained, spring was also for football. It was, besides a chance to screen the team that would play the following autumn, an excellent physical conditioner in its own right—healthful exercise at its best along with balanced diet, development of camaraderie among the youngsters—oh, spring training was a splendid thing.

It was the old story. Hilda's father poured it on and Prexy Tait, after his first jolt, got to bobbing his head again and we went into spring training.

It was tough too. It didn't take us long to get the idea that the old days were gone—the days when we used to laugh at the mistakes we made and argue out our little differences among ourselves. Now, we found out, Hilda's father's word was law—the final law.

"But, Coach," Rocky said, that first day, "don't you think—"

That was as far as he got. That benign expression went by the board and there was a piercing glare in its place.

"I said," he told Rocky distinctly, "that

we'd do it my way. And when I say that, it's done that way, Massone."

Rocky bridled a little, but he was the kind of guy who hated an argument like poison. And as it developed that the coach's way was better than the way we'd been doing it, we dropped the inclination to dispute his word.

He kept at us every minute, driving us, correcting what we did with cutting, sarcastic little remarks, lashing out at us viciously if we repeated a mistake. The fun went out of playing football. Instead of the carefree bunch we had been, we became a collection of automatons who went through the motions absolutely correctly and developed into a well-oiled machine.

We used to talk about it during our bull sessions, but even there there was a different atmosphere. Hilda's father had a way with men as I've said, and he collected enough men around him and charmed them with his personality to insure a clique of supporters in any bull sessions we might have to discuss a revolt against his tyranny.

I ought to know, because I was one of the first men the coach picked out to get on his side. He did it as he did everything so unobtrusively that I hardly knew I was the leader of the pro-coach bunch until, one night, somebody—I think it was K.P.—flung the accusation at me.

"G'wan," he snarled, "you'd say it was okay if that guy beat us with a bull whip! He's got you tied up, hand and foot. Him and his daughter."

Somebody stepped between us before we collided and after awhile we shook hands and told each other to forget what we'd said. But the old feeling wasn't there any longer.

I told Hilda about it, explaining that I was worried about the new trend. She laughed at me.

"For heaven's sake, Mike," she said, "it's time you fellows grew up. You've been living in a kind of prep-school world up there at Klamuth too long. It's a hard, crool world you'll be going out into, and maybe it's better that you find out some of the facts of life now before they hit you in the face later, when were's starting out together."

Well, maybe, I thought. Maybe we had been sort of sappy with that help-the-other-guy attitude, but I'd liked that about Klamuth. And I didn't like this new attitude, this business about every man suspecting the next fellow of being a member of a different crowd, of trying to put something over on

him on the football field or in the classroom.

Spring practise ended before there was a real explosion and the coach took his snowy-haired, beatific presence off the Klamuth campus. He explained that he owned a boys' camp, somewhere in Michigan, which required his presence during the summer months, but he promised he'd be back. And, oh yes, he'd lined up a fine schedule for the school that fall—one that would be sure to swell the coffers of the Student Fund by a sizeable amount.

CHAPTER XI

Hangover

WE nearly fainted when we got a peek at that schedule Hilda's father had taken upon himself to arrange for us. We opened against Duchess! After that we met some of the biggest, strongest, toughest squads in the country. Included in the schedule were two notorious football factories, of the type that Hilda's father had sobbed over during his first interview with Prexy Tait.

Poor Prexy—Hilda's father had him by the short hair. He went into a spasm when he saw that schedule, but what could he do? The take on those games would mean that the school could have half a dozen things Tait had dreamed of having in the dim future. It would mean that more students could be accommodated at Klamuth, more scholarships arranged, more and better equipment installed.

At that, the Old Man might have balked if it hadn't been for the fact that Hilda's father showed him the contracts he'd signed, promising to have a Klamuth team on the field on certain specified dates. Those contracts were pledges made in the name of Klamuth College and Tait couldn't go back on them.

The Old Man remembered then that he had given Hilda's father some innocent little contract for himself, a paper that gave the coach the right to book games for the team wherever he saw fit.

Prexy Tait was stuck.

There was one thing we could have done to ruin the coach's game. We could all have simply refused to play football. Why didn't we? Listen, we were as human as the next man and we thought about those trips to the big places that were on our schedule, those

mammoth stadia filled with people turning out to see us play, the newspaper articles about us, the cheers of the crowd—and what do you think we decided?

We'd worked hard the previous season, trying to keep our scholastic standings up and practising on our own time and taking the bumps that came our way without any more reward than that "banquet", which really was only the regular evening meal with crêpe paper decorations. Now we could get some of the gravy that was due us. Klamuth owed it to us in return for the dough we were going to pile into the Student Fund.

You see the change in attitude, don't you? That change was general throughout the football crowd, and there was a different attitude prevalent among the rest of the student body, too. The others, the ones who didn't play football, resented the idea of us traveling all over the country, getting all the laurel wreaths, while they stayed back at Klamuth and did our work for us.

Oh yes, Hilda's father had talked Prexy Tait into arranging a special schedule for us which gave us more time for football and took us out of the cow sheds. I don't know how he talked Tait into that one, but he did. Great convincers were Hilda and her father.

We opened our season against Duchess after a month of practise that was about twice as tough as the spring training had been. We'd been taken off our summer duties in the middle of August and from that day on the old whip had cracked loudly and often in the hands of the old master, Hilda's father. When we jogged out onto the field against Duchess that September afternoon we were as hard-bitten a crew as you'd ever want not to meet in a dark alley.

THE hangover from the publicity we'd received the previous season, plus the drum-thumping that Hilda and her colleagues had done in pre-season stories, had filled the stadium. Brave little Klamuth was coming out again to do battle with a giant for the sheer love of playing football and an earnest desire to bring honor to their tiny co-operative school. Hah!

I could imagine what the people in the stands were saying.

"Did you hear they practise in a cow pasture by the light of the moon?"

"I understand they hitch-hiked up for this game."

"They say that they have to make up every

minute's work they lose playing football."

And I remembered what Hilda's father, his face twisted in a scowl that hadn't made him look at all like a retired minister, had told us just before we went out to meet Duchess.

"You guys know the game," he had said. "If you don't play it the right way I'll know you're dogging it."

Well, we played it the right way because Hilda's father was a good coach and had beaten football skill into every one of us, whether or not we resented his methods. We played Duchess to a fare-thee-well without a fluke to help us. We took everything Duchess had to offer and gave it right back to her with a little extra.

We busted up her passing attack, that was supposed to be so hot and when they tried to travel on the ground we smothered their progress. We were grinding out touchdowns the hard way as Mel Roragen got his first step on the path to All-America honors with his crashing plunges.

We played good football even if we didn't enjoy ourselves doing it. We played savagely because that was the way we had been trained to play the game. We worked on one lineman with everything we had until just before his coach saw he was out on his feet and then poured through that battered wreck for a long one. It was ruthless, heartless, pitiless football.

We were in the big leagues and we were out to win. We wanted a Bowl bid.

Yeah, we had that bug already. Hilda's father had made sure we were bitten by it, early that fall. A year ago we'd have gone into hysterics over the idea. This year, when the coach told us he was shooting for a Bowl bid, we didn't even snicker.

"You'll have plenty of nice trips this fall," he had said. "Good hotels, plenty of sight-seeing, lots of fun. But the Bowl trip is the real one. That's the one you'll remember. That's the one we'll be shooting for."

Thus it was that every team we came up against was just another block in our path to a Bowl game that had to be removed by one means or another. Duchess was the first block and we shoved that aside with a smashing attack that belonged in midseason rather than an opener, as the papers said the next day.

"That's a mighty football machine they've built down at Klamuth," one columnist wrote. "Those boys make every play as though it were the one that would take them to Pasa-

dena. If they can keep up that relentless brand of ball the rest of the season without any let-down, Duchess is going to have plenty of company on the mourner's bench. After today's game, we can't think of anybody who can take Klamuth. And that goes for Barton."

BARTON, of course, was our highest hurdle. Always a leading figure in the football world, Barton had been reinforced by a flock of returned veterans and Barton was red hot that year. We didn't point for the Barton game especially, we pointed for every game, but we all knew that the chips would be down when we came up against her.

We travelled halfway across the country after walloping Duchess 20—0 and had an easy time with Kenlear. We took Wagnall, 14—6, and got bawled out all the way back to Klamuth because we didn't chalk up a bigger score.

We went South to take Sherbrook in our stride, 40—0. We trampled down Highbridge, 28—3.

We took Barton on a rain-and-snow afternoon, 7—0.

Is that all I'm going to say about the Barton game—the big one? Sure, because it was just another game to us and a pretty dull game at that. There was a time, like the day we played Reed Agricultural, when I could have replayed darned near every move we made.

Barton was just another lineup of big men who had plenty of stuff, but not enough to beat us.

The flavor had gone out of the game for all of us. We were tired of football, weary of the endless grind, sick of the howling stadia that were packed solidly everytime we played. We had thought we'd enjoy the trips but none of us did. The coach was always after us, whipping us along, even when we weren't on the field.

We'd get into our cars at the city near Klamuth and travel to another city and check into a hotel. We'd stay there until it was time to go to the stadium—sometimes we'd have a light drill on the previous afternoon, if we arrived in time—and then we'd go out and play a game of football.

After the game we'd go back to the hotel, eat, check out and get aboard our train to go back to Klamuth.

A glamorous life, huh?

Instead of getting a kick out of all the attention we attracted, during the few minutes we were exposed to the public eye away from the gridiron, we got to feel like a bunch of two-headed calves or something. The reporters would ask us a lot of questions and Hilda's father would be right there to make sure we gave the right answers, and the papers would be filled with stories about members of the "Wonder Team from the Hills".

Most of the sports writers seemed to be surprised that we knew how to eat with forks and use napkins. I don't know what they expected, but a couple of them were visibly disappointed when they found out that we wore the same kind of clothes they did and spoke the same language.

"This Klamuth College," one of them asked me one day. "Is it true that your money comes from Moscow?"

You had to remember to bite down hard when they threw one like that at you. Some of the newspaper syndicates had gotten the idea somewhere that we were a bunch of radicals and had hinted broadly that we were probably all Communist spies in disguise as football players.

It was strictly to laugh, but we couldn't appreciate the humor, somehow.

"Sure," I told this jerk reporter. "We get paid every Saturday night. Ten rubles if we win—a one-way ticket to Siberia if we happen to lose."

"Smart guy, huh?" he asked me. He was about five feet five and looked as if a haircut wouldn't do him a bit of harm. I was figuring which way he'd fall when the coach hustled in and led the guy away toward the table that held the sandwiches and the liquor. Hilda's father put out a spread for the newspapermen in every town we hit. That came out of "expenses" and the Student Fund never saw it.

After the Barton game, we all relaxed and tried to get back into the swing of things at Klamuth. It wasn't easy. We'd lost so much time with our traipsing around the country, playing football, that we were way behind in our classes and we had enough make-up time in the field to keep us busy working overtime until graduation.

And the fellows and gals we'd known so well acted differently toward us, thinking about those splurges we'd made around the country, living off the fat of the land, wined and dined in the best places because we knew how to carry a football.

CHAPTER XII

Back to Normalcy

I WON'T say Prexy Tait gave us the cold eye exactly, but he was different in his attitude toward us, too. He couldn't bear down on us too much, of course, because he'd been caught in the same trap we had, but the old spirit between the front office and the student body was pretty weak when we tried to get back into harness.

That didn't set so well with us, either. The football season had been far from what we thought it was going to be. We might have been excused from class and field work, but we'd done plenty of work on the football field, learning how to play well enough to earn important money for the school.

We had the idea the rest of the student body ought to be grateful to us for getting up the money to get all that new equipment and we burned when we found ourselves treated like a bunch of bums who'd gone off on pleasure trips, leaving the others to do the work.

We got to be a tight little group with our own set of grudges. We'd help each other once in awhile, but it was to heck with anybody who didn't belong to our bunch. And when Hilda's father came up with the announcement that we'd been given the Orange Bowl bid we all said okay. Hilda's father had told us the Bowl trip was the real trip.

We'd grown accustomed to disregarding any promises the coach made but in this instance what could we lose? We voted for the trip and Prexy Tait more or less had to give us the okay. Hilda's father had him over a barrel with another contract and he couldn't have said no if he'd wanted to.

I had dinner with Hilda in town the night her father made the Orange Bowl announcement. I shouldn't have been there, I suppose, because it was a study night, but by that time most of us on the squad were taking time off when we felt like it, subject, of course, to the coach's okay.

Hilda thought the Orange Bowl bid was marvelous, but she had more important news.

"Dad's got his offer," she told me. "He got it today."

"What offer?" I asked.

"The bid to coach Barton, silly," she said. "Didn't he tell you?"

No, he hadn't told me. All he had told me was to get in there and play football like a grown man instead of a grammar school kid. He'd told me that quite often.

"Barton?" I asked. "I didn't know he was after the Barton job."

Hilda nodded and took a sip of the drink that was always close by her elbow.

"He's been after it for years," she said. "It's one of the best-paying jobs in the country. Up till now, he never could quite make the grade. And when he lost out at where he was—some stupid misunderstanding with some fuddy-duddy faculty board who thought he was too rough on the little mamma's boys—it looked as though he might never get the bid.

"Some people thought he was too old-school. But he showed Barton this year that he could still put out a winning team. He took the worst he could find and made it into a Bowl team."

THE worst he could find—that was Klamuth. And Hilda's father had beaten our brains out for a year to prove that he could make a winning football combination out of a bunch of lugs who had thought that playing football was just a game.

"That's fine," I said, weakly. "That's great."

"Isn't it?" she asked. "And he laughed at me when I first proposed it."

"Oh, it was your idea, then," I said.

"Uh-huh." She nodded. "I got my stroke of brilliance right after the State game last year. I thought to myself that if Dad could get hold of you boys and really coach you you might stand a chance of winning this year, and if you got a good enough schedule the people at Barton would just have to give Dad the bid for the job."

"I see," I said. "Then all you did wasn't just for dear old Klamuth."

She laughed.

"That place," she told me. "Darling, won't I be glad to see you out of there!"

"Do you," I inquired carefully, "think you can stand having me there until next June? Providing, of course, that I do graduate next June?"

She wrinkled up her nose in that grimace I'd previously found so adorable.

"Don't be ridiculous," she said. "You're not staying at that awful place until next June."

"I'm not?" I said.

"Of course not," she chuckled. "I meant to save this for you until after the Orange Bowl game, but you might as well see it now."

She reached into the huge bag she carried and pulled out a folded telegram. She handed it across the table to me. I read the message and blinked. It read—

OKAY ON MIKE PROPOSAL. HAVE HIM REPORT HERE NOT LATER THAN DECEMBER FIFTH READY TO PLAY.

The telegram was signed by a man with a familiar name. He was the owner of one of New York's professional football teams. I refolded the telegram neatly and passed it back to Hilda.

"Suppose you brief me," I suggested. "Just what do I do?"

"Why," she said, "I knew you wouldn't want to stay at Klamuth all those months just to finish out a silly course and get a diploma that doesn't mean anything, and I knew that you could get a good contract with these pro's right away, as soon as the Orange Bowl is over, so I got in touch with this man—I know him quite well—and offered your services. And he's accepted at the price I quoted."

I picked up a fork and made a tracing on the tablecloth. Doodling, I realized I was drawing out our X-3 play where I pull out of line and protect the passer going out to the flank. I put down the fork.

"I hope you got a good price for me," I said. My voice was quite calm. "It's nice to know these little things."

"I think I did very well," she told me. She named a figure that made me blink again. "Of course you'll only play in a couple of games this season, but there's next year and the year after that and maybe you have five years of pro ball in you."

"Uh-huh," I said. "Maybe."

Something in my tone must have caught her ear.

She looked at me, wonderingly.

"Why, Mike," she said, in an astonished voice. "You don't sound very enthusiastic about what I've done!"

I waited a couple of moments before I spoke, fighting to keep my voice down.

"I'm not, dear," I said, very quietly. "I'm not at all enthusiastic about the idea of your arranging for me to leave school and play pro ball. I don't intend to leave school and I don't intend to play pro ball. So suppose you send this fellow a wire and tell him that."

SHE leaned back in her chair and stared at me.

"But—you mean you're going to turn this offer down?" she asked. "All that money? We could be married right away, Mike, and we'd have money enough to set up house-keeping after you came off the road and—and—"

"Look, honey," I said. "I'm going to finish school. I've worked pretty hard to get as far as I've gotten at Klamuth, and I'm going to finish up. Then, I'm going to get a job managing some big farm. And then I'm going to work twice as hard to get the dough to have my own place. That's the program. There's no pro football in it anywhere."

She took a gulp of her drink and set down her drink hard.

"That's *your* program," she said, and suddenly she wasn't half as cute as she had been. "But it isn't mine. You sound like my first husband, always insisting on having his own way and absolutely disregarding any suggestions, any plans, I might make."

"Well, listen to me, Mike. I don't intend to be tied down to any man who insists on staying in a hick school that was the laughing stock of the country before my father made it amount to something. And if you think I'm going to stagnate on some pig farm for the rest of my life, you're crazy."

"Not pigs," I said. "Blooded stock."

She waved a furious hand.

"Whatever it is," she said, "it's not for me."

"Listen," I reminded her, "you've known for a long time just what I intended to be, what I intended to do. How come you suddenly tell me that you don't want any part of it?"

"I didn't take you seriously," she said. "I felt sure that once you got out on these football trips and saw how people really live, you'd throw away those crazy ideas. I thought you'd be a big enough man to do that."

"I've seen how they live," I told her, "and none of them seemed to be enjoying themselves too much. I guess I'm not a big guy, because I don't want any part of it."

"And that means you don't want me," Hilda said.

"I want you more than anything I've ever wanted in my life," I told her. "But not on those terms."

"Your own terms, I suppose," she sneered.

"Uh-huh," I said, nodding. "My own terms. Not according to a bunch of rules"

you've drawn up that I hadn't known anything about, until now. I kind of like to make my own way, Hilda, and I thought we were going to plan our own way together. Instead, you seem to have taken over the job of manager. And I don't think I want a manager just yet."

"You need one," she flared. "Any man who's content to stick in a mud hole of a college and then pick up a pitchfork instead of a fat check for playing pro ball needs a manager."

She gathered up her gloves and shrugged into her coat. I stood up as she bounced to her feet, but she didn't even look at me. She turned and spoke over her shoulder as she left me.

"Goodbye, Silas," she said. "Give my regards to the cows."

So there it was. I'd lost Hilda and this time I knew it was for good. I wondered why I didn't feel worse about it, because I really had loved the gal. But somehow I felt relieved.

I knew then that I had been out of my class, all the time. I was made for Klamuth College—the old Klamuth—and not to be the husband of a dynamic character like Hilda, with her schemes and her behind-the-scenes planning. I had visions of what her husband must have gone through before he cut loose. The

poor guy probably never knew from one day to the next what Hilda had mapped out for him.

I called for the check and even the size of the bill didn't stop me from feeling happy. I was happy hitch-hiking back to Klamuth and I was still happy when we entrained for Miami three days later.

I was happier yet, I guess, when the last whistle of the Orange Bowl game tooted and we had lost, 20—14, and I'd never have to play big-league football again or have to look at Hilda's father any more.

I was feeling pepped up because I knew that now that we'd finished up with big-time ball we could work our way back to where we'd been before we had the pressure put on us by Hilda and her dad.

It would take a little time, but the old gang would be back in the old rut—if you want to call it that—in time. They were basically good guys and the Klamuth idea was basically sound and everything would straighten itself out.

And it did. Things at Klamuth are as they were before Hilda and her father burst upon the scene. I read in the weekly paper that Marcia and I get here at the farm that Klamuth just dropped her opening game to Reed Agricultural, 14—6.

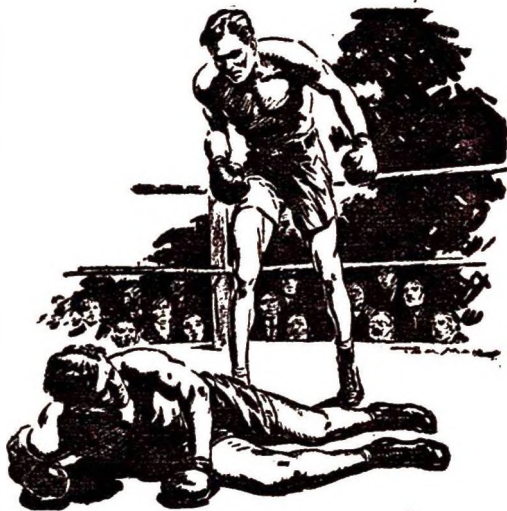
I'll bet it was a whizzer of a game.

"My Boy, Hook Thompson, Is Dynamite Every Time He Gets in the Ring—"

That was what the manager called Pee Wee claimed—but those in the know had their doubts! They pointed out that Hook's real name was Charles "Lamb" Thompson—and that he was sure going like a lamb to the slaughter! Because, one after another, youngsters had challenged the reigning Champ — and been mowed down. And Hook would be no exception.

Everybody knew that Hook seemed more interested in building miniature models of boats, planes and stage-coaches than he was in fighting. But they didn't know how his hobby would help him when he met the Champ in **A MODEL FOR THE CHAMP**, the complete boxing novelet by Tom Tucker which will hold you breathless in the next issue!

It's a grippingly "different" type of boxing story—look forward to it for some real fistic thrills!



Terror gripped Ben Turl, and the ball struck his outstretched hands, took a quick bounce and got away from him



THE WRONG RIGHT END

By WILL BRUCE

Ace pass grabber Ben Turl goes butter-fingered whenever the heat's on, so his foe Paul Clark puts him on a spot!

A PSYCHIATRIST would undoubtedly do a land-office business within a fifty mile radius of Sandusky U. between September and November each year. That, of course, is the football season. The area described is the very heart of the Pennsylvania coal mining country, where football fans arrive at hysteria in mid-season and move on by stages toward mass insanity as the season approaches its climax.

On September 18th, in a column called

"Football Fillers" on the front page of the Sandusky *Sentinel*, chuckling students discovered this Winchell-istic tidbit:

What son of what candidate for what important political office will bypass the football squad this year? And for what good reason?

In his dormitory room at 105 Prentice Hall, Ben Turl, a tall, slightly stoop-shouldered young man with moist pale eyes was scan-

ning the item with frowning intentness. Still frowning, he passed the newspaper across to his roommate, "Specs" Doolittle.

"Read that, Specs. If you ask me, that's pretty low punching."

His owlish roomy glanced at the item, then shrugged his frail shoulders.

"Don't see what's so wrong about it, Ben. You *are* bypassing the squad this year, aren't you?"

Ben Turl sighed, very gently. Sometimes he wondered why he'd picked Specs for a roomy. The little guy was a quiz kid whizz with the books. Ben was a more-or-less average student. It was a help to room with a braintrust like Specs. It helped plenty. But most college grinds love to argue, and Specs was no exception.

"That's right," Ben admitted wearily. "I'm not out, but—"

"Your dad is running for Congress, isn't he?" Specs cut in.

"Sure. Sure, but—"

"Then what's your kick, Ben? That's all it says here in the paper. Why wouldn't they wonder how come you're not trying out this year?"

Ben knew the futility of trying to outtalk his brilliant roommate. "All right, but it's my own business, Specs."

"That's where you're dead wrong, Ben. Not on this campus. Football is king in this part of the country, and you know it. You looked like a red hot pass receiver on the Frosh squad last year, until that appendix operation took you out for the season. The whole campus has been counting on you in there at right end for us this year. And you suddenly decide you've lost interest in football. That's not your own business, Ben. That's monkey business. And you'll reconsider if you want to stay a popular guy on this campus."

Specs was leaning far forward, waving his small pale hands as he talked in his raspy high voice. The little fellow meant well, Ben knew. Specs was loyal to the bone, genuinely worried about him. Ben was touched by his roomy's concern. But what Specs didn't know was Ben's reasons for not turning out this year.

BEN TURL looked like a star pass receiver in the two opening games on the frosh schedule last year, before his burst appendix had taken him out for the season. But he had a secret weakness which would

surely have showed up if he'd played out the string. It had been the bane of his life back in high school.

When the heat was off, when his team was ahead, Ben could hang onto passes as if he had glue on his fingers. But in moments of real crisis, when the whole game depended on his making the catch, he tightened up inside, somehow. Despite himself, he tried too hard, became butterfingers, and fumbled around like a stumblebum ex-fighter out there.

He'd been the laughing stock of the high school league. When his team was behind, his coach used to yank him, knowing he'd be little good with the heat on. Front runner, they dubbed him. No money performer. No moxie.

It had been agonizing for Ben. It had seared his soul. And the harder he'd tried to combat the trouble, the worse it had plagued him, the more he tightened up when the chips were down, with a high hard pass arcing up the line toward him.

He hadn't been pressure-tested his frosh year at Sandusky, for the simple reason that the first two games, the only games he'd taken part in, had been virtual set-ups for Coach Hal English's Sanduskyites. There simply had been no moments of crisis.

This year, his soph year, with his lawyer father entered in the district race for a seat in Congress, Ben had decided to drop the football. Folks in this section of country took such a fierce interest in football that a poor showing by Ben on the Sandusky squad might very well prejudice his father's vote-getting potential.

It was a crazy idea, sure, but not too crazy when you considered that Sandusky carried the football banner for every hard-bitten fan in the district. Lehigh and Lafayette were all right, but in this particular stretch of country, there was only one team that counted, and that was Sandusky.

Whoever helped Sandusky win games was a hero. Whoever spoiled Sandusky's chances was a—well, his old man had plenty of nerve, trying to run for Congress in this district!

Ben looked at his spectacled roommate and sighed again, deeply.

"I do want to stay a popular guy on campus, Specs. And that's why I'm not out for football. I know that sounds sort of silly, but I'm not to be blamed."

He looked up as a knock came at the door. It opened and three husky-looking students

walked in. Paul Clark was at the point of the trio, with Effie Spooner and Mar—short for “Marlene”—Dietrich on the flanks. Quarterback, left and right halfbacks of this year’s Varsity, in that order. Clark was a stocky, hard-eyed son, with nervous hands and a bossy manner. He seemed to have appointed himself spokesman of the trio.

“We’re here for a showdown, Turl. Hal figures he’s got a chance for an undefeated season this year. He’s got a weak spot at right end, though. Lou went good in there with the Frosh squad, and we figure you could plug that gap for us.”

The guy had a way of snapping his words out, like a bulldozing top sergeant in the army. His manner made it plain that he was not asking favors. He was announcing decisions. Ben didn’t go for it.

“You don’t go in for the subtle approach, do you?” Ben asked mildly.

The swarthy quarterback smiled thinly at him. He was here on transfer from State, eligible to play by virtue of a wartime eligibility system which had not yet been converted back to the old peacetime basis.

“I’ll be subtle when I have to,” he said blandly. “You’re acting stubborn and spoiling our chances. We figure it’s time we got stubborn. Let’s put it this way. You either turn out for the squad tomorrow afternoon or we’ll start a whispering campaign that’ll scorch your ears off. We can do that, Turl. You’ve got the whole campus talking already. It looks darn’ queer when a good player suddenly loses all interest in football.”

“I have my reasons,” Ben Turl was getting sore. What right did Paul Clark have, telling him to do this and that?

“From where I stand it looks like you’re plain yellow,” the swarthy man snapped.

Effie Spooner and Mar Dietrich grabbed the quarterback from either side.

“Easy, Paul,” Effie was saying. “No need to lay it on that thick.”

Ben Turl could feel a tight lump of anger in his chest. He was breathing hard, and it was all he could do to keep his voice down in its proper octave.

“Go on,” he said thickly. “Go on, Paul. You were saying—what?”

“I’m saying this,” the dark man muttered. “Your pop’s running for Congress out of this district. The way you’re acting, he won’t have a chance in China. This is a football country. People aren’t going to vote for a man whose son looks like a ball of fire one

year, and then quits cold the next, for no good reason. From here on, it’s your baby, pal. We’ve warned you. If you’re smart, I figure you’ll be out there tomorrow.”

HE SWUNG angrily through the door and his two sidekicks followed. Specs Doolittle, who’d remained tactfully silent throughout the painful scene, glanced at Ben.

“You’re in a spot, son,” he sighed gently.

“What do you think?”

“I think it might be fun to get my mitts on that cocky gazebo just once, in a scrimmage!” Ben said in a hard voice.

Ben Turl put in three rugged days of conditioning exercises before Coach Hal English even let him work in a scrimmage. When he finally got in there at right end with the seconds, Paul Clark grinned craftily in the Varsity huddle and sent a series of bone-crunching plays through Ben’s position.

Ben got the old one-two on the first play, and an avalanche of Varsity backs, with Paul Clark in the lead, trundled over his prostrate figure. He felt his nose gouge into the packed dirt, felt a cleat grind at his small ribs. It hurt like blazes. He got up and crouched there at the line, watching Paul Clark call the next one.

The Varsity backfield shifted over, unbalanced to Ben’s side. He dug his cleats in the turf, watched center Obey Hinkle snap the ball back, and went driving in past Varsity left tackle, Luke Davis.

Luke tried to throw a body block on him. Ben drove the big man down with two muscular arms, leaped skittishly around him. He drove between Dietrich and Spooner, and there was Paul Clark, coming up with a blistering, high knee motion, plunging straight at him.

Ben smiled grimly, set himself on wide-spread legs, and drove his helmet straight at the big quarterback’s middle.

It was the obvious target and the obvious tactic. Unfortunately, he never reached that target. One of Paul Clark’s up-pistoning knees caught Ben flush on the temple. There was some knee padding within Paul’s mole-skins. That cushioned the brutal impact a little. It still felt to Ben as if he had caught a cannonball on his forehead.

He went down like a stone. He lay on the hard ground, twitching, groaning, fighting the dizziness that threatened to overwhelm him. There was a black veil over everything he looked at, over the field, the sweating play-

ers, over the hastening figure of Coach Hal English.

Ben shook his head angrily, put both hands on the ground, and stood up like a New Year's Eve drunk who has tripped in the gutter.

"How is it, son?" the coach asked in worried tones.

"A-all right," Ben said firmly. He walked with great care toward the scrub huddle. When he got there, his eyes cleared a bit more. He heard titters all around. Blinking, he understood what it was, and he could explain those titters. He had walked into the Varsity huddle.

"Better take right end with the seconds, Ski," Paul Clark was saying with biting sarcasm, to the right end, Ski Bonkowski. "Turl just promoted himself to your Varsity spot."

Hal English fingered his bony nose and glared at the swarthy quarterback.

"Save your breath for calling signals, Clark. You, Turl, better go lie down awhile somewhere. You're out on your feet. I thought you were bluffing."

He sent a gauging glance, tinged with admiration, in Ben's direction, as he resumed control of the scrimmage players.

Some minutes later, the youngish coach came over to where Ben lay resting by the sideline.

"You showed plenty of grit out there, son. I like that in my players." The coach ran a hand through his sparse, sand-colored hair and glanced at Ben shrewdly. "What's wrong with you and Paul Clark, Turl?"

"Nothing, much. We're not palsy."

The coach sighed. "I hope you will be. You looked good nailing those practise passes, the three days you've been out. You went good the two games you played with the Frosh last year. I need a good right end who can take Paul's long passes, Turl. I'd like to fit you into the picture."

Ben shrugged, saying nothing. His head still rang like a struck gong, from that brutal kick the quarterback had administered to him.

"Try to get along with Clark, Turl," the coach said. "No particular reason why you shouldn't, is there?"

"I guess not," Ben said limply.

He knew differently when he read the next morning's edition of the Sandusky *Sentinel*.

Paul Clark's startling revelation that he is the son of the John Clark who is opposing Ben

Turl's father in the district Congressional race, adds special significance to the accidental clash between the pair in yesterday's scrimmage session.

Paul's a quiet, somewhat secretive chap, so it's not too surprising that nobody on campus suspected his dad was the Clark who's running for Congress. A transfer from State, he's been with us at Sandusky only a couple of weeks, and the name "Clark" is quite common.

The situation between him and Ben Turl is far from common, however. The pair seem to be natural rivals, quite apart from the fact that their fathers are squared off as opponents in a political tussle.

It just might be that the battle for football glory between Ben and Paul will have a telling effect on election day, when this district's football-wise voters cast their ballots. Stranger things have certainly happened in this nation's somewhat haphazard political life.

No matter which of the two proves more popular with the fans this Fall, Coach Hal English has nothing to lose. Dog-eat-dog rivalry is the sort of thing great ball teams often are built of.

We'll see what we'll see, when we take Tech on next weekend.

What they saw was Paul Clark, ripping through a weaker Tech team for three slashing quarters, running the ball like a Grange, kicking and passing like Jim Thorpe, making his name a household phrase, while Ben Turl squirmed impotently on the bench.

No matter what you thought personally about Paul Clark, he could certainly play football. Ben watched with bug-eyed admiration as Paul slammed through center for another twelve yards, then passed to Mar Dietrich for the game's, and Sandusky's, fourth touchdown. Paul's point-kick was good as gold. The crowd boomed applause at the stocky star as the scoreboard went to 28 to 0.

It was good to see his bunch win, but Ben couldn't avoid a trapped feeling.

"That Clark tricked me out for the squad this year, doggone him," Ben told himself. "He knew blamed well he could play rings around me. It's funny he never said who he really was till I'd turned out for the squad!"

"Turl!" It was Hal English, down the bench.

BEN got up nervously and trotted down there.

"Yes, Coach?"

"Get in there for Ski. Tell Paul to chuck you a couple."

Ben raced out there. This was an important moment, he knew. The coach hadn't started him, because he'd reported late, and wasn't in real condition to play a full game

yet. But if he showed he could hold those passes of Clark, he might start next weekend, against State.

He waited his play out, before joining the huddle. Paul Clark frowned when he heard Hal English's orders. He was too shrewd to buck headquarters, though.

"Okay. Make it number six then. Right into the end zone. And be sure you hold it, Butterfingers."

Ben's eyes widened a trifle. Butterfingers! He hadn't heard that epithet applied to him since the old days, back in high school. It was probably just coincidence that Paul Clark had used it now. Still, it could always make Ben nervous. It was biting reminder of his repeated failures when the chips were down.

He knew he couldn't afford to fail now. He lined up, out wide. He heard Paul Clark's flat voice snap out the signals behind. He saw Obey Hinkle's fingers whiten as he pressed down on the ball, then flipped it neatly between his huge legs.

Ben moved down there. He ran from the Tech thirty to the end zone in slightly more than three seconds. They were trying to gang him. They had him tabbed for a sneak receiver. They put three men on him. But Ben did a quick feint to his right, cut left with a skater's overlapping stride, and scooted out like a frightened fly.

He looked back and saw Paul getting set for the pitch. The Tech line was sifting through at the quarterback. He was fading fast. He suddenly stopped, cranked his right arm, and let go with a long, smooth-spiraling bullet.

Ben saw the defense running up and did a quick dance step, then moved forward. He had once tried his luck, with some success, as a high jumper. He stamped the ground with the old skill now, and went up there, stretching. He saw he was just going to get the tips of his fingers on it. He twisted one shoulder up, the other down, and managed to get his whole right hand in back of it.

He stopped it, got his left hand to it and struggled grimly to keep his grasp. The ball was still spinning like a thing alive. But he had to hold it.

He finally got it in control just as he hit the ground. His feet went out from under him. He went down, but he still held that football. It was another score for Sandusky.

And his ears were full of the crowd's wild screaming. It was his name they yelled now,

as much as Paul Clark's. Back in the huddle, the quarterback didn't look as pleased as a man should look, when he's just helped score a touchdown.

He called for the kick-try, and planted one neatly between the uprights. 35 to 0, that made it. They kicked off to Tech. The Techs hung onto the pill during the remaining moments, so that's how it ended.

Going in, Ben Turl reflected hopefully that he was batting a thousand. One chance to catch a long pass and he'd nailed it spectacularly, for a touchdown. He could feel the approving eyes of the crowd on him. It was a fine sensation, he thought. But of course there'd been no real crisis involved in his catching of that one. The real test of the old nervous weakness would come only when a game's outcome depended on his making the catch.

"Gosh, there might not be a spot like that all season!" he muttered, half-aloud. "The team's so strong, they may never get in hot water."

He hoped not. If there were no one involved but himself, he'd have welcomed the test. But if he flubbed, it could hurt his father's chances for Congress. That was a crazy set-up. But calling it ridiculous didn't change the facts any. If he let the fans down, in this football-wild district, it might well cost his father the chance his dad had dreamed of. Even one lost vote can spell defeat, as any ward heeler will tell you.

Against State, the next weekend, Ben Turl went like a whizz out there. Little Effie Spooner got loose in the first five minutes and romped half the length of the field for six points. State fought hard during the rest of the game, but with the pressure off him, Ben hung onto Paul Clark's long passes like a Don Hutson.

He scored in the third quarter on a pass into paydirt, and again in the final frame. He'd looked darn' good out there, and the fans let him know it.

"Okay, pal," Paul Clark said mysteriously. "Enjoy your day in the sun while you've got it. They won't all be like that one."

The surly quarterback was a rotten prophet. The Lafayette game was much the same, except it ended at 19 to 0 instead of 21 to 0, as the State game had ended.

FOR a wonder, they breezed right through the schedule without once finding themselves on the unhealthy end of the score. A

hot offensive team sometimes does that.

The way things were turning out for him, Ben was glad he'd reported for the squad. He and Paul were sharing the headlines about equally, which of course meant that the football season would have no effect either way on the November election. And Ben had thoroughly enjoyed the season, so far.

The night before the wind-up against rugged Lebanon College, he was feeling so pleased with the way things had worked out that he finally took down his hair and confessed all to his owlish little roommate, Specs Doolittle.

"So that was why you weren't coming out this year!" Specs' piping voice had a worried inflection. "Go to pieces with the big chips down, huh? But gosh, Ben! Lebanon's tough, this year. They may score on us, first thing out of the bucket, tomorrow."

"I don't think so," Ben said. If he'd been honest, he supposed he'd have said that he hoped not.

"But if they do, and you fold up out there!" Specs was biting his under lip. "Tomorrow's our big chance for an undefeated season, Ben. First one in eight years, if we can knock Lebanon over. Boy, would you be in the doghouse, if you spoiled that chance! It *would* affect the voting, when the fans went out to the polls the following Monday!"

"Good grief!" Ben was sweating, beginning to wish he'd kept his own counsel. "Don't worry so much, Specs. It's not your funeral, is it?"

"Somebody's got to do the worrying around here, Ben. Look, about this reaction of yours. When the heat's on you out there, do you have any hunches about when and how that business started?"

Ben smiled ruefully. He was in for it now, he saw. His bespectacled roomy was a psych major. This thing was right down Specs' alley.

"You're not going to psychoanalyse me, pal. I'm no human guinea pig for you to experiment on, not the night before a big ball game!"

"No, I'm not kidding, Ben. Think back. If you could just remember how that fool business got started, you'd have it licked. There's always some kind of an incident behind these neuroses. That's what you've got. You can take my word for it. A neuroses."

Ben sighed. There was no stopping Specs. Might as well play along with him. It was

kind of an interesting thought that Specs had suggested.

"What kind of an incident are you looking for, Specs?"

The little guy took off his thick glasses and squinted owlishly through the lenses.

"Failure in crisis. Any time that you failed to come through in a crisis?"

Ben looked at him with a shocked expression.

"Why, yes, there was. Hey, maybe you've got something there, Specs. Why the heck didn't I think of it that way?"

Briefly, he told it. There'd been a time as a kid, at a resort lake. He and another youngster had been fooling around down by the water one morning, without supervision. The other kid had taken a boat out, fallen out of it, and yelled holy murder to Ben for help.

Ben hadn't been much of a swimmer—just a doggie paddler. He'd tried. He'd puffed his way out there, but the kid had gone down just before Ben got to him. He'd gone down and had never come up. The boat had drifted away in the meantime, and Ben had almost drowned too, before he pulled himself onto the lakeside.

So it had not been his fault. He'd done his best, and everyone said so. But Ben never did get over that awful feeling of failure. If he'd swum harder, or been just a bit better, he might have done something, the way he looked at it. He'd taught himself to swim like a fish after that, and once, some years later, he'd saved a girl's life. That seemed to balance the books a bit, and he quit worrying about it.

He'd practically forgotten the unfortunate business when he started playing football in senior high. He'd certainly never connected his failure to hang onto passes, in the games' crucial moments, with the old tragedy out of his boyhood.

"But that's it *exactly!*" Specs said now, leaning forward like an excitable hen. "I'm glad we talked this thing out, Ben. Now, even if they do score against us tomorrow, I think you're going to come through. I think you'll hold onto those passes with the chips down!"

Ben stared at him, gulping. If this was Specs' cure, it seemed outlandishly simple. But he'd heard of such things turning the trick, and he certainly wanted to believe what Specs was saying.

"Gosh!" he said numbly. "The way you talk, Specs, you've got me almost hoping I

get a chance to try my luck out there with the heat on!"

BEN TURL did, and in the opening half. The Lebanon bunch turned on a blistering power drive the moment they received the kickoff from Sandusky. They moved up-field in a steady, plodding march, piling first downs on first downs with monotonous regularity.

A long pass from the Sandusky twenty-three was good, in the end zone. The record crowd in the banked seats of the grandstand groaned with disgust, but there was a hopeful roar when the point-try burst like a bubble. 6 to 0, favor Lebanon, and the crowd chirped eagerly to the Sanduskyites. Six points was no ball game.

But it began to look that way. It wasn't until the second quarter that Sandusky got started. Mar Dietrich, Effie Spooner and Paul Clark began to tear loose around the ends. They got past the midstripe and the crowd yelled like madmen. That put fire in cocky Paul Clark's veins, and he bucked the stubborn Lebanon line even harder.

Slowly, they pushed their way down to the Lebanon forty.

Paul Clark called a pass play. It was twenty-two, a pass which could go to almost anybody. But Ben could feel Paul's eyes brush him, as the quarterback called the play's number, as much as to say:

"This is for you, pal. And you'd better nail it!"

He was nervous, crouching there at the line. He saw Obey Hinkle flip the pill back. He went darting down there through the Lebanon secondary. He made his count and cut hard to his left on the enemy ten. He might as well have stayed on the line of scrimmage.

Paul Clark had a change of mind and was running with the ball. He had the Lebanon defense spread wide for the expected pass.

Surprise took him up to the line of scrimmage. A pair of sprinter's legs and a vicious straightarm turned the near fiasco into a nice eight yard gain for the swarthy signal caller.

It came to Ben, on his way back to the huddle, that Paul could have tossed him a pass, as easily as not. Why had Paul held his hand? Was the quarterback teasing Ben purposely, trying to get his raw nerves even more ragged?

"Same play," Paul said crisply. He looked

briefly at Ben. "And this one's for the business."

Ben went racing out. The lines crunched together. He cut all the way down to the goal line this time, made his quick turn to the side and looked over his shoulder. It was coming. It was riding down toward him, a high, hard one.

All season long he had waited for this moment. The big test. The crisis. For an eighth wonder, he was in the open. He went up, stretching. The ball came straight to his hands.

He felt some unnamed terror grip his insides, felt his whole body tighten. He watched the ball hit his brittle hands and take a quick bounce away from them. Frantic now, he clutched at it, tried to stay with it. He might as well have tried to grab that ball with a stick. His hands were no more good to him, in this crucial moment, than that.

There was a shocked silence from the grandstand. The crowd's roaring tumult had died, when Ben dropped that pass, as quickly as the water stops in a turned-off faucet. They could not believe it. It seemed impossible a man could drop a ball which came so straight at him.

Even his teammates looked shocked in the huddle. Paul Clark didn't waste any time.

"Number six. Let's hit it."

Ben felt something thud sickly within him. It was another long pass. The same thing, really, except for a new signal formation.

He went out there and put up his hands in the end zone. Again the ball zoomed straight to him. They were watching him this time. He had enough presence of mind to run forward, to make a wild leap upward for it. The same mental block assailed him as the ball drifted in toward his waiting fingers.

This was a crisis. The game might ride on the outcome of this single play. Their successful season without a defeat. It was too much. He tried too hard. He went tight. The ball bounced up off the tips of his fingers.

He heard some razzberries from the Lebanon side, on the way back from that one. Then he saw Ski Bonkowski coming in at a lope. Disgustedly, he turned toward the bench. There was a duty cheer for him. It was worse, he thought numbly, than if they just hadn't bothered.

He was not too surprised to find Specs Doolittle crouching down in back of the players' bench. His owlish little roomy had

somehow sneaked down from the grandstand.

SLOWLY Ben Turl slid off the bench and sprawled on the grass with him, out of earshot of the others.

"Some cure," he said miserably. "Boy, did I louse things up out there?" He was thinking of his father, of the fact that some thousands of those folks up there in the stands would be casting votes in the Congressional race the day after tomorrow. His father's heart was so set on serving his country for one term in Congress.

"Listen," Specs said. "There's only one chance, the way I look at it. Just you take it easy, Ben, and try not to worry about what just happened out there. It wasn't your fault. It's that doggone fixation." He was getting up.

"What're you aiming to do?"

"Gonna see if Coach'll listen to me a minute," Specs said firmly.

He tried getting on Hal English's ear, but the coach wasn't having any. Not till the half.

Ben didn't know what Specs was up to, but he had to admire the little fellow's insistence, as Specs dogged the coach's heels, on the trek to the showers. The coach finally seemed to take a real interest in what Specs was saying. They turned in at an office in the fieldhouse to hold a private confab, and were gone a full fifteen minutes.

When Hal English sent his team out for the second half, he nodded curtly at Ben. "You stay here with your roommate awhile, Ben."

Ben frowned at Specs.

"What in the dickens is up?"

"Relax, Ben. Easy does it. Now look, how much self control do you have in your system?"

"Whaddaya mean? What is this?"

"Maybe the game, if you'll do as we tell you. All you've got to do is wait till you're called out there, go in there, and keep your eyes off that scoreboard!"

"Huh? What kind of nonsense is that?"

"Can you do it?"

He got it, then. "Listen, this is the craziest stunt I ever heard of!"

"Not crazy. Darn' cute, if you ask me. The only reason you can't nail those long passes is you think the heat's on. So—when you get out there again—you won't know it. The team's been briefed. They're not gonna tell you. Our offense was built around you and Paul. You know that, Ben."

"Yeah, but it's wacky just the same."

"It's a wild chance, maybe. But Hal English seemed to think it was worth taking. He wants this game like a fish wants water to swim in."

So it was crazy. Well, maybe not so crazy, at that. Turl waited, sweating out the minutes, wondering when it would come, that summons to action. It came sooner than he thought. It came after seven minutes of that third quarter.

He'd heard lots of yelling, inside there. Maybe Sandusky had scored. Maybe they were ahead, he thought grimly, racing out there to join the team. He held his eyes down and away from that scoreboard with a supreme effort of self-control. He coasted through one play before joining the huddle, all the while trying to convince himself that they'd scored, they were leading Lebanon now.

They were on the enemy's forty-six yard line. The team was studiously quiet, in the huddle. There were only the harsh accents of Paul Clark's voice, grinding out at them.

"Number Six. Hold, you linemen! We can still bea—"

Clark paused abruptly, and gave an excellent imitation of a man who has made a dumb break and feels badly flustered.

Obey Hinkle, the towering center, glared at Clark angrily.

"I always thought quarterbackin' took brains, Paul," he said, glancing sidewise at Ben. "Guess you realize that did it."

"It slipped out," the quarterback flared. "I wasn't thinking."

Ben looked at him. Under the carefully contrite mask Paul Clark was wearing, he seemed to detect a trace of sly humor. He suddenly knew, beyond a doubt, almost without thinking, that the quarterback had made that so-called "break" on purpose. He'd wanted Ben to know the chips were down on this one.

Ben didn't know when he'd ever felt quite so disgusted with anyone. In a sharp moment of insight, he could suddenly visualize the whole pattern. Somewhere, somehow, Paul Clark had heard of Ben's fatal weakness, his inability to hold onto a pass with the chips down. There was that political rivalry between their two fathers. And what a golden opportunity to sabotage Ben's dad's chances, if Paul were to transfer to Sandusky from State, and show Ben up in front of the voting gentry.

THEY had planned it that far, Ben suddenly knew. The political skull-duggery involved wasn't too surprising. There were few unbroken rules in that game. But for Paul Clark purposely to jeopardize the team's chances, for such a spurious motive—it made Ben more than a little sick.

You look for more sportsmanship, in football. And with a few rotten exceptions like crafty Paul Clark, you usually find it.

Thinking about it just burned Ben up.

"It's all right, Obey," he growled angrily. "I'm way ahead of you. So let's go, before we're overtime in the huddle. And one thing, pal," he talked straight at Paul Clark, "if you pitch to me, you better make it a good one!"

They lined up, and there it was. He took his place grimly, digging his cleats in. He didn't have any idea what the score was. He still hadn't looked at the scoreboard. He knew the moment was important—he could thank crafty Paul Clark for that—but he tried to thrust all thoughts except of this play from his mind.

It was hard to quit worrying about his dad's election.

If he messed that up for his father in this last game, it would be tragic.

Paul Clark's brittle voice was barking behind him.

He saw the linemen become tense, saw Obey Hinkle snap the pill back through his massive legs.

Ben came out of his crouch, slammed past an incoming left halfback, and went scooting down there. This was the big one, he knew. If he got past this moment, if Paul flung a pass to him and he somehow managed to hang onto it, the cure would be finished. He'd have licked that fool phobia which had so constantly plagued him!

He raced on a line down the center of the field, then made a butterfly's abrupt cut toward the left sideline. He had counted while running. He had timed this thing right. He was certain of that much. If anything went wrong with the timing, it would be in Paul Clark's department.

The Lebanonites were watching for him. There were two of them on him, but his swift sidewise cut left them in the ruck for a few precious moments.

He heard the crowd yell wildly. Way back there in the Sandusky backfield, Paul Clark was having his troubles. The Lebanon linemen were in. Paul fainted a run, faded an-

other half step. His right arm was moving back in the long stretch he affected when tossing.

That arm lanced forward, and here it came. It was a long low ball. It was a beauty. To the crowd in the stands it looked grooved. Even from the bench it looked like a perfect pitch.

But to Ben Turl, who was expected to catch it, it told a much different story.

The lead was too long. By a hair, but when you're already running your legs off to make up for the natural lead on a ball, a hair can be mighty important.

Ben could feel the tight ball of rage inside him growing to mountainous proportions. Purposely overlead him, would the shrewd devil? He slammed his flying cleats down harder, harder. He put his hands up as the ball dropped down swiftly, up there in front of him.

All he knew was that Paul Clark, for obvious reasons, had thrown a pass which looked good, but which couldn't be caught—and that he *had* to catch it. He leaned forward on the dead run, his arms out, stretching, stretching.

The ball dropped. He got his fingers under it, like a scoop. It twisted free, started to elude him.

He jabbed forward harder, brought it up to his chest and held it!

Their safety man was right there beyond, not five yards from him. Turl saw he was on their eleven-yard line. He put out a rocking straight-arm. He felt the man's clutching hands grab at his flying knees. He applied more pressure on the player's helmet, drove him head foremost to the turf.

Ben Turl did a flicking skip-step around him, and romped the final ten yards into paydirt.

You never heard such wild yelling as came from the grandstand then. The crowd's thunder slackened when Coach Hal English yanked Paul Clark out of the ball game. They could not understand it, nor could Ben, unless the coach had shared Ben's moment of insight into Paul Clark's outrageously selfish motives.

Effie Spooner ran it around end for the point, with Turl clearing a wide path for him.

In the huddle, Mar Dietrich slapped Ben on the back, "Okay kid," he said. "Now take a look at that scoreboard."

It said 7 to 6 in Sandusky's favor. Ben gulped.

"So now, we play football," Dietrich said grimly. "We hold those babies!"

AND they did, right through that last quarter.

It was still 7 to 6 when the gun banged to end it.

Ben didn't completely understand his football cure until the election returns were counted next week, and he and Specs went out to celebrate his dad's brand new importance as a member of Congress.

"I had a hunch Paul Clark would spill the beans out there in the huddle," Specs told

Ben soberly. "Matter of fact, I was counting on it."

"Counting on it?" Ben looked at his owlish roomy.

"To get you sore, Ben. That was the most important part of the cure. Just knowing how come you kept flopping under great stress was half a cure. But when you got so raging sore at Paul out there, you forgot all about your blamed inhibition. That's what really pushed you over the hurdle."

"Yeah," Ben said thoughtfully, gently. "That—and a swell little gent I know, name of Specs Doolittle!"



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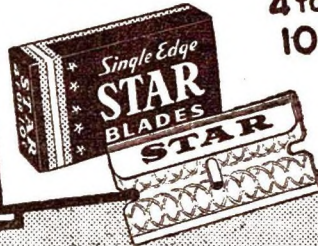
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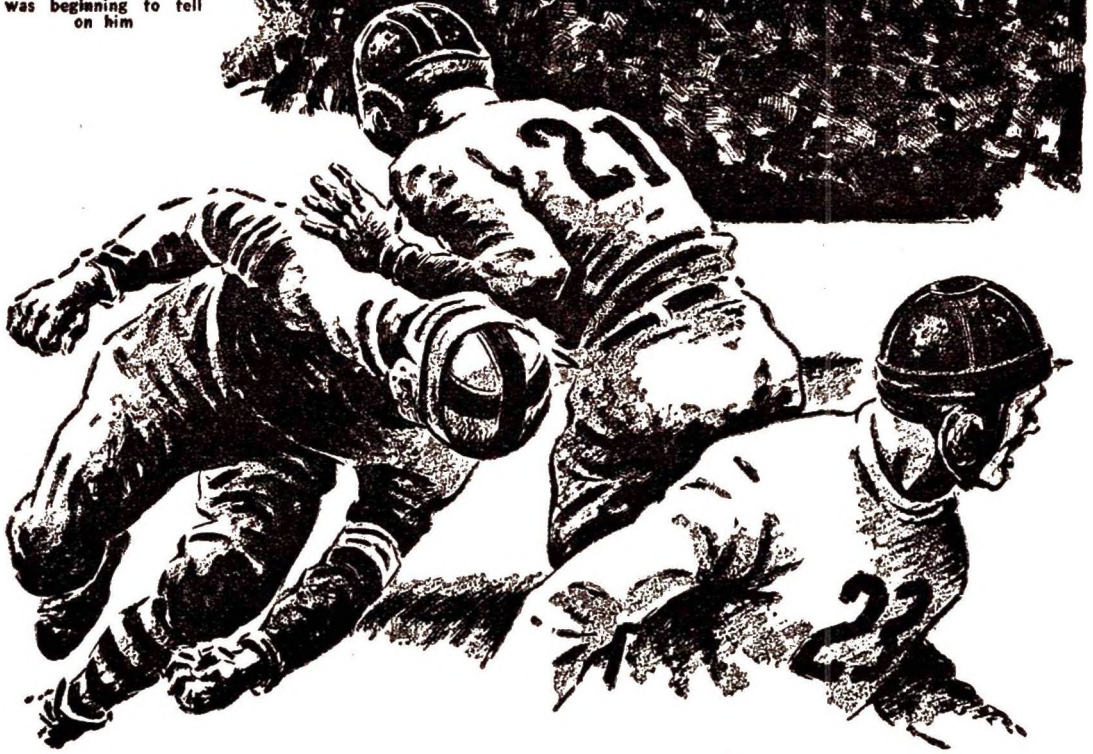
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STAR BLADES

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Stormy had played grimly and hard, and now it was beginning to tell on him



CRAZY FOR TROUBLE

By WILLIAM J. O'SULLIVAN

The Bums were the clowns of the pro game, until a couple of real clowns joined up to make a football team of them!

CHAPTER I

Son of Fury

EVEN if his name had been Jones, instead of Weathers, he'd probably have picked up the nickname "Stormy" at a tender age. Trouble came to Mrs. Weathers' son Harold like eyebrows to John L. Lewis or like curves to La Grable—naturally and in great quantities.

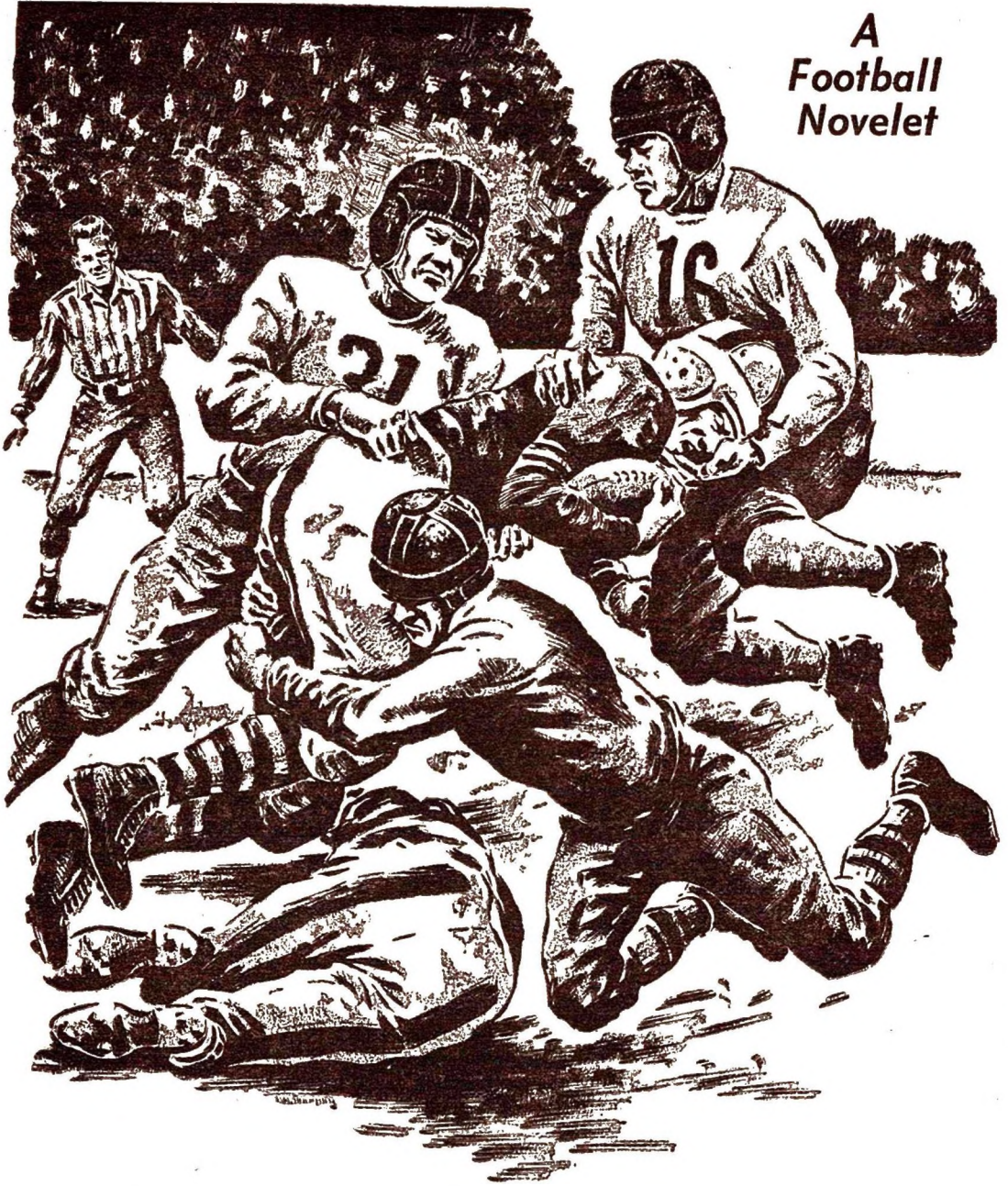
When he'd been a kid, people had looked at him and thought of golden-voiced, curly-

haired choir boys and velvet-suited Little Lord Fauntleroy's and Mother's Little Helpers . . . and then suddenly were wondering why they thought, too, of Putty-blowers and of jam-smearing pantry-bandits, of the Ol' Swimmin' Hole and of a full-blown street-fight . . . of stink-bombs in a hot classroom. . . .

Stormy Weathers had grown up along both lines of thought—and action.

"A saint with a broken nose," a great sports-writer had called him, when he was starring with the New York Titans that first

A Football Novelet



season, ten years ago. "A battle-scarred angel. . ."

The enraged Brooklyn fans—or *fanatics* if you prefer—said it should have been "Battle-scarred." They took that back and said they meant "Bottle-scarred."

They had called him many things, the Brooklyn pigskin followers, when professional football's great blocking back had personally blocked the Brooklyn Bums out of the Eastern Division Title all three times

that the Bums had their big chance.

Brooklyn football fans didn't have any need for nightmares. Not for any more nightmares, that is, than the vision of Stormy Weathers wild-bulling it along through the Bums' secondary, savagely flattening line backers-up and safety men, the Titan ball-toters following safely over the human debris.

Or Stormy Weathers rocking the Bums' flashy runners with soul-searing blocks as they stepped out hopefully for the pay-dirt

of the Titan goal . . . one never-to-be-achieved down from a sustained attack . . . one never-to-be-scored touchdown from victory . . . one never-to-be-won game from a Championship.

On the last occasion, the Bums' last chance and their best in years, Stormy had blocked Gibby Latour so hard and so wreckingly that the flashy Brooklyn back had been knocked colder than a pawnbroker's appraisal. Stormy, rolling over and over on the frozen turf with the lethal momentum of his smearing but clean body-slam, had looked up to see the spheroid anchored there in the air near him, flying free.

Stormy had opened his arms receptively, and it was the Titans' ball on the Titan two, the score *Titans 10—Bums 7* with one minute of playing time left.

Stormy had needed a police cordon to get him out of the Bums' raging park. But the Bums themselves, led by Owner-Manager "Broadway" Denby, had got a chance at Stormy first—in much the same way that the luckless Gibby Latour had had a chance at Stormy.

Denby's first name was John; but the burning question following that fracas had not been, "Who Struck John?" It had been, "What was John struck with?" Some said he had been blocked out. Others held that Stormy had hit him with the Brooklyn bench.

Stormy's own version was he had merely started to set the Brooklyn owner up for a convincer when the stout, fiery Broadway Jawn had decided to go beddy-by—right there at Stormy's feet.

Broadway Jawn had spoken his forgiveness. Broadway Jawn, a once-good performer in the prize ring, had told all and sundry that it was just so much water over the dam . . . and that he took it with a grain of salt. But those who knew the proud, unyielding Broadway Denby said the 'dams' the man mentioned were not spelled that way; and that he took the salt in the wounds Stormy's granite fists had opened in the rocky Denby visage.

Then, so quickly can the picture change, a spark of the old fire was gone from Stormy's gray eyes, a cylinder of explosion was missing from his lusty, roaring blocks and new, strange faces were studding the Titan roster. Old, familiar faces were missing.

Then old Cully Bodine, Titan mastermind, parlayed a simple head cold into double pneumonia and a pass to Immortality,

and then new money came in, and new ideas and new systems and new faces. And before you could say, "Ow, what a tackle!" the Titans were matching the Bums for sheer futility.

THE Bums had laid out money and the Titans had laid out money and their respective public relations barkers told all the Faithful what they were going to do with their teams. And the Faithful came, paid and saw, and they went away with very definite ideas of what the Titan and the Bum ownership could do with their teams, including the players, the benches and the water-buckets.

Then came a lull in public relating, a lull in attendance, and a lull in the interest of the Faithful. Then came the announcement, and from Brooklyn the storm. Without lull—

STORMY WEATHERS TRADED TO LUCKLESS BUMS!

The first rumors were a Brooklyn 'gag.' Then reliable reports gagged Brooklyn. But not for long—the Flatbush Faithful burst the gag with a roar that evacuated pigeons from Borough Hall, and sent the lions into hiding in their cages in Prospect Park Zoo.

And the next Sunday, as he trotted out onto Ebbets Field with his strange mates, he received a roaring tribute from the Bums' vocal supporters. But it was the kind of tribute a shepherd reserves for a dagger-fanged wolf trying to smuggle in among the lambs.

"Kill the bum! Boooooooo!"

"Stormy, ya stink!"

"Come awn, Pittsboigh! Flatten dat rat! Boooooooo!"

Warming up out there in the wash of Brooklyn's hate, Stormy didn't notice it—not too much. He spun a ball in his big, powerful hands and took a quick step. The ball dropped, his right foot thudded against it and a soaring spiral corkscrewed up into the crisp, sunny air. The staring Pittsburgh players loosed 'birds' into the uproar.

Stormy didn't mind because he'd foreseen this; and because, anyway, Stormy played the ball or the opponent or the game, not the stands.

Besides, Stormy had just left a session with the Bums' board of strategy and owner and team, there in the dressing-room, a session that was not so noisy as the stands, but much more grim.

"This team is stumbly and handicapped

enough," Coach "Ginger" Mahan had roared at Broadway Jawn, "without ringing in a guy that Brooklyn would pay to see electrocuted! You told me this trade was rigged to pass Weathers on to the Oilers or the Senators! I won't have Weathers out there with my boys! They are having a hard time even now, getting together!"

John Denby had focused his fish-blue eyes on the irate little manager, rolling an unlighted cigar from side to side of his slit of a mouth.

"Shaddup, Ginger," he had said tonelessly when the Bums' coach paused to suck in air. "You're no fireball. I think I'll make use o' that clause in our contrac' says I can advise. Remember?"

"Well, I'm advisin' you to use Stormy. I'm advisin' you to shaddup, too. I give you a free hand to pick an' buy players an' wotta I get? Boy, they're Bums okay. With th' capital B!"

"They haven't got rolling," Ginger defended, his dark eyes angry. "They're not, uh, cohesive."

"Yeah," Denby agreed. "You got something, Ginger. They're adhesive, not cohesive. Their pants are adhesive to the bench an' their feet are adhesive to the ground, inside the ten-yard markers. An' their hands are adhesive on my payroll." He'd paused to bite incisively into the cigar.

"But you're not adhesive, Ginger. Not if you refuse to advise with me, see? I'm advising you to play Stormy, here—" his opaque, pale gaze had swiveled impersonally onto the former Titan star. "I got my reasons, Ginger."

The Brooklyn coach glowered and for once let his tongue slip from control.

"Listen, John, if a guy puts the slug on me I put it back on him. If I can. And if I got the sand, and I have! I don't get thirty other guys and the stands to slug him for me! And I don't bust my team up doing it, either!"

The players had ganged around in a tight group, their eyes riveted on the scene and shifting only to move from one to another of the principals. The Bums had been proclaimed a collection of names and individuals who could not get along. But for once, they were of one mind and purpose—listening—sizing this thing up.

Broadway John's eyes went still on Ginger's face; but it was the sort of going still that a wrestler will employ when he has his opponent cornered, is watching for the fatal

move. The Bums' scrappy coach made that move now. With his mouth.

"I'm not having any, John. Weathers doesn't play."

WATER was audible dripping from a defective spigot into a basin, in the washroom. The gazes of coach and owner stayed locked for sixty full drips.

"What time is it, Ginger?" Denby asked along his cigar.

The Brooklyn coach blinked, shifted his eyes to his wristwatch, moved his baleful gaze back to meet John Denby's steady stare.

"It's exactly two o'clock."

"At exactly one-fifty-nine, Ginger," John Denby said evenly, "I fired you. According to contract."

It was curious the way the color flowed out of Ginger Mahan's face—like red-tinted fluid flowing from a basin and leaving the empty bowl of it whitely dirty. The coach turned his head jerkily, his eyes seeking out Stormy Weather.

"You're not taking this, are you, Weathers? You know how John loves you, don't you? Hah! I never liked you too much myself. But it shouldn't happen to an Imperial Japanese Marine that Broadway John should get the drop on him like *this!* Like he's got *you!* I understood he wanted you to swing a deal with. But playing you in Brooklyn—Especially with this gang we got now. . . ."

Ginger Mahan's voice trickled away and he sat in silent contemplation of the disaster he predicted for both the Bums and for the Bums' hated glory-wrecker, Stormy Weathers.

Stormy stared incuriously at Denby, then shrugged.

"Don't worry yourself about me, Mahan. I don't scare so easy." He smiled faintly at the angry flush that pointed up the bumpy cartilage on the bridge of Denby's nose. "Me, I'll get by."

"Like meat coming out of a chopper, you'll get by!" Mahan snorted. "Well, nuts to this. I got some lawyers to see! Have a good time, Denby."

The powerfully-built Brooklyn owner looked up and intercepted Stormy's steady gaze. After a moment, he chuckled, his huge shoulders moving with the hard mirth that was in the man.

"I think I will," he murmured. "I think I *will* have a good time. But if you want to see me have it, Ginger, you'll have to pay. I

told you a little while back to shaddup. You wouldn't. I'm telling you now to get out. And I mean *now!*"

He thought a brief moment while Mahan moved out of his chair, moved heavily across the floor, crashed the door shut after him.

"Okay, boys. Better get out there and limber up. I'll run things as usual. You don't need a coach. What you guys need is a governess."

When the highly-individualistic Bums trotted out a few minutes later, they had their minds on more than their own personal equations for the first time this new season.

And for the first time in his life, Stormy Weathers was going into a fight the outcome of which was doubtful in his own mind. Before, he either didn't stop to think or didn't care what the odds.

Broadway Jawn Denby and the Bums and the Faithful were another thing again. . . .

CHAPTER II

Warrior's End

AFTER he had limbered up with some passing and punting and a few high-knee sprints up and down the sidelines, Stormy trotted over to the bench, nodded his thanks when Tony Mannisch, the Bums' trainer, tossed him a hooded windbreaker and walked slowly up to where Denby and "Tiger" Welsh, tackle and team captain, were conferring.

The standout star of the Bums, huge, bull-like "Killer" May, sat with left-half "Bid" Swanson and quarterback Dave Gowan, watching it all with hard eyes and a challenging cant to his big jaw. May was heralded as the only Brooklyn performer who had lived up to his Press notices. The big red-head looked tough and was.

"Gink" Borund and Carl Mains, the ends, were having a pass-catching warm-up behind the bench. Guard "Tiny" Gordon watched.

"Duffy" Gottlieb the center; "Tilly" Lawson, tackle; and Gus Helmuth, guard—ceased talking when Stormy came by and watched the blocking back. There was some quality about Weathers that registered with other men, that automatically had an influence on them, their action, their talk, when he came

near them, became one of their group if only in his nearness.

It was as if they recognized something vital in the dark-haired, gray-eyed man, an always-new discovery that never palled. Their eyes had that appraising quality you give a race-horse or a champion performer in other sports. A familiar fighter would get that same swift study, that identical, slow second-time-over look, as if with their eyes they could test his ropes of muscles, could gauge his weight, could assay the metal of the man.

Too, there was always that suggestion of, "I wonder if he could?" in their sharply inquiring looks. Not unfriendly exactly—nor friendly either. But weighing, musing, studying.

In his college days, Stormy Weathers had been a light-heavy fighter. It was perhaps typical of the man that football players thought of him as a fighter and that fighters thought of him as a football player.

It was an unspoken recognition of the fact that Weathers brought to whichever sport, fighting or football, an added something that others didn't have. On the gridiron, he was a good back, a very good back. But also, he was a fighter, ready to mix it with anybody whose craw was sanded enough to spill over.

In the twenty-four-foot square 'ring,' his flat-footed refusal to back up, his berserk rushes when an opponent weakened, had about them the rugged, stubborn quality of football, of a rock-ribbed line, of a slashing attack to bore through a weak spot.

They looked at Stormy Weathers thus, when he walked over to where Denby and Tiger Welsh stood in close talk—measuring the man, appraising him, questioning, "How would I stack up against this guy?"

Stormy waited for Denby to speak, to notice him. While he did, his eyes touched on Tiny Gordon—"Army" Gordon, the right guard. Tiny had played at The Point at the same time Tilly Lawson, Tiger Welsh's other tackle, had been a Navy line star.

They had played against one another at West Point and Annapolis; and although they lined up on the Bums in adjacent positions it was no secret that they still played "against" one another.

You couldn't say it was a focal point in the bickering that marked the Bums a trouble-team. With Killer May holding silently aloof from the others—with halfbacks Chuck Castrain and Bid Swanson not teaming up

smoothly—with Duffy Gottlieb critical of both his guards—it was as futile to look for or declare this or that a focus of trouble as it would have been to argue which leg of a centipede was out of step with the others. . . .

The Brooklyn Bums were a trouble team. And in this respect football's stand-out trouble man, Stormy Weathers, fitted like a custard pie in a Keystone Comedy.

DENBY saw Stormy was waiting, but let him wait while he said a little more to Tiger Welsh. Then he let his eyes touch slowly over the new back.

"Something, Weathers?"

Stormy met the man's stare evenly.

"For instance?"

Broadway John's eyes were nettled. But only his eyes. "Well, all our plays, for instance. I should think you'd be busy going over them. Unless you learned them all in two days?"

Stormy's face eased in a mocking grin.

"If your plays didn't give me any trouble as a Titan back, I don't guess I'll miss much of the idea when Davey Gowan tells it in the huddle. Anyway, I probably know the plays as well as your own backs. I mean, looking at the record."

Of them all listening, only Killer May grinned. The big redhead seemed to like that crack, which was testimony of its edge.

"What's number twenty-two?" Denby snapped.

Stormy looked up at the tidal flow of the stands. "I blast a hole open for somebody, I suppose."

"What's number twenty-seven?"

"I blast another hole open." Stormy yawned lazily. "Next?"

"What's number fifteen?"

"I blast another hole open."

"Hah!" Broadway John snorted. "It's a quick kick by the full."

"So I'm not even in it," Stormy said. "So what? Don't worry over me, John. I deliver. See?"

"That's not what the Titans say!" Denby growled.

"Oh, well, they're just sore we couldn't play the Bums every day." Stormy grinned maliciously. "Anything else?"

There apparently wasn't. Stormy sat beside Killer May until game time came around.

But underneath the impersonally hard crust of his face, he was unhappy. Stormy

had come a long way along the football trail. Here and there, back over the years, were crossroads and detours along the hard path of his career.

Crossroads where he should have slowed . . . detours he should have taken, perhaps . . . crossroads of diplomacy with managers, owners, fans, fellow-players, detours of simple strategy that led to semi-executive jobs or to bench jobs that had a future beyond the endurance of muscle and brawn and combativeness.

If Cully Bodine had lived . . . if he hadn't told Darragh what he thought of him that time—those *times*. If he hadn't unmercifully ribbed headline-hogs shortly destined for bench jobs when they'd sought to hang on beyond their time, had tried to bolster with brag their waning prowess.

But he hadn't. And here he was, playing in a park where they hated him from franchise-owner down to hot-dog hawker.

"So what?" he murmured, as he trotted out to line up with the team. "What do I care?"

"You say something?" May asked.

Stormy didn't even bother to answer.

Going into the fourth quarter, with the Oilers leading by 21—10, Stormy licked his split lips and stared benchward—in question, not in plea. Of them all there on the field, Stormy alone had been in for every play of the game.

Denby sat the bench like a beefy Sphinx, face unemotional, eyes opaquely filming it all for that shrewd brain. Through the half-time intermission, he had kept strictly out of the dressing-room.

Through the game, thus far, he had watched closely, silently, expressionlessly, waving Dave Gowan or the quarterback's substitute, "Soup" Malone, away the few times the field-generals had sought him out for consultation, for advice.

Through it all Stormy had played grimly, hard—albeit he was patently off a step in his old speed, a convincing blast off in his old tearing blocks. Now it was beginning to tell on him.

The Oilers flattened him twice in six plays that earned them consecutive first downs in the fourth quarter. And the Faithful roared their glee when the pulverizer of old became the pulverizer of new.

Tilly Lawson and Army Tiny Gordon had a bit to say to one another, when the plays started breaking through the right side of

the Bums' line.

The first time Stormy listened, his bruised face questioned the two men through whose area the play had come to slam him down hard. The second time, Stormy walked away and looked his disgust. The Oilers fumbled then, the heat was off Stormy.

HIS head was still spinning, his feet feeling as if they were both lefts, when Dave Gowan ganged them in his huddle, crisped the play. They came out of the huddle fast, and Stormy hesitated uncertainly, inclined to check the play.

His senses cleared, but he was slightly hazy about the deal coming up. He *thought* he knew it. . . . Recheck of the signals would mean a penalty for delaying the game, though. He was pretty sure he knew the play.

The ball snapped and Stormy faked for the end, then cut back hard. The play, as he figured it, was a delayed buck, with him piling hard through the right guard position, Bid Swanson stepping in his wake.

He banged hard against someone . . . someone who shouldn't have been there. If he knew the play. It was Dave Gowan, the speedy quarterback taking the ball with the spinner, then hitting out to follow close after Stormy in an off-tackle slant.

Stormy, mistaking the play, had swung into the man, telescoping the chunky quarterback stunningly between himself and Tiny Gordon, who had pulled out at guard to screen the play.

Gowan screamed his pain, the ball shot out of his hands and the man was on the ground, on his back, moaning and writhing in his agony. "Joey" Lattery, the Oiler end, was on the ball in a pounce and the Brooklyn stands hit a new high in rage.

Cushions sailed out onto the field, programs floated down in whole and in pieces and The Faithful really outdid themselves in venom.

"Boooooooooo! Boooooooooo!"

Tony Mannisch and Doc Michaels were out there then. The Doc took a fast look, felt Gowan's leg gently, then lifted his hand in a signal for the stretcher.

"Leg broken," he said simply.

The Bums walked around or dropped to the ground, but without exception, their eyes were on Stormy. Soup Malone trotted out, pulling on his helmet. He looked at Stormy closely, opened his mouth to speak, but shut it again without a word. Then Chuck Cas-

train was racing out, pointing at Stormy.

The battle-weary blocking-back walked slowly off the field, his face raised in a harsh grin to the howling, cat-calling stands. He went past Denby, was dropping down on the bench when the owner spoke.

"Beat it, Weathers. Looks like another cop exit. Gowan was a good boy and popular." The man shook his head. "That was a crazy thing to do. Anything to say?"

"Yeah," Stormy said savagely. "I got something to say. *Nuts!* To you. To you and your griping so-called team and your lousy fans! *Nuts!*"

"That wouldn't look nice in print, Weathers." Denby smiled slightly. "Feel a little beat up?" He shrugged. "You could have asked to come out, you know."

"Not you, I wouldn't ask," Stormy said tightly. "Not anything. Well, I guess I'm through?"

"It isn't that easy, fella," Denby said simply. "Not that easy. You're through for the day, yeah. After all, I'd hate to see ya killed, get it? You better dress and sneak out. I don't want to see ya ruined."

"No, not by anybody but you," Stormy said savagely. "By you playing me until I'm half unconscious, out on my feet, almost!"

"You hollering uncle?" Denby asked. "Is that it?"

"You go to Hades," Stormy said flatly. He turned on his way to the showers.

The roar of the crowd poured down on him, voicing its distaste, its hate, its rage. Stormy walked slowly along, then raised his hand to his face—five fingers wriggled derisively from their pivot-point on his swollen nose.

The sound then was a fury of impotent murder when Stormy walked on in a new shower of cushions and pop-bottles and curses.

But Stormy wasn't listening. To that. He was listening to a voice within him that kept saying, "*Through. You're through. Through!*"

CHAPTER III

Hobson's Choice

THE Brooklyn players accepted the loss of Dave Gowan for what it was—another bad break in a series of bad breaks. But the way the fans looked at it, it was an-

other piece of testimony added to the already voluminous record of Stormy Weathers' personal feud with them.

"It was a mistake," Killer May saw it. They gathered on the Monday following the game to go over mistakes, consider strategy, suggest corrections. "Stormy shouldn't have played until we'd worked out together, longer. And he was kept in too long without rest."

Denby looked at Weathers.

"That's right, you were worked too hard?"

"I'm not being paid to shoot my mouth off," the blocking back said flatly. "Ask somebody else. When I'm paid to worry about team condition and strategy and things like that, I'll produce. Until then, you worry about it. You said you were running things? Okay, you're running things. Why ask me?"

"Shooting the mouth off, huh?" May asked angrily. "Was that directed at me, that crack?"

Stormy shrugged, but his eyes were adamant.

"Cut yourself a slice if you think it fits, Killer. You heard me. I'm not paid to think or to talk."

"I think we're all agreed that Soup Malone isn't ready yet to carry the team attack," Broadway John Denby said. "Not with the use we're making of the T-formation, now and then. He doesn't understand it fully yet. It's awkward for him to work it. So . . . how do we get around that?"

"We got to get us a quarterback," Tiger Welsh said.

Denby smiled tightly.

"Oh. Just like that, eh? We get us a quarterback! Even if I did lay the money out for one, do you *know* where I could get a big-time quarter, quick?"

"Give Stormy two bits and get his ideas," May said. "Stormy, the way he says, he don't think unless he gets paid to. His ideas might be worth that. Two bits. A quarter. Huh, Stormy?"

The former Titan made as if to consider the offer.

"Well-l, I think it ought to be a little more than that, Killer. You see, I went to a decent school; not a freshwater jerk outfit that even a coal miner without a high-school diploma could get by at. My ideas ought to be worth maybe four bits."

Killer growled his rage and kicked his chair back, towering over Stormy with knotted fists.

"Why, you cheap has-been! I—"

Stormy came up fast and only Denby's quick move between the two kept the men from swinging at one another.

"That's enough of that!" the owner snapped. "You asked for it, Killer, and you got told. I don't care if you guys kill yourselves, once you get away from here. But for now, I want to settle this, to know where we are going as a team.

"Now, let's get down to business. Any of you fellows got ideas about a quarterback we could get? I mean, without paying a foolish sum to get him? Let's hear your ideas. You, Tiger?"

"How about Geary of the Senators?" the captain asked. "He's having trouble with the club, I hear."

Denby snorted.

"Sure. He wants his salary doubled. He'd have the same trouble with us. Geary was bitten by a fox, but I don't intend to have the costly bite put on me by Geary. That's out."

"Mandell, of the Lions," Tilly Lawson suggested. "He's a sub, and was a very good Navy player."

"So what?" Tiny Gordon sneered. "That don't qualify him. Maybe Beast Dannahy could do us some good. Beast—" The big ex-Army star paused, unable to go on until the laughter and the jeers had subsided. "Well, it was an idea. The Beast is good for a game or so, anyway. And he's wide open for a bid."

"So is every team Dannahy ever played with wide open!" Denby said. "Like a zipper! He's the crackpot of the game! He's like Al Schacht, Germany Schaeffer and Danny Gardella rolled into one with a touch of Groucho Marx! Let's be sensible."

"And he's yellow," Tilly Lawson added. "As a duck's foot, he's yellow! Heck we all know that. The guy will run like a madman on one play—only to practically drop to the ground when you come at him on the next."

"So?" Stormy asked flatly. "What do you think we got here, an orchid patch?" He narrowed his eyes in recollection. "He was on the Packers team that we played a few years back. He can smell a play coming up as if it had perfume on it. He's a crackpot, sure. But if we're going to refuse to play crackpots, we might as well resign from the League tomorrow."

"Listen to who is talking!" Gordon

growled. "Him!"

"You sure should know a crackpot when you meet up with one, Stormy," Lawson said. "The number of times you've been fined for fighting on the field. And even taking a swing now and then at a spectator."

KILLER MAY took out a quarter and flipped it to Stormy.

"Just about what your idea is worth, Weathers. Now you been paid for your piece of brainwork. Let's get serious."

"I am serious," Stormy said, pocketing the quarter with a hard grin. "I think Tiny has a good idea. For right now. Beast is a screwball and in trouble the whole time. With the referees, the players, everybody."

"But he's a real smart field-general, and he's a wizard on defense. He's—uncanny, almost! Also, he's been with about every team in either division. He knows the teams, their systems, their weaknesses. Get him to cut out his clowning and you've got a good boy."

"And who hasn't tried to stop his clowning? For money, he won't," Denby said. "For good money!" Denby paused as if in respect for the very sacrilege of not doing something for money.

"Anyway, he is yellow. He favors himself. Besides, he drives every team he goes with just crazy. Practical jokes, heavy sarcasm, continued ribbing and fault-finding. He's a team wrecker or he'd be the highest paid quarter in either loop. He's out."

Stormy shrugged.

"What do you have to lose, John? You got no treat here right now. He might win us a game somehow, and that would be a novelty. One tie and two losses, so far. Trouble is, the Bums are so busy fighting among themselves they got no time to work steady against any other opposition."

"Tiny and Tilly are each so afraid they'd help the other, that they won't go for team play. Bid and Castrain never got along. Duffy Gottlieb thinks he is the only lineman on the team. And they're all sore at Tiger because he's field boss."

"Killer, here, plays like he means it for another team, some other game. You haven't got a team, John. You've got a collection of individuals wearing similar uniforms."

"Maybe you think you could handle them, Weathers?" Broadway John Denby said. "I mean, better than Ginger or I could?"

Stormy smiled thinly.

"Maybe you don't think I could!" he said.

"This gang needs handling, that's all." He waited for the battery of Bronx cheers to still. "But that isn't my job, so—"

Broadway John worked the wrapper off a cigar and didn't speak until he had savored its flavor.

"And you think Beast Dannahy would make a good quarterback. Right?"

"I think so."

"You seem crazy for trouble, Weathers," Denby said. "Nothing is too tough for you, too much. Well, I think I can fix you up. With pay that will suit. I need a man to take Ginger Mahan's place, and I think it might be a good idea if he played right with the team."

"You couldn't do it. You couldn't work it out. But you wouldn't admit you couldn't. You wouldn't find me unreasonable at the cash window. Will you take it? Will you run the Bums?"

ALL the players sat stunned. Stormy blinked, sucked in his breath, considered. He was smiling slightly when he spoke.

"You got yourself a deal, John."

"Okay. And I'll get you Beast Dannahy, too." He looked around at the wide-eyed, tight-faced gang of them there. "Boys—this is the new boss. What he says goes."

A chorus of groans, laughs and ripe "birds" swept the gathering. Stormy waited with a tight smile, then took pencil and paper and made a list of names, swiftly, passed the list to Denby.

"Hundred dollar fines for these men," he snapped. "Insubordination! Gordon, Lawson, Gottlieb, Swanson, Helmut. If you want me. If I get any more stuff, the fines are doubled. If you don't back me up, you can look for another man."

"No, by gum, you don't!" Duffy Gottlieb yelled. "Who do you think you are, you overrated pug?"

"One hundred dollars for that," Stormy said. "Extra. Does that stick, John?"

Denby smiled faintly, his eyes maliciously content.

"That sticks."

"Strip down for calisthenics and practise," the new Bum boss snapped. "And don't keep me waiting."

He walked out, slamming the door after him. The shocked silence was broken by Killer May's mirthless chuckles, chuckles that grew to a roaring laugh.

CHAPTER IV

The Storm Breaks

"Oh, brother!" the big fullback shouted. "Sweet Joe, is *this* going to be a deal! That guy is crazy. He means every word he says!"

Outside, Stormy was far from mirthful. He knew his choice was not really a free one, knew that John Denby had worked him into this the way a chess expert will work out a calculated attack—letting his opponent think everything is hunky-dory until it is too late . . . only then does the hapless opponent see the subtle, clever strategy of it all.

Denby had him. If he didn't have him before, he did now. He had come to the Bums as a sort of Hobson's choice . . . the nearest if not the only place available for him.

But the legendary Hobson, the stable keeper, who let every patron choose his horse so long as it was the one in the stall nearest the door, at least served notice as to his arbitrariness.

Denby had let him think he was making his own choice; and would tell the Brooklyn Faithful and the sportswriters that was the way of it. Denby was saddled with a group of stars he couldn't control. Well, he was shed of that stigma now. It was saddled squarely on Stormy Weathers and he had to shoulder the load alone.

The season was a bad one for the Bums. Mahan wouldn't hold the bag and had quit—with Stormy's coming as the pretext. John Denby had been left to face the wrath of the fans.

But Denby had rightly calculated Stormy's combativeness, had foreseen that any further trouble of the Bums' could be laid at the former Titan's door. Now he had copped that bet in spades, with Stormy Weathers jockeyed into the saddle to face Brooklyn's wrath.

Stormy thought bitterly of the way he'd played right into John Denby's hands, foresaw with grim amusement the satisfaction Broadway John would derive from watching the ex-Titan backfield star take a beating out there on the field every Sunday. It would be a triple beating from the opposition, from the fans, from his own teammates.

Stormy had only broken Denby's nose, in their fight of the year before. But before Denby was through he'd probably see Stormy's career, if not his neck and back, snapped like a reed in a tornado.

"Crazy for trouble, he called me," Stormy reflected ruefully. "Trouble, heck! I'm just crazy, period!"

THE new quarterback reported for practice in two days, and with his arrival came a flood of messenger boys from the telegraph offices with congratulatory expressions over the deal that acquired "Beast" Dannahy. Collect—C. O. D. to the Bums.

While the front office was still shouting its refusal to pay for any more such items, squads of other messengers appeared bringing boxes of flowers, floral horseshoes, boxes of cigars, theater tickets. Also collect.

An unctuous voice announced itself over the telephone as being that of a United States Senator wishing to speak to John Denby. And when that worthy hurried to his extension and answered with becoming respect, the unctuous one spoke thusly—

"This is the Senator, Jawn. Claghorn, that is. . . . Ah want five thousand seats in a block. In the *South* end of the field. . . ."

Broadway John cursed feelingly and ordered the football-playing comedian to report for work without further ado or to-do. He was on hand when the grinning, sharp-eyed quarterback came along the ramp in a loud-checked suit over a characteristic turtle-neck sweater that was redder than a fire at midnight.

He stood around wisecracking while photographers flashed their bulbs and reporters asked questions.

"The Bums can't lose," he said. "Not now. Who'll I room with on the road? Oh, Broadway John and I will have a suite of rooms wherever we go. Nothing is too good for Jawn. When he is with me. . . ."

It was traditional with the clubs Beast Dannahy had been with that nobody would room with him. Snakes, skunks, horned toads, mysterious messages in the boxes, falsetto voices telephoning to say it was Annabelle or Clarice or Josephine and didn't Whoozit remember her. . . .? Then would follow conversations the details of which were strangely the Beast's, and subsequently the club's.

By himself, Beast Dannahy gave little trouble, however. It was his puzzling refusal to meet a tackler with a headlong smash, and his sharp, cutting tongue that did for him, in the final analysis, with the various

clubs. That and his loudness had made him a shunned man.

His turtle-neck sweaters had become as familiar a signature as Al Smith's brown derby or the "Little Flower's" traditional ten-gallon hats. On or off the field, Beast Dannahy wore the large, collegiate type of sweater. In hotels, in night clubs, in the dressing-room, everywhere.

Before practise, Stormy took the keen-eyed blond man aside and read him the act.

"Keep your nose clean and I'll see that you get the breaks. Goof off, and I'll still see you get the breaks; but . . . around the neckline. Understand?"

"Oh, you dweat big wough mans!" Beast lisped. "I'm scairt!"

Stormy grabbed a handful of trademark sweater and jammed Dannahy hard against the lockers.

"Listen, you—I'm serious. I have a job to do, and I'm going to try and do it. You truck with me and I'll splash you all over this locker-room! Savvy?"

Beast went still and quiet, but there was a grin on his face that wasn't the expression you'd expect of a man who is frightened.

"Okay, Chum. Look, who do I bunk with? I mean, he might as well get used to me now. I gotta have a place to live, no?"

"That's taken care of," Stormy said flatly. "You're so popular that everybody has already served notice. You room by yourself. And cut out the clown act." He looked at the man, saw the unflurried calm of those keen blue eyes. "And another thing."

"Shoot, boss."

"When you carry, block or tackle, do it! None of this, 'I'm a little tired now, I'll lie down here a bit.' No slacking off. I'm not taking it. I asked for you. I got you. But I can get rid of you just as easy. I'm warning you, Dannahy, this is your last chance in Pro football, as you probably know."

The quarterback grinned but his eyes were angry.

"I guess we both know that feeling, eh, pal? Let go of the sweater, huh?"

"Just remember what I told you," Stormy said. "I don't give up without a fight. And that's a fight you wouldn't want to be in. Behave yourself!"

His mind was almost made up, however, that Beast was yellow, when they trotted out for the first practise with the new quarterback.

The man was so quiet, and so down-to-

business, that the others looked at him in wonder.

They loaded onto the train for Washington two days later with a calm that would have fooled anybody who didn't know the trouble-laden Bums. John Denby watched it all with knowing eyes and climbed aboard the Pullman after them.

"It won't last." He knew of the good practise sessions the Bums had shown. "This is just the calm before the storm."

He smiled slightly when he sat back to watch . . . his eyes on Stormy Weathers. Broadway John was feeling content with things. It wasn't every man who could turn a collection of badly teamed players into a gold mine, win, lose or draw. Nor could every man watch a long-time adversary get his ears pinned back and have to take it, as Stormy Weathers did.

WHEN the Washington Senators took the offensive in the game with the Stumble-Bums—as the writers had begun calling them—they ran a few plays, couldn't seem to get untracked, punted and settled down to wait. There was lots of time.

In the backfield, that joker Beast Dannahy was directing the defense with signals, with numbers which he sang out like an oldtime quarterback directing the attack, before the day of the huddle.

The turtle-neck sweater marking him like a bandage on a thumb, the slender youngster would eye the formation as the Senators shifted after the huddle then would sing out his two or three numbers.

Almost reluctantly the Stumble-Bums would move, a few of them. When the few plays they were able to run unfolded, the Senators found men in a position to foul them up.

"Luck," Budd Mason, Washington Quarter, said to his men, when they didn't make headway. "Just luck."

Once, teams had said the same when Jim Thorpe, Carlisle's immortal star, directed the defense against attacking rivals. Once, mighty Princeton had thought the same when Harry Stuhldreher, of Rockne's unforgettable Four Horsemen, mothered the huddle by singing out an accurate interpretation of the Tiger quarterback's signals as fast as that worthy called out his formula numbers for his plays.

"Twenty-six . . . forty-two . . . seventy-one," that harried Tiger quarter would bark.

"Off-tackle slant," Stuhldreher would yelp to his men. "Coming to the left!"

"Signals!" the Princeton quarter would bark, and improvise a new play. "Twenty-two . . . thirty-seven . . . seventy-five!"

"End run coming up!" Stuhldreher would shout. "Left end!"

Then had come the huddle, with its masked signals. But now Beast Dannahy, with a mysterious something in his mind—a movement by a back, a certain way of the men lining up, a natural conclusion based on sequences of plays plus some tip-off that he alone caught—could do the same thing with amazing regularity.

Until now, he had never done it aloud, by signals. And even now, Washington wasn't impressed. "Luck," they saw it.

When the Stumble-Bums went on attack, they moved with a crispness under Dannahy's direction, a sharpness that they hadn't exhibited in any game so far in the new season. Two first downs the Stumble-Bums garnered, on smooth ball-handling, sharp opening of holes, crisp slashing through narrow slots.

Then, with Bid Swanson taking the ball on a fake reverse and slamming for a hole at right guard, the Senator left tackle broke through and smeared him all over the place. Tiny Gordon cursed savagely and stalked a few steps to stand glowering at Tilly Lawson, his eyes ugly and his nose an inch from the Navy's star's own flattened proboscis.

"At it again, huh? Letting them trickle in on me! Whyncha learn to play your position, you lug?"

Stormy came in, stepped between the two.

"Cut it out," he snapped. "I'm tired of you two fighting out your old Service games every play. Grow up and play football! You're professionals, not a pair of squawking school boys. Cut it out!"

Tiny twisted his leonine head and glared. "Who asked you into this, wise guy?"

Stormy's eyes fired with points of light.

"Maybe you'd like another fine, Tiny? You can get it, you know. Just keep popping that lip of yours at me, and I'll really hit your pocketbook until it hurts."

"Yeah, and that's all you will hit with," the big guard said. "All you will hit with if you know what's good for you!"

"Oh, that way, huh?" Stormy said. "Okay fella, I'll see you later." He turned to Lawson. "You, too, Tilly. I don't want any more of this. Hear?"

TILLY chewed his gum savagely and spat. "Think you'll have any left when Tiny gets through with you, Stormy?" He winked. "I do hope you'll save some for me. Oh, boy!" He rubbed his hands in glee. "If only you would!"

Stormy sighed.

"Play football, Tilly—for now. You'll find me any time later if you still want me. For now, let's stick to this game. Okay?"

"Okay!" Lawson grinned wickedly. "Okay! Hey, Tiny? How much you want for first crack at Weathers? Listen, you're liable not to leave any for me to work on!"

Tiny Gordon grinned and shook his head. "I got him."

On the next play, with Stormy running interference, Swanson struck off tackle, running well, cut swiftly back in and followed after Stormy when the blocking back flattened two Senators. The crowd came up with a yell when the speedy, shifty runner struck into the open, his interferer down and out of the play.

But Stormy had done his work, had taken two men out. Bid picked up Tiger Welsh and Gink Borund and Carl Mains a little further on and the Bums scored.

Twice more they scored in that first half—and then the Senators, smarting under the wrong end of a big score, lashed back savagely. But slended, cool-eyed Beast Dannahy watched the plays coming up, diagnosed them as accurately as an X-ray, sang out his signals to bottle up Washington's attack.

In the intermission, the Bums pretended they weren't watching; but everyone knew just when it was that Stormy followed the big ex-Army guard into the small private room off the lockers and shut the door after him.

Two minutes later, Stormy walked slowly back, blood trickling from his puffed lips. He motioned to Tony Mannisch.

"Tiny wants you," he said briefly. He looked at Lawson. "Well?"

The former Navy tackle came to his feet, his eyes tight. He pushed past stormy, shoved Tony away, and went hurriedly into the small room. Stormy came to the door and watched the scene—watched the sworn Navy enemy of the beaten Army guard drop onto the floor on one knee, heard him ask softly, "How's it, fella? Holy cow, looky the eye!" The fiery tackle turned then, was starting for Stormy when Tiny reached out a hand and stopped him.

"Let him alone," he said. "Not that you'd have much chance, Tilly. Not with the guy practically a pug. Anyway—well, we're wrong, Tilly. You know it. Heck, we know what it is to take orders, don't we?"

"Even if we don't like the man giving them? Lay off him, Tilly. Anyway, I hung one on his lip will have him eating mush for a few days!" The recuperating guard sat a bit straighter.

"Beat it, you!" Tilly snarled. "And send some water in by Tony. Go on, Stormy. Beat it."

Stormy beat it.

And the Stumble-Bums beat Washington, 28—7, in a game that was featured by Beast's clever running of the defense, by the synchronized attack of the Bums and by a new close-knit play in the right side of the Bum's line.

But Beast, in two plays late in the game, plays that might have scored with a bit more moxie, wasn't trying too hard.

He seemed afraid of the right side of the Senator line.

The storm that Broadway John had foreseen broke when almost the entire team came to the owner later with an ultimatum:

"Us or Stormy Weathers. We'll give you a week to decide!"

The two ends, and Killer May and Beast Dannahy stayed clear.

CHAPTER V

The Showdown

WITH the Bums back in Brooklyn for more practise before the trip to New York to play the Titans, Stormy called on Broadway John in his offices one morning. It was the fourth day after the Washington win.

The owner stared at Stormy keenly, then sat back and waited. Stormy looked troubled.

"Uh, I came to see you about Beast," he said.

"Well, spill it. What gives?" The man grinned. "Did he mail you a skunk or something?"

Stormy shook his head slowly.

"Nothing like that. I—well, I got to thinking about the kid, figured he was maybe lonely, and dropped around to see him. I figured maybe he'd be better with somebody to pal

around with. But—well, I guess it is better this way."

Broadway John frowned and sat up.

"What's wrong?"

Stormy seemed to come to a sudden decision, forced a smile and shrugged.

"Nothing. I guess he's better off by himself. He's a funny kid, isn't he! Smart as Hades on the defense. He always could see a play coming up but calling signals like that rattles the opposition. It's good psychology."

"That isn't what you came to say," Broadway John said mildly.

"No, it isn't," Stormy admitted. "But skip it. I think we have a good chance of going places if the team continues to click. They're poison to handle but you can see they are shaping up."

"Also, they don't want any part of you," Broadway John Denby said with a hard grin. "They've given me a week to lose you—or them."

Stormy's face went pale.

"So what's your decision?"

"Well, Weathers—much as I'd like to keep you for more than one reason, as you've smartly surmised—I don't see how I can. If you stay, they won't. And you aren't twenty men."

"That many?" Stormy frowned. "Gee, I'm popular." He smiled ruefully. "So what do we do now?"

Broadway John shrugged.

"That's up to you, Stormy. When you came to the Bums, I was glad to have you in a position to beat your ears in and then send you on your way. I still don't cry when I see you get smeared.

"But, like you, I'm an old fighter. I like to see courage, even when I'm not liking the other guy. You have courage. But you need more than that, Stormy. You need a team that is with you, that likes you, that will work for you.

"I mean *steady*. They won a game, sure. But that isn't a season. Think you can swing the boys your way in a week?"

Stormy's jaw jutted and his eyes blazed.

"I'm not even going to try," he said harshly.

Broadway John shrugged.

"There you are. Well?" He toyed with his cigar a moment. "Anything else, Stormy? I mean, anything we can discuss?"

"Nothing," Stormy said. "I was going to ask you to remit those fines. You know? Lawson, and Gordon, and Gottlieb and the

others. But you can forget that, too. Let them stand."

Broadway John sat at his desk for a long time after Stormy Weather had left, wondering why he couldn't rejoice. Stormy had tied the noose around his own neck. Stormy was going down. Stormy was through. It was inconceivable that the gang would change in their feeling, alter their ultimatum even one whit.

John Denby cursed viciously and threw his cigar away. When his secretary came in to tell him something, a short time later, he said. "Shaddup. Shaddup and go away!"

When game time came around at the Polo Grounds, the Bums were in a state of near collapse from hilarity.

FOR once, someone had played a trick on the old trickster, Beast Dannahy. Every single turtle-neck sweater the quarterback owned had been purloined. The one in his locker—those at his hotel. The slender quarterback was savage about it.

"Some wise guy told the hotel I wanted all my sweaters," he told it. "And left some silk sports-shirts in their place. Fun is fun, but I want those sweaters back! Come on now, who has them?"

"Okay, Beast, get ready for the game." Tiger Welsh said.

"Come on, stop the stalling."

Dannahy spoke truculently.

"I don't play unless I get my sweaters. When nobody spoke up, he offered, "Well, just one sweater."

Welsh, his face hardening replied.

"Get undressed, Dannahy."

Stormy, who had been listening, came over. He was strangely gentle with the quarterback.

"See if you can dig up another that will do," he said. "But step on it."

Five minutes later Killer May roared at him. "Hey, Squirt! Just put that sweater back where you got it! Go on, now, put it back!"

"Look, Killer—" The quarterback licked his lips. "Look—"

"Move!" Killer May roared. "I don't go for guys going into my locker. If you'd asked, maybe you coulda used it, but I don't see why you should. Take it off or I'll rip it off. And some skin with it!"

Stormy moved in between the two men.

"Let him take it off and leave it where he got it," he said to Killer. "You don't have

to yank it off him."

"Get outa my way!" May gritted. "I've steered clear of you. Now you steer clear of me. This is my deal. Get away, or I'll get you away! Step!"

"Start getting me away, fella," Stormy invited.

Killer moved in, fists swinging. But he stopped as if he'd been pole-axed when Stormy's left flashed in a savage uppercut.

Thock!

The big fullback staggered, then roared his rage and made a berserk rush. Stormy struck again but the huge back had him, rushed him back, struck against the lockers with a crash. Both men fell atop the bench.

Stormy gasped, then screamed his pain; and when Killer got up, fists ready for another onslaught, he lay there, eyes open, but immobile.

"Get up, ya yellow rat!" Killer challenged, eyeing the gang who crowded about. "Get up!" He waited, then moving in, reached a huge hand down to yank Stormy to his feet. "I'll get you up!"

Then Beast was in, was clawing at Killer, was screaming.

"He's hurt, Killer, he's hurt! That fall across the bench! Wait, Killer! Look." The quarterback was peeling off the sweater, had it off, was holding it out.

But nobody was looking at the sweater. Instead, they were looking at Beast Dannahy, their eyes wide.

The slender quarterback's right arm and chest were well developed, were muscular, normal. But his left arm was a shriveled stick of bone and skin from shoulder to wrist. His left chest was a caricature of the right.

"Oh, my God;" someone whispered in the silence.

Dannahy looked at them all with savage eyes, bitter eyes.

"Yeah, look! Look! All my life I been hiding this thing, and it's been hard. Until I could get people to hating me around them so they didn't notice, would let me alone, wouldn't think it was funny that I didn't room with anybody . . . who could see this . . . arm.

"I got it when I was a kid. I was scalded by boiling water. Stormy came around to call on me, and my door was open a crack. I was in my undershirt. He . . . saw. I thought he'd tell, would insist on letting everybody know." He looked at them all.

"That's why I 'favor' this side, with a guy charging in on me. Not that it would hurt, especially. But, well, they might feel it, might start talk about it."

HE looked away in the silence, saw Stormy was sitting up, was holding his right side.

"You okay, Stormy?"

"That gorilla crashed me so hard I think I got a couple of cracked ribs," he said. He reached a hand out and Tiny Gordon helped him up.

"Tiny, get the Doc to tape me up. I'll start, anyway. For a minute, it just about paralyzed me." He looked at Beast. "Get into a sweater or something, kid. No use letting the Doc get too inquisitive about it."

Killer May looked around him.

"Any of you uneducated mugs so much as open your mouth about this—this arm of Beast's, and I'll personally slug you right out of the park." He looked at Stormy. "Whyncha say something?"

"I figured that maybe a guy is entitled to some privacy," Stormy said. "I thought of telling Broadway John. But I didn't. He isn't as bad a guy as I figured, Broadway John isn't. But even so, that's the kid's business. Can we all keep it that way? All of us?"

Tilly Lawson and Duffy Gottlieb came along shame-facedly, tipped Beast's elbow.

"We got your sweaters, kid. But—you sure you can play . . . that way?"

Beast smiled crookedly.

"I have been for some years. It isn't for padding, for protection, I wear big sweaters. It fills the arm out, makes 'em both look alike. I guess an arm is like a team, huh? Everything may not match but you'd be surprised at what you can get by with if you try."

Killer May looked closely at the bluish lump over Stormy's ribs.

"Better have those X-rayed. You can't play that way."

"Don't give me orders," Stormy growled. "You were lucky there was a bench there. Next time, I'll look out for the benches. I'm all right, Killer. I can start, with the side taped. Then if everything goes right—well, maybe I can drop out and . . . and watch. Think so?"

Killer twisted his head.

"How soon can we score enough to bench Stormy, you Bums? How soon!"

"Five minutes!" Tiny Gordon yelled. He chuckled. "Anyway, it's only the Titans. Now, if it was a good team like the Bums—"

They went out onto the field, and a roar from New York's crowd greeted them, a roar of derision that was to grow to a roar of respect . . . a roar that would grow as the Bums fought their way back along the hard road from defeat to victory.

The fans liked fight, and gameness, and courage.

The fans like this gang that was crazy for trouble. . . .

Next Issue: TOUCHDOWNS DON'T COUNT, an exciting complete pro football novelet by JOHN WILSON — HEAVE THAT HOTCAKE, a Flatface McGinty discus-throwing novelet by Richard Brister—and other stories!

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THRILLS IN SPORTS



FAMOUS SPORTS COMMENTATOR

The Biggest Day in Jim Thorpe's Football Career

CARLISLE Indian School, which produced some of the great football teams of the early century, was not a college. Actually, its grades only ran through high school. But in spite of this, under the coaching of Pop Warner, the redskins defeated the best university teams in the land.

In 1911 Harvard was top dog of the gridiron, and was determined to finish with a clean slate at the end of the season. Coach Percy Haughton knew Carlisle was tough and tricky, even though its star, Jim Thorpe, had been badly injured.

Haughton remembered how, in 1907, the Indians had swept to a 23-15 victory, sparked by the great quarterback, Mount Pleasant. But the Crimson coach also knew that Thorpe, in good physical condition, was a better man than Mt. Pleasant, Metoxon, Bemus, Pierce, Johnson, Hudson, Exendine or any of the other tremendous athletes who had worn the colors of Carlisle.

Jim's leg was sore, but he was the main-spring of the attack. The team needed him, so he went in. Nothing, as a matter of fact, could have kept him out. He was more anxious to beat Harvard than any other team he had ever faced.

In the first period Jim punted to the Crimson 20-yard line, where the ball was fumbled and the Indians recovered. They couldn't get their attack working, and it stalled around the five. Harvard, faced with imminent danger, punted. It wasn't a very good punt and Welch returned it to the 30-yard stripe. Carlisle hammered back to the five again and was once more stopped.

Then Thorpe dropped back to the 13, and calmly booted the oval through the goal posts to give the Indians a 3-0 lead.

Spurred into greater effort, Harvard began a roaring drive of its own, charging into Carlisle territory and beating and bullying its way to the Indians' 30. There, with Thorpe backing up the line with inspired fury, the men from Cambridge were stopped. But they had a pretty good booter themselves in Hollister, and he lanced over a dropkick to tie the count at 3-all.

Though Jim was handicapped by his bad

leg, he not only carried the ball frequently, but led the interference, and he was a terrific blocker as any player of those days could tell you.

Harvard was strong defensively, very strong. In the second period they again hamstrung the Carlisle offense, so Jim dropped back to the 43-yard line to try another field goal. That's a long way to go, and his leg was bad. Perhaps the soreness was a help. At any rate, his injury made him more



deliberate. The ball split a deadline between the posts . . . and the Indians were ahead 6-3.

The lead didn't last long. Starting on his own 30, Reynolds, the shifty Harvard back, slipped loose, cut through the line, dodged his way past the secondary and eluded the Indian safety man to score a sensational touchdown. At half time the Harvard men were in front 9-6.

Resting between halves, Jim Thorpe burned with a desire to do something about it. They had to win this game. They had to! Beating Harvard in those days was like trimming Army in 1945-46-47. Victory would be Carlisle's proudest feather.

The Indian offense was a complicated one of intricate double passes and criss-cross plays that required perfect timing. In the third period, the attack clicked for a touchdown. And Thorpe added another score by booting his third field goal from the 37-yard line, which made it 15-6. The Indians were very happy people indeed.

But that was not the finish. When the Indians reached scoring position again and

were stopped, Big Jim dropped back for another field goal try. This time his linesmen failed to hold. The Harvard forwards ripped through. Storer, the burly center, blocked the kick, picked up the ball and raced for a touchdown.

Thorpe still was not through. Once again his mates surged into Crimson territory. Once again their complicated, baffling attack was solved and they were stopped in their tracks. Jim dropped back to the 47-yard stripe, cool, commanding.

No one really expected him to make that

one. Evening was coming in with its long, purple shadows. The game was drawing to a close. Thorpe stood there for an instant, as the lines strained toward each other. The ball smacked against his palms. He dropped the oval. His big foot swung against it, and once more it passed between the goal posts . . . and the score was 18-15.

Then, battered and with an aching leg, the big Sac-and-Fox signaled to the bench. He had won that game single handed and he was through for the day . . . the biggest day of his football career.

A Trio of Bills in the Fight Game

■ AM inclined to think that the most surprising fighters in ring history were three guys named Bill . . . Hanrahan, Squiers and Wells. The latter two were respectively heavyweight champions of Australia and Great Britain. Hanrahan never won a title, but it looked for a time as though he would.

These fellows were amazing, because almost all the battles in which they engaged ended in knockouts. Either they flattened their opponents or were, in turn, flattened themselves. Very few of their fights went the limit.

Between them, the three Bills engaged in 99 bouts. They scored 60 knockouts, and in turn listened to the twirp of the birdies on no



less than 26 occasions. If it isn't a record, it will do until another one comes along.

"Wild Bill" Hanrahan entered the ring only 20 times. He knocked out 11 foes and bit the dust six times. By that time he decided there wasn't much future in having his brains bashed out.

"Boshter Bill" Squiers became the sensation of the continent Down Under when he smashed his way through all opposition with flailing fists. In 37 fights, the Australian dropped 21 rivals for the lethal count, and was dumped on the seat of his pants 10 times.

The queer part of it all was that after Boshter Bill was nailed on the button in the very first round by heavyweight cham-

pion Tommy Burns, he never seemed to regain either confidence or ability. Those 10 knockouts he suffered occurred in the last 11 battles of his career, which proved, if nothing else, that Squiers was a very stubborn character and hard to convince.

The most interesting of these fellows, was "Bombardier Billy" Wells. He was probably the handsomest man who ever stepped inside the ropes; a lithe, slim hipped giant of six feet two; fast, a good boxer and a sharp hitter. No one was ever endowed with finer physical qualities. Had Wells possessed the stamina and heart of a Dempsey, he might have become the greatest fighter of all time.

The National Sporting Club matched "Bombardier Billy" Wells with Georges Carpentier, "the Gorgeous Orchid" of France. No bout staged in that cradle of boxing ever excited the interest this one did.

Wells was the idol of Britain. He was considered unbeatable. No one underrated Carpentier, who was a wicked, two-fisted puncher. But Georges was hardly more than a middleweight and, as the experts pointed out, a good big man can always lick a good little one.

Ringside seats cost as much as 25 pounds (more than 120 dollars at the then rate of exchange) and the battle was scheduled for 20 rounds. The National Sporting Club was packed with the greatest names in Britain that night. Millionaires had come across the Channel to cheer for the French war hero, even though he was considered to have little chance.

Some of the ringsiders lingered at the bar for a last Scotch-and-soda. They would be bored by the preliminaries of introductions and such things. It would be pleasanter to come in just as the battle started.

That's where they made their mistake. As the bell sounded, the tigerish little Frenchman leaped across the ring, whipping his left into the middle of the giant Englishman. Wells grunted with pain and doubled up. He couldn't take it there. It was his vulnerable

spot and he knew it better than anyone else.

It was all over very quickly. Georges knew he had won and smashed his way to the finish within a few moments. But the Bombardier wanted another chance. Since his popularity was so great and the finish of the first match so fantastic, they were matched again.

American critics had said Billy possessed a jaw of glass and the waist of a woman. The British passed this by as mere phrase-making. Wells was frightened, muddled. He lived in a whirl of conflicting thoughts.

He asked for water. He took an inordinately long time to get on his gloves, as though he was afraid to start. When the bell sounded. . . .

The Frenchman leaped out as he had before, staggering the Bombardier with a punch on the jaw; then hammering at the body. Wells winced, but landed one sharp blow to the eye. Then Carpentier ripped the bridge

of the Englishman's nose, and painted red patches on his ribs.

On went Carpentier, fighting like a demon, and Wells dropped to one knee. Immediately he rolled over on his back while his chief second, Jim Driscoll, shouted "*Coward!*" at him.

Perhaps the other knockouts in his spotty career can be understood after those two happenings. Similar disintegration had come to Squiers and Hanrahan. Their youthful confidence shredded away. They became unsure of themselves and that was fatal.

But I have forgotten one man who should have been mentioned in this unhappy list. He was another Australian heavyweight, Peter Felix. Peter engaged in 51 fights. He was knocked out 12 times, lost seven decisions, and was disqualified five times for fouling. . . . 24 defeats in 51 battles, which is not something one would write home about.

It shouldn't happen to a dog!

Hockey Hi-Jinks in the Good Old Days

WHEN I was covering hockey in New York more than a decade ago, the Rangers were my favorite team. They were tough and hard, those fellows. . . . great skaters and stickmen and game to the core. Bill and Bun Cook, Ching Johnson, Frank Boucher—I remember them all as athletes who wore the red badge of courage.

There is no game harder on the human body than ice hockey—no professional athletes in the world are rougher on those who oppose them than hockey players.

It is not only the natural hazards of the sport, but the flaring tempers and primitive reactions of those who play. I remember a game in the Garden, bitter and hard fought. One of the rival team. . . . I forget at the moment who was playing the Rangers that night. . . . raced toward the goal, the puck cradled in the curve of his stick.

Bill Cook body-checked violently, sending him spinning across the ice. Up came the man, fire in his eye. He slashed Bill across the face and head, ripping open cuts that cascaded blood. Cook, blazing mad, retaliated in kind, but players and officials separated them before the score was anywhere near evened.

Both men were sent to the penalty box and a doctor followed to attend to the stricken Ranger. It took eight stitches in Bill's face

and six more in his scalp to sew those gashes together. But when the penalty period was up. . . . bandaged and taped. . . . the Ranger skated out on the ice to take a place with his mates.

Most athletes would have been willing to call it a night, but not a hockey player. He asks for it and takes it, grinning, when he gets it.

One of my all-time favorites on that club was bald-headed Ching Johnson, and a mighty man was he. . . . cut from the same cloth as the Cook brothers. It was a real thrill when, under a full head of steam, Ching went roaring up the ice, ducking and dodging his way toward a score.

Johnson suffered a fractured jaw one night. They took him to nearby Polyclinic hospital, but couldn't keep him long. The lure of the ice was calling and, besides, the team needed him. Ching had a protective mask of steel and leather made to cover his injury and, long before he should have played again, was winning the applause of those who admire courage and skill.

There are countless other illustrations, but these will do for the moment. The years have done to those old hockey players what wounds and injuries never were able to do. The swiftly passing days and nights slowed them down, and finally ended their careers.

Jack Lelivelt Sure Loved To Pile Up A Big Score!

JACK LELIVELT once played for the Washington Senators. He was a mighty man with the bat, but a bit slow on his feet, and by no means a Tris Speaker when it came to going after flies in the outfield.

Lelivelt eventually passed from the big league scene and, for awhile, managed the Los Angeles Angels of the Pacific Coast League.

Most managers are well satisfied to have

their ball clubs win. They aren't particularly interested in piling up big scores. But Jack was. He had an absolutely sadistic delight in winning by the most tremendous margins.

Once the Angels scored 22 runs on the San Francisco Seals, and you've never seen such a happy man as the ex-big leaguer. He fairly reveled in that run scoring orgy.

Catcher Chet Windsor's Winning Inning

IT MAY be that you'll never hear of catcher Chet Windsor in fast company. He may remain just an obscure name in the history of baseball . . . but the kid set one record even the Babe Ruths and Ted Williamses of the future will have a hard time matching.

Chet wore the mask and windpad for Sharptown of the Central Shore League. One day last spring his club was playing Crisfield. The Crisfield pitcher was having more than his share of troubles, and when Windsor came to bat the bases were filled with eager runners.

The moundsman tried to buzz one past the hitter. Chet lashed out from the shoetops, and caught the ball on the fat end of the bat. The last anyone in the park saw of the ball was when it dropped over the fence for a home run. A grand slam is a thrill for anybody, but that wasn't the end as far as Ches-

In a later game his team built up a 17-2 lead in the eighth inning and people were walking out of the park in droves. But Lelivelt, coaching at third base, kept dancing up and down the line, clapping his hands and shouting:

"Come on, boys, come on. Get me some runs!"

ter Windsor was concerned. Sweaty and happy, he returned to the bench.

But Sharptown was in a hitting mood and not to be stopped. Though several Crisfield relief pitchers came in, Sharptown batted



around and the catcher came to bat again in the same inning with two men on bases.

Once more Chet found a pitch to his liking and rammed another one over the fence. Two home runs, and seven runs driven over the plate in one inning is a feat the kid will never forget as long as he lives.

This Really Happened in San Francisco

THIS may sound like a gag, but many an old San Franciscan swears it really happened.

Back in 1906, a broken down ex-heavy-weight prizefighter named Deacon Jones was a familiar figure in the barrooms of the town. On the morning of April 18th, at six o'clock to be exact, Jones wandered into Spider Kelly's saloon. He was bleary eyed and pugnacious and demanded a drink.

Since he had no money, Kelly turned him down.

The Deacon became infuriated. Gripping

the edge of the bar in his massive hands, he shouted: "If you don't gimme a drink I'll tear the joint down."

He began shoving and tugging with all his strength. The building shook and promptly collapsed in a mass of debris and dust. The San Francisco earthquake had occurred at exactly that moment!

And from under a pile of wood and masonry came the wailing voice of Deacon Jones:

"I didn't mean it, Spider, honest to goodness, I didn't mean it!"

Close But No Cigar

THE best team in the six-day bike race at Madison Square Garden in 1923 was made up of Alf Goulet and Alf Grenda. There were others shoulder to shoulder with them, Reggie McNamara and Oscar Egg, Pete Van Kempen and Maurice Brocco. But no one seriously considered the kid team of Dave Lands and Sammy Gastman. They were just a couple of guys put in to fill up the field.

If two or more pairs finish with the same

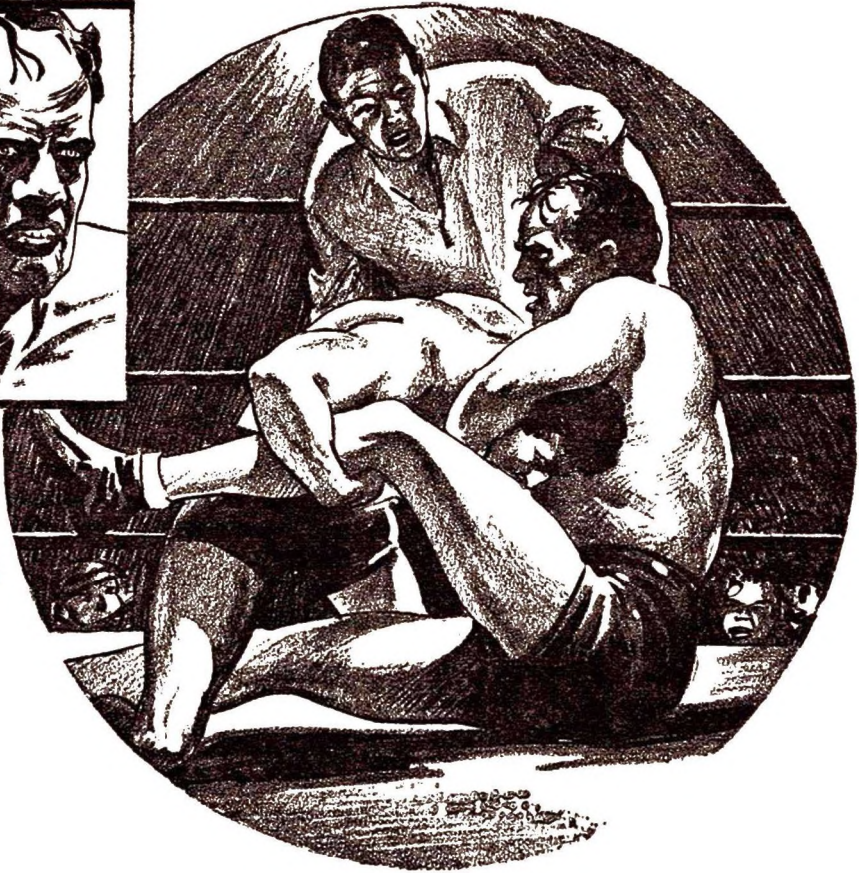
mileage in the six-day grind, the one with the greatest number of points earned in the sprints is acclaimed the winner. Gastman and Lands were at a distinct disadvantage there. They hadn't tried to roll up points. They conserved their energy in an effort to steal a lap.

The last hour of the race was well under way when Gastman saw his chance. He opened a gap . . . widened it. Lands relieved

(Concluded on page 96)



Jiggy really went
to work on the
Major!



JIGGY WAS A SOLDIER

By JACKSON COLE

Because he was a GI, Jiggy had to wrestle a third fall with the Major who was trimming him — but Jiggy knew a few tricks!

JIGGY was a soldier and before that Jiggy was a miner—of the hard-coal variety that is perhaps slightly harder than the coal itself—and before that Jiggy was a professional wrestler.

Looking at him as he walked with a bowed-out, toed-in mincing gait across the floor of the barnlike structure that was the Fourth Group's gym, he was the sort of soldier that a spit-and-polish officer would love—in front of his desk, getting chewed out. Even when he stood at attention on the ramp at parade, Jiggy Lasher was a stationary violation of at least half the precepts of *The School of The Soldier*.

In the sacred precincts of his beloved gymnasium where he was a non-com worker, Jiggy Lasher—his right name was said to be Stanislaus Lasciewzsciz, and maybe that is a zsciz short—was in what he termed his "fatigues," which is Army for work clothes. The fatigues, in his case, began with a duck-billed flying cap, the stiff visor of which was cocked skyward from a face that was just then, believe it or not, in repose.

Jiggy's nose had long since been laid to rest among his oddly assorted features. But the blue eyes were busy as he went, the ears hung out at a rakish angle from the perfectly-round skull and the generous

mouth worried the unlit stump of cigar that the man perpetually wore.

The rest of him was in line. A sweatshirt of dubious past and dark present encased bulging shoulders, huge chest and short, powerful arms that terminated in square, mitt-like hands. His legs were GI-clad columns of thighs on power-bowed lowers, the feet of which were in conventional black gym shoes with once-white laces. And so one-dimensional was Jiggy—completely and bafflingly round—that he was like a squat bear without the fur trimming.

Jiggy progressed across the floor in a rolling gait, uttering little cries of nameless recognition as the exercisers in the Group gym waved and called out to him. Jiggy's once-normal vocal cords had, over a period of years, been choked, banged, scissored and mashed flat so that his normal speaking voice was unexpectedly high and blurred. When Jiggy spoke, it was as surprising as if you banged the side of a bass-drum and got a rusty calliope-squeak for answer.

But when Jiggy spoke of and on wrestling, the gang at the Fourth Group didn't hear just a voice. It was *the* voice. For Jiggy was a pro. Over a period of several years, many scores of aircrewmembers had felt the power and savvy of Jiggy's grips on the rope-enclosed mat over by the southeast corner of the structure. And had gone out in better shape to grapple with the Nazis and the Nips. And if Jiggy worried about what would come after, nobody at the Fourth Group heard of it.

And now with the Sons of the Double-Cross and the Brown Bummers of Dai Nippon body-slammed for all time and the boys coming back and getting mustered out, you didn't hear of it if Jiggy Lasher were worried.

If Jiggy were bothered by the fact that he was on the shady side of forty and faced with the dank oblivion of coal-mine passages and ever-lessening appearances at small wrestling clubs, he didn't show it. Here, Jiggy Lasher was king. And it didn't do for any king to show concern about anything.

True, more than one of Jiggy's faithful followers in the art of grunt-and-groan had studied the old boy's teachings so well that it took more extended effort and more polished performances to pin them down. But many an officer who glowered menacingly on the ramp at parade listened with respectful eyes while Jiggy showed a grip, showed

how to break a grip, told long forgotten epics of the old game.

But Jiggy was a soldier, so he didn't worry. Jiggy had his job, his orders, his kingdom. Things would work out somehow. He hoped—

He made his way to where a small knot of watchers were gathered while a lieutenant from the Link room worked out on the mat with Big Jay, one of the Physical Training Detachment officers.

"Hi, Jiggy!"

"Oh, 'lo, Mike!"

"Hey, there, Jiggy!"

"Hiya, Cap'n! How's it!"

HE WAS turning to look at Big Jay work a wristlock when his eyes tangled with the other man's—a burly, young major with a triple-row splash of ribbons over his left breast pocket. Jiggy didn't nod. He met the man's dark appraisal evenly, eyed the power-line of sloping meat from short neck to hunchy shoulders, accurately tagged the man as to weight.

"Maybe one eighty-one, in shape," he saw it. "An' he ain't far from shape now! A good big boy!"

He turned his eyes to the canvas, but he was conscious as he did, that the big young major had nodded to someone near him, was moving over to stand alongside.

"Going to wrestle to-day, Jiggy?"

Jiggy looked. It was one of the younger officers from Transition.

"Hiya, Lootenant! Huh? Well, I dunno. I ain't feelin' too good. Hard to work up a sweat, see?"

"Is that bad?" It was the major asking, now. "Anyway, I thought you pros maybe had so much stuff you didn't need to stay 'up' all the time. I mean, in bad shape—and you don't look it—you ought to be able to trim most anything you'd meet."

Jiggy nodded absently. His eyes were on Big Jay as he tried a step over head scissor, but his senses were warning him. He was puzzled. He'd seen this big kid before, in the gym, this major, a day or so ago. It had happened then, too—that warning inside of him.

"Huh? Oh, yeah. Yeah, I guess that's right, Major."

"Well, okay," the other was saying then. "I know you're a professional, or so I've been told. Right?"

Jiggy nodded, forgetting Big Jay now.

"Yeah. A—er—well, some time ago." Small club matches. Exhibitions. Appearances at stags, smokers. Like that. Or an occasional murderous grudge-match, against some miner with a fancied grievance. "Before the war, yeah."

The major was smiling and a small group was clustered near him. It had the earmarks of a set-up, as if this big lad had predicted he'd have trouble getting Jiggy to go to the mat with him.

"Same with me," the man was saying. "Only, I was never a pro. I was just a school wrestler. How about it, Jiggy? Want to try out a few grips? Or would you rather not?"

Jiggy blinked.

"Huh? I didn't say I'd rather not. I said—"

"Well, all right then," the other cut in smoothly. "I misunderstood you, I guess. Let's get going. I have something to do soon. But we have about an hour. Okay?"

Big Jay had succeeded in getting that step over head scissors and his adversary was losing his fight, was slapping Big Jay's leg to signify he'd had enough. Big Jay climbed up, came over to stand near, breathing hard.

"Going to wrestle Major Spangler, Jiggy? He's been asking about you. I told him he'd find out!"

Jiggy chewed his cigar stump and nodded.

"Yeah?"

Big Jay was like the others here at the Group. To him, Jiggy was tops at wrestling. Youngsters are that way. Jiggy was the only professional they'd known, wrestling. So Jiggy was tops, the best there was. Deep inside them they might have reasoned there were men in the world could stretch Jiggy—but they'd never known any.

Jiggy Lasher. Jiggy the Pro Wrestler. Their Jiggy!

"Well now, the major says he has something to do. Maybe he wants to put it off until we can make it a good workout. See?"

"I'm waiting for orders," the major put in. "This is as good a time as any. Unless, of course, you don't want to wrestle?"

Jiggy chewed his cigar, took it out and stared at it, stuck it back into his mouth again. He'd had a slight cold and couldn't sweat it out. Even now his skin was dry as crackling paper. Jiggy liked it when a short workout would bring a wet glow of well-being coating his body. Especially against this big young Spangler. There was just something about him that was not

good to Jiggy.

But a professional has a certain standing, as Jiggy had here at the Group, as a king has in his own country—or should have. A standing that will brook no challenge—none that he can't gracefully sidestep, anyway. And for some reason this burly lad Spangler was giving these other boys the idea that Jiggy didn't want to meet him.

"Let's go, let's go!" he grinned. "Get into your duds, Major. I'll be wit' you soon as I strip."

WHEN he was stripped down to fighting shorts and shoes, Jiggy was somehow not so funny to look at as when he was clothed—until you took a look at Major Spangler.

The contrast was notable. Spangler was standing straight, as a man should, and there was a logical arrangement of comparative size among those younger arms and legs and shoulders.

A crowd had gathered with news of the match, so when Jiggy and Spangler climbed through the ropes, with Big Jay in as "third man," the place was jam-packed with wide-eyed, tense GI humanity.

"Point rules or a fall?" Spangler asked, watching Jiggy.

"One o' them lads!" Jiggy figured. "A collegiate. So much for bringing a man to the mat. So much for holds, for breaking the holds, for getting on top, for a near-fall."

"I don't think Big Jay, here, knows too much about point-score," he told the man.

Spangler laughed, his eyes wise but twinkling.

"Everybody understands a fall, though, huh, Jiggy? Okay—a fall it is. Ready?"

"Shoot!" Jiggy grunted and circled slowly, bent slightly forward.

Jiggy had a 'sugar' side like anyone else, one leg he could protect better than the other. With Jiggy, it was his right leg. Measuring his man, testing his savvy, Jiggy deliberately advanced his left leg when the major went into a square stance, both feet evenly advanced.

Spangler threw a muscle grip in time with Jiggy's own, their hands sliding to one another's deltoid muscles while they reasoned out the best leg-dive to upset one another. Deliberately, Jiggy let his sugar side slide back. He grinned in their two-man huddle when Spangler disdained the weaker leg and

went for the stronger one that Jiggy slyly held retarded.

Jiggy flexed his right leg down, slamming a headlock on the larger man and bearing down on him with his weight. Spangler kept to his effort, got a handhold on Jiggy's leg behind the right knee, and then the professional realized for the first time the strength of this youngster.

The major threw the full load of his weight down and the surprise of it took Jiggy's right knee to the floor. Using this as a pivot, Spangler slammed hard against the knee and Jiggy was spun in an arc that sent him hurtling to the mat.

But he helped it along instead of trying to counter. The onlookers roared when Jiggy spun completely out of Spangler's grasp and rolled over and over until he was beyond the low rope. He crawled back slowly. Spangler backed up, grimacing his disappointment.

Jiggy bounded up and down and side-ward in the inimitable leaps and bounds that had given him his nickname. He was trying to work up the sweat that would bring him that glow.

Spangler watched, hands moving in and out, feet shuffling forward, head low, eyes watchful. He drove Jiggy to a corner, then slammed in with his hands seeking a waist hold. But Jiggy had seen him coming, had backed hard into the ropes, met the man like a projectile discharged from a cannon.

Spangler recoiled from the impact and staggered back, and then Jiggy was on him making his bid. He got a leg hold on the younger man, whirled, and heaved up into the air, to come crashing down with stunning force on Spangler.

The major bridged his back into an arc by sheer muscular force and will-power, a maneuver that Jiggy grinningly recognized as the high bridge, a defensive tactic a Turk back in Pennsylvania often used. Jiggy had the answer for that one, but it was strictly rugged, as differentiated from legal wrestling.

For the moment he contented himself with throwing a headlock on the man, sprawling out under him to do it. Spangler's legs described a parabola that brought him slamming to the mat again and Jiggy threw a twisting hammerlock on him and wrenched mightily.

Slowly, slowly, Spangler turned over, Jiggy edging sidewise to keep clear of the

man's seeking legs. Let that powerful youngster once get a leg hold, and Jiggy could reason where *he* would be!

Suddenly, the major tried to break out of it by twisting with the hold, almost succeeded in upsetting Jiggy. But the old pro was watchful, knew he wouldn't again get this smart lad, this man of bull-like strength, at such a disadvantage. He relaxed his weight and brought the full of it to bear on Spangler's chest.

The younger man grunted and strained and the sweat was pouring from his face, which was by now a distorted mask of emotion. But it was more than even Spangler could take.

A ROAR broke from the crowd when Big Jay stepped forward, his face strained with the sight of that grim duel, and slapped Jiggy resoundingly on the back.

Jiggy got to his feet, gave Spangler a hand up; and stood breathing hard. His eyes were happy.

"Nice—goin', Major," he said. "I was—lucky—to get you so—quick. You wrestle—okay."

Spangler smiled, but it wasn't with pleasure. He looked at the ring of faces crowded close about.

"That's only one fall," he said. "Heck, boy, I'm not even warmed up yet. You aren't going to quit now, are you? Best two out of three, I thought—when you don't wrestle on points. Yes?"

Jiggy's heart sank. He had felt the power, the youth force, of that other man. He'd got by this time on pure shock, on surprise.

But Jiggy was a soldier. With the crowd yelling delightedly for more, Jiggy Lasher nodded.

"You got time, Major? You said there was somepin you'd hadda do. Remember?"

"Plenty of time," Spangler said flatly. "We take a short breather and then go again. How about it, fellows?"

The surrounding crowd roared their agreement—especially the tight knot of Spangler's rooters, led by the young officer from Transition.

Jiggy flexed his legs and tried for that sweat, but he had a grim foreboding that he was face to face with disaster.

When the two answered Big Jay's call for the second fall, Jiggy exhibited a wariness that he hadn't had to exercise in many a day. He staved off Spangler's first two bids

for a leg hold, but then the younger, more aggressive wrestler got a waist hold on the old pro and Jiggy threw himself to the canvas to avoid rougher tactics in being brought to the mat.

Jiggy braced himself on widely-extended hands and hunched knees and tried a series of feinting tactics to shake off his adversary. But Spangler proved to be a well-versed 'rider' and easily thwarted the oldster's efforts.

Then Jiggy began to get an exposition of the art of wrestling that was a textbook in motion.

A 'rider', the man on top when one wrestler is on all-fours and the other attacking, must view his opponent much as a man seeking to upset a table would view a piece of four-legged furniture. His first move is to destroy one of those legs—in this case, to upset a hand or succeed in turning over the man by a crotch or leg hold.

Cunningly, Spangler worked—carefully, cagily—until he had a wrist hold. Then he leaned his weight harder and harder and jerked to upset Jiggy's balance. The weight became unanswerable, and Jiggy tried to roll hard and fast and come up on top. But Spangler was thinking with him, ahead of him.

Jiggy found himself chin-down on the canvas with Spangler applying a brutal half-nelson. It was brutal because the man made no attempt for minutes to take advantage of his hold other than to pinion Jiggy under the eyes of all the watchers. The pro grunted and gasped and sought to catch one of Spangler's legs with his toe, so he could make a pivot of power to work from. But the major easily eluded him until he tired of it.

Then, with a sudden surge of power into those broad young shoulders, he spun Jiggy heels-over-head to slam him hard on the mat.

Jiggy felt grim panic while he waited for the man to come crashing in on him. But when it didn't happen, he made a frantic attempt to gain his feet, puzzled, but still grateful. Until Spangler moved in, caught him in a half-crouch and grabbed another waist hold.

Jiggy went down again, again 'tabled' arms and knees, and Spangler went on with his exhibition. For it was that and little more. He grabbed a "Read" crotch hold and flattened Jiggy, then let him scramble to his knees before he rode him again.

This time he threw a quarter-nelson, foiling Jiggy's tries for his legs. When he tired of that, he hurled the pro to one side and caught him again as he rolled desperately for the ropes.

Jiggy knew how a mouse felt when cornered by a particularly playful tomcat. He also sensed what it was like to be cheese at a dinner-party. Spangler let him come fully erect, then slammed in and upset him again with a clever pick-up that rocketed Jiggy's left foot skyward and brought the older man crashing down again.

THEN Spangler really went to work.

Hammerlocks gave way to nelsons and crotch holds. These in turn were followed by letting Jiggy to his feet to throw an arm-drag and pick-up that sent Jiggy hurtling down again.

Even as he winced in chagrin, Jiggy could admire the speed of this big man and his daring in trying the hold. It was one that often as not brought the attacker to grief. But with Jiggy feeling fagged and dizzy from the numerous slams it worked.

It could have gone on as long as Spangler cared to work on Jiggy. But the younger man made a decision, worked Jiggy into position, and pinned him with a murderous scissor.

Jiggy knew when his arm was trapped in the scissor that this was it. With an arm free, he might have worked some of his cunning, like getting a toe-hold on the other and brutally working that toe before his own strength gave out.

But Spangler cleverly held his big body at right angles to Jiggy's own while he pressured his powerful thighs in a grip around Jiggy's neck and held it for the length of time it would take to slow the older man's circulation, weaken him to make him easy pickings for the fall that would follow.

Jiggy had a dim knowledge that a sea of taut faces and staring eyes were watching him slowly drown in this younger man's savvy and power. He was still game, but gasping and weak when Spangler made his final move.

The second fall was the major's with a hook scissor and a reverse wrist lock.

Spangler's cohorts were grinning widely and wisely when the spent pro regained his feet and leaned, puffing and panting, on the ropes.

Jiggy's eyes went to his own supporters,

measured their bewilderment and disbelief, and he tried to nod encouragement to them, tell them it was all right, that there was another and a deciding fall to come. But it was only half-hearted.

Then Spangler was coming toward him.

Jiggy crouched, hooked his arms, began to circle warily, and everybody, including Spangler, laughed.

"Hold it, you old war-horse!" the major laughed. "That business I got to attend to, remember? They just sent over about it. Well, I can attend to it over the telephone. But it will take a little time. Okay?"

Jiggy blinked, dropped his arms.

"How long?"

"Maybe fifteen minutes. I can use the gym phone. Okay? I'd like to finish this out." He grinned. "After all, I don't think I should have lost that first fall."

Jiggy puffed.

"Okay—Major." He remembered his training duties enough to counsel, "Wrap up an' keep warm, now! Don't you go catchin' no colds, hear?"

"Roger, old boy," Spangler said. He winked at one of his friends. "As for you, I'd say, 'Get hot, brother!' Well, I'll try to make it quick."

Jiggy stared at the faces around him after the major had gone toward the gym office.

"Give him blazes, Jiggy," someone said. "Stop pulling your punches. Give him the works this time!"

"Yeah," Jiggy said, trying to laugh with it. "Sure."

He thought of the man's power and his youth, of the sly way he had caught him into this, and of his jibe, "Get hot!" Right in Jiggy's own home grounds, too—and in front of Jiggy's ardent GI admirers.

"I'm lettin' them down, more'n me," he thought. "Although it ain't fit for a pro to get made a monkey of, anyway. A pro ought to have savvy to get by on, anyway! The nerve of the fella! 'Get hot!' Huh! Wish I could get hot! Brother, I wish I just could get so hot that—that—"

He broke off, his scar-fringed eyes going small with the idea that came to him.

"Brother, just maybe, now—"

"Hey, Jiggy, slip on your sweat-shirt and pants," Big Jay said. "Or do you want to call it here? It's a draw, now. One fall apiece."

Jiggy was a soldier and he was going to die as a soldier should when the call comes—in battle. He grinned crookedly and waved

a hand derisively.

"G'wan! Y'ever seen me quit yet?"

"Nope," Big Jay said, his dark eyes somber. "An' then I never saw a lad could wrestle like Spangler. Have you?"

Jiggy had. He'd seen all the champions for thirty years back. Of course, Spangler wasn't there yet. But then Spangler had been fighting the war for three years, even if he had stayed in pretty fair shape.

"Plenty of 'em," he said. "Look, Jay—I'm goin' back to the dressing-rooms and showers. I'll be back soon as you send the word. Let me know when the major is ready. Okay?"

Jiggy's gang cheered up at the seeming confidence of their champion.

"Brother, will this next go be a dilly!" one of them exulted.

But as he went away at his peculiar rolling gait, Jiggy was not so sure.

WHEN word came, Jiggy was just coming out of the dressing-room, encased in a GI blanket that he wore up over his balding head. He looked like a weird sort of monk—or maybe more like a plain ordinary monkey, so squat was he and so comical looking with only his face showing.

Spangler grinned when the pro dropped his blanket and climbed through the ropes.

"One more fall, huh?"

"That's it, fella," Jiggy nodded. "Points is out, o' course. But them collegiate ways o' yours—or the wide-open?"

"Wide-open?" Spangler echoed. "Oh! You mean, professional-style? That phony-looking show to get the customers excited?" His grin was hard. "Maybe you don't know I used to play football, Jiggy?"

"That's okay," Jiggy grunted. He reasoned he might as well be kicked out of his own ring as be made a monkey inside it. "Okay wit' me, Major. Let's go, hah?"

Jiggy grinned and winked at Jay and slid his hands out for a muscle grip. Spangler joined him in the arm-hooded huddle, but recoiled a moment later when Jiggy drew back his round right forearm and dealt the major a stunning clip alongside the head.

Before the powerful youngster could recover, the pro launched himself in a feet-first flying tackle that knocked the major out through the ropes.

The crowd was a roaring sea of faces when Spangler, his eyes hard, but a grin on his lips, climbed back in and began to stalk his

adversary. He made a feint at a waist hold, shifted to a pick-up that succeeded and Jiggy was down again. Spangler dropped on his man and threw what was intended to be a punishing half-nelson.

His face was a mask in incredulity when Jiggy slipped from his grasp and came up fast to give the still-kneeling major a boot in his stern. The crowd shouted in glee when Jiggy followed up with another that flattened Spangler. Then the old professional made a take-off that landed him with a resounding crash on the major—and with jarring results.

Spangler fought back gamely, got a wrist hold and lost it again when Jiggy shook him off with the ease of a clever open-field runner sending a clumsy tackler spinning.

Then Spangler was ignoring Jiggy, was talking heatedly to Big Jay—and the referee was wiping a hand on Jiggy's now-glistening body, smelling the shiny coating the man's skin now wore, feeling of its texture with his fingers.

"Oil, my hat!" the third man snapped. "Let's wrestle, huh?"

"I can't hold him no more'n an eel!" Spangler growled. But then, again, maybe I can, too!"

He charged in, bowled Jiggy over with a head-butt and body-slam and got smacked flat himself by a neat drop kick when the downed wrestler caught him coming in. Jiggy regained his feet and then Spangler was in on him, was reaching for a muscle grip.

But instead of the hands closing on the deltoid muscles far up on the shoulder, he tried for a grip in Jiggy's hair. He came away with a few sparse hairs in his fingers, but he didn't come away far. Jiggy, liking the idea, found a profusion of growth on the younger man's head for the same sort of hold.

Two vigorous yanks, followed by a forearm smash, sent the major reeling. A flying tackle was devastating enough to send the ranking man in the ring out for another sortie among the howling spectators.

But the game, if dazed, major had another trick in his ample bag of wrestling knowledge. He battled Jiggy to a corner, secured a waist hold low from the rear and attempted to execute a fall back, a maneuver that would bring Jiggy to the mat with Spangler still maintaining a secure waist hold. But to do the maneuver properly, he had to throw his adversary to right or left as he went.

Spangler got his weight started back and Jiggy came with him. But when he tried to wrench to his right side, his arms slipped and Jiggy crashed atop Spangler with a force that brought the breath *oofing* out of the under man.

Jiggy had seen many a bout terminate in just such a misstep. But Spangler was made of stuff that didn't give in that easily. He rolled quickly to his stomach, trying to get clear, but Jiggy was on him, clamping on a punishing toe-hold. The man grimaced his pain when Jiggy applied power, pounding the mat alongside his head with clenched fists.

Jiggy leaned close to the man's ear.

"Like you was nice to me, Major, in th' last fall an' didn't finish me when you could? Me, too! I like a smart scrapper! We ain't all through yet!"

He threw a quarter-nelson on his man, then spun him into the clear. But Jiggy didn't follow to his feet. Spangler came clear, saw his adversary on the mat and launched himself with a yell of rage and determination.

Jiggy rolled with him, came up underneath, let the man get a new waist hold and then deliberately rocked from side to side until Spangler couldn't hold on any longer. But the big man made a high-bridge when Jiggy tried to slam him flat.

JIGGY spanked his midriff hard with the flat of his hand and the bridge relaxed—but only for a moment.

The next time the man lifted on his heels and the top of his head, Jiggy dived under him, got a grip, and came up in a whirling airplane spin. When he had the proper momentum, he turned loose—and Spangler was battling the ropes again. Jiggy grinned when he came hurtling back, tried futilely for a grip, couldn't make it stick.

Jiggy took the third and final fall with a Read crotch followed by a twisting hammerlock.

He was king again as he climbed through the ropes, grinning at his GIs and his officers.

"Nice lil' wrestler," he said. "Nice lil' wrestler!" Which was much like saying **The Babe** had been a nice little hitter, or that **Ty Cobb** stole an occasional base.

Then he remembered and turned to Major Spangler, who was standing apart with his small group of backers.

"Hey, Sport? Major? C'mon into the dress-

(Concluded on page 110)



The next hitter belted out a grounder between first and second

MOUND MASTER

By CLIFF WALTERS

Several types of curves were puzzles to this southpaw hurler—but he had his own way of solving them!

TOMORROW at two o'clock sharp, Corn Belt time, the leadoff man for the Loop City Lions will step into the batter's box. And go down swinging—whoosh, I hope—at the port side pitches dished up by my six-foot nephew, "Lightning" Lew Ainsworth who's been twirling, during his last three years in high school, for the Groveville Grizzlies.

Which is why, tonight, I'm all steamed up like the glass eye of the fat gent in the

Turkish bath. Also why I'm freely offering advice, with gestures, to my stalwart nephew who, ever since he was twelve years old, has shared my bachelor residence, same being an upstairs room in Mrs. Hogan's Boarding House. A very quiet room in the very quiet little farming town of Groveville, miles away from nowhere.

"Suppose you're going to come through with a change of pace," I'm saying. "Wind up like you're going to fog one through—like

this—"I cracked my hand against the light-fixture overhead.

My eighteen-year-old nephew, who's standing by the front window, grins.

"Easy, Unk," he says. "You nearly smashed that light bulb. A minute ago, whirling to pick a runner off first, you nearly knocked the table over. A minute before that, fielding an imaginary bunt toward the pitcher's mound, you nearly rammed your bald head through the bookcase." His grin broadens. "Save your strength and breath. This one-man ball game you're playing might go into extra innings."

"You're not paying attention, anyhow," I growl, my plump face flushed from my exertions, and state of mind. "Tomorrow you're going to play the toughest game of your life. Well, I admire self-confidence, but not smugness. If you don't win that game tomorrow—well—"

"What?" he says.

"You'll be letting all of Groveville down. Not only that, but we both enjoy regular eating and a roof over our heads. Mrs. Hogan might not like it if I told her I'd bet my next month's pay check—that handsome check the Groveville Hardware Company pays its star clerk—"

"I wish you wouldn't have quite so much confidence in my pitching arm, Unk," says Lew.

"And I wish you'd stop gawking out that window like Little Willie Wishful waiting for a glimpse of Santa Claus," I retorted, irked by my only relative's attitude. "I don't like that faraway look in your dreamy blue eyes tonight. Or the way you've got your golden hair all slicked up and—"

Just then a car horn outside honks. Lew, plenty agile when he wants to be, rushes for the door. "See you later, you old furniture smasher," Lew says. "The gang's having malted milks tonight and—"

"You get home and get to bed early tonight or I'll bunt the seat of your pants!" I yell back at him—just as if I were young and unfat enough to dare trying such a trick.

I close the door, walk to the window and watch a long, sleek coupe drive away from the curb. It's a car I've never seen before. I'm a little puzzled and curious, but I'm also too nervous to read and relax. Envyng a handsome, orphaned kid who's been like a son to me for the past six years, I roam over to the bookcase and pick up an old baseball. This horsehide, some fifteen years ago, has been autographed personal for me by Babe Ruth.

I cuddle that ball in my left hand and, making myself believe that the admiring eyes of all Baseball Fandom are on my every move, and the cheers of the vast and sundry multitude are ringing in my ears, I wind

up to blaze one past an imaginary batter.

But I'm forgetting Lew has put wax on that old onion to preserve the cover. I come down with an overhand pitch. The ball slips out of my hand—and crash! Right through the window!

HEAVY, purposeful steps sound on the stairway. Mrs. Hogan, a sizable woman, knocks at my door. And when I open it timidly, she says, "Well, Mr. Eckard—" She glances sternly at the broken glass and continues. "So you don't like the old-fashioned way of getting fresh air into a room? You know, by just raising the window. They've been doing it for years."

"I had a little accident," I tell her, feeling as cheap as a half-melted ice cube in the land of the glaciers. "But I'll replace that glass in the morning."

"I'm sure you will," she answers, and stomps away.

I take my flashlight, go outdoors, prowl around for a half an hour on my knees in the lilac bushes and find the autographed ball before Lew gets home. Yes, long before he gets home.

It's nearly three o'clock of that beautifully moonlit morning in early June before my nephew comes tiptoeing into the room and makes stealthily for his bed.

"Where have you been till this disgusting hour?" I bark, suddenly sitting up in my own little trundle bed.

"Out—for a little ride," he says.

"Out where?" I bellow.

"Oh, in the moonlight. I met a girl named Rita Smith the other day and—" He stops as the old maid schoolteacher in the adjoining room starts pounding on the wall. "But I'll tell you about it in the morning."

"You will not!" I snort, disgusted-like. "You'll sleep till noon tomorrow, you June-smitten Romeo. Three o'clock in the morning. A fine way to condition yourself for your pitching assignment."

I go on and on, like Pop Tennyson's 'Brook'.

The old maid schoolteacher raps sharply on the wall again, and I roar, "What are you trying to do in there, Miss Mitchner? Hammer that wall with your false teeth till you break 'em?"

Again heavy, purposeful footsteps sound on the stairway. I flop back on the pillow, or reasonable facsimile thereof, and whisper to Lew, "Ye gods! Hogan's on the march again. Duck in bed and pretend you're asleep!"

But Lew doesn't seem to hear my warning, or care a hoot about Mrs. Hogan, landlady. He just sits there on the edge of his bed, staring at the moon-silvered window through which I've hurled a wild pitch.

Shortly after noon the next day—it's Fri-

day—old Dave Cavanaugh, the hardware dealer, tells me to lock up the store. Everybody's going to the ball game, so why not us?

I don't require coaxing. Two minutes later I'm out on Main Street where visitors from Loop City are chasing around in bunting-decorated cars.

"Poor old Graveville, village of the dead. When the ball game's over, we'll be ahead!" is what they're yelling.

"Listen to them smarties!" growls old white-haired Dave Cavanaugh, who's followed me out of the store. "Wait till Lew starts zipping his fast ones past them Loop City boys. By the way, where is Lew? Wasn't he going to eat lunch with you?"

"Yeah," I answer, nervously. "If he's out romancin' around again, I'll—Did we unpack that shipment of new sledge hammers yet? Or maybe just a pick handle might be just as—"

Just then a big red coupe pulls up to the curb and Lew steps out. "Goodbye for just a little while, Rita dear," he says to the driver. "I promised Unk I'd eat lunch with him, otherwise you and I—"

"Come on, you love-woozy wart!" I bellow. "Forget these silly belle games and think about ball games! Stop concentrating on the wrong kind of curves and wake up!"

"That's what I say," calls John McClaine, the high school coach, who's also been searching in vain for my nephew.

By a quarter after two, the old grandstand at the edge of town is packed to its leaky roof. Excited people are yelling greetings. Also peanut shells are popping and the home team is running out on the field.

"Boo!" yells a Loop City rooter, by way of greeting the Groveville boys. "Look at the white uniforms. Made out of flour sacks, no doubt, from the Loop City mill!"

"Quiet, you Droop City sap!" I holler from my front row seat. "Stop trying to advertise the flour mill over at that hick hamlet. Who wants to hear about Dog Biscuit Delight when—"

"Uncle Baldy! Uncle Baldy!" hoot the Loop City fans, while I grit my teeth and pretend to ignore my tittering tormentors.

The game starts. Lew stands there on the mound. A batter steps into the box. The stretch, the pitch. A fast one nipping the outside corner of the plate and sogging into catcher Pete Oldring's glove.

A yell from the Groveville rooters. Once more the stretch, the pitch. A fast curve ball breaking sharply away from the plate. And the Loop City batter looking bad as he swings and misses. Also he nearly falls down.

Fairly twitching with pride, I yell lusty approval at my portside nephew who, after getting his third pitch a little high, comes

through with a still faster one that the batter swings at and misses.

The next batter is stepping in when there's a commotion among the Loop City kids who are packed in a solid, noisy group to my left.

"Here she is, folks!" one of them yells. "The belle of baseball. Gorgeous, glamorous little Rita!"

LIKE everybody else, I turn to look at a stunningly pretty who, with her dark hair, her big, Gipsy eyes and what a shape, makes me think she might be a fugitive from a Hollywood studio. Then I notice that Lew's stopping to watch her, too. Also that he's waving at her.

The umpire is bellowing: "Play ball!"

Rita—Rita. I can hear Lew's voice saying again, "Goodbye for just a little while, Rita dear—"

Then I forget the glamor girl to watch my stalwart nephew blaze another fast ball over for a called strike. Working smoothly, he makes the batter foul out to the first baseman. Then he whiffs the next man to face him on three beautiful pitches. Whereupon I crow lustily and long.

Lanky Wayne Spurrier—"Speed" Spurrier they call him, takes the mound for the Loop City Lions. The alert, foxy son of the Loop City banker, Winthrop Spurrier, is good-looking. I'm also afraid he realizes it. He also realizes that he's possessed of a good right arm.

Now that right arm comes down, and a fast ball is over the heart of the plate for a called strike on Rusty Gebhardt, a skinny farmer lad that's homely as a scarecrow, and self-conscious as a dachshund about to tackle a revolving door. Yet he's faster on his feet than a panther-pursued pickaninny, if there is such a thing.

Whoosh! The fast one again. Restless Rusty lets it go by for another called strike. Whereupon I get an idea and yell, "Swing at it, kid. It won't cost any more!"

The next pitch is a curve. Dubiously, Rusty takes a half-hearted go at it, and the ball connects with the bat to go twisting crazily out toward the pitcher, then turning off in the direction of third base.

Speed Spurrier has started for the fluke bunt. Now the Loop City third sacker takes over the fielding job. But by the time he gets that ball over to first, the Groveville lead-off man is safe. Do I go berserk!

A trifle disgusted by the way the first runner has reached base, Speed Spurrier bears down, fans the next two batters, but not before Rusty, the runner, has stolen second base.

The fourth man up swings hard at the first pitch, then at the second one. Then he raps a looping single out toward left field.

Rusty's in easily with the first run, while I hammer my pudgy knees and audibly gloat.

Speed Spurrier scares the next hitter up by dusting him off with the first pitch, then he fans him, thereby retiring the side.

Lew takes the mound again, smiles toward gipsy-eyed Rita and burns a fast strike past the batter.

"Oh, Lew dear!" chirps the shapely girl. "How fast you are. But you don't have to prove it to me again. Not after I was out with you till three o'clock this morning—in the glorious moonlight. Don't you remember, my adorable, golden-haired one? Don't you remember taking me in your big, strong arms and telling me that I was your Dorothy Lamour?"

The Loop City rooters shriek with laughter while Lew—and I—stare at the pretty girl. A girl whose lovely neck I'm longing to touch, but not gently.

"Play ball!" roars the old umpire.

Lew winds up and pitches one down in the dirt.

"Why, Lew dear!" chirps the Rita girl. "You shouldn't use a baseball for a plow! If you're going to become the big pitching star of the major leagues—like you promised me you would last night, out by romantic Miller's Lake—"

Well, to make a painful story short, brunette Rita smilingly, mercilessly, undermines the nerves of a lad with a great pitching arm, a lad who hasn't had one-third enough sleep last night. I learn later, he was up early that morning to keep a date with the gipsy-eyed little siren who's now publicly airing the more tender details of their last night's tryst.

Oh, it ain't only because Lew's my nephew that I'm boiling over till I can't talk. It's because Rita's pulling a shabby trick to help win a ball game for Loop City where, I also learn later, her rich father has just bought a flour mill.

It's pitiful to witness the way Lew begins to crack up. He's game enough to try weathering the storm. But his fast ones are wild. His control is gone. He walks two men, gives up two hits when he has to throw a nothing ball, just to get it over.

Then, with Rita still razzing him, he is taken out of the game. Joe Lathrop, not much of a pitcher, goes in to lose the game to Loop City by a score of nine to three.

Sick at heart, I leave the stand before the game ends. Leave with the Loop City rooters hooting, "What's the matter, Uncle Baldy? Can't you take it?"

WHEN I get home, Lew's sitting by the window. I stride toward him and growl, "Listen, you lovesick laughing stock! The next time you let some gipsy-eyed little gyp

make a fool out of you—and me—and Groveville—"

"I didn't know she was a cheap little doublecrosser, a spy in our camp," he answers numbly. "I didn't know she was Speed Spurrier's new girl, and was practically engaged to him before she ever moved to Loop City. I still don't savvy how she could seem so sweet, and then—"

"You've learned something the hard way," I answer. "But if the pill's bitter, remember it ain't as fatal as a dose of arsenic. So don't look so green around the gills, kid. Time'll prove that neither your heart nor your good left pitching arm is broken. Now, shed those baseball duds and let's—"

Beau Trumball, a dapper young gent whose dad owns the local newspaper, the Groveville Weekly, barges into the room. "Well, Mr. Ainsworth, if—" he starts to say.

"Out, Beau!" I remark, pointing to the door. "If you think you're going news-gathering in here—"

"I'm here to impart some news," he answers sharply, and eyes Lew. "I had the scene all set for a nice story today. And here's a little secret. I had a scout from the best team in all the minor leagues in that old grandstand today! I thought you'd amaze and intrigue him, Lew, while the knowledge of his presence wasn't making you nervous."

"Then Rita Smith began baiting you, and you folded up like grandma's silk parasol. I was as surprised and disappointed as everybody else in town. The scout was disgusted. Even wanted me to pay for his wild goose chase over here."

"Ball—scout?" Lew chokes.

"Exactly!" comes back young Trumball. "But you can forget about him and a pitching career. Like Groveville can forget you!" He makes his exit, and slams the door after him, by way of a period.

With that information beating him down to a new low, Lew says finally, "I'm getting out of this town."

"No, you're not," I tell him. "We don't have money enough to move on right now. Besides, you promised my boss you'd work for him this summer. Be service man for tractors and attachments. You've got a knack for that work, and we need the money."

Well, true to his word, Lew works all that summer for the Groveville Hardware & Implement Company. He won't touch a baseball though, not even to play catch. When he ain't working, he just loaf. Pretty soon they hang it on him—the nickname of Lazy Lew.

I try, by every known method, to make him snap out of his lethargy. But it seems the heart was yanked out of him the day of that diamond debacle. He's got no more snap than a pair of cast iron suspenders.

At times he talks about leaving Groveville,

but that's one thing I won't stand for—an ignoble retreat from the tireless tongues of local gossips. At other times, I feel like letting him run if he'll only take me with him.

Early October rolls around. I go out to the repair shop and tell Lew that the boss and I want him to come in the store and listen, with a bunch of town idlers, to the World Series broadcast. No no, he won't do it.

"Why not?" I explode. "Before this year, I couldn't have dragged you away from a Series broadcast with a team of mules. A donkey's stronger than you, and just as stubborn. Why won't you—"

"Two reasons," he says. "I don't want to be present at a gathering of baseball fans. Perhaps I'm endowed with the donkey's stubbornness, but not his thickness of hide. Reason two is, that I'm driving my jalopy out in the country. I'm going to repair a tractor belonging to Batch Parmalee, a new farmer over by Duck Lake. I might not be back for a couple of days." He reaches in his pocket. "Here's that money you lost on the ball game, Unk. I've been saving up."

"Hold on, kid," I tell him. "That ball game's already cost you way too much. I can't take—"

"You'd better, Unk."

"Are you running away—for good?" I ask.

"Nope. I'll be back," he says. And his blue eyes, calm and unwavering, tells me he means it.

Lew is gone for three days, and seems happier when he comes back. He likes this new farmer, Batch Parmalee, who's invited him to come back and visit whenever he can. During the beautiful, mild fall, Lew spends about all his spare time over by Duck Lake. I miss the kid a lot.

But I don't squawk about his absence. Farmer Parmalee, or maybe just being away from Groveville, is good for Lew. He has more pep. He actually smiles once in a while again. Then another situation arises fast enough to make my hairless head spin. My boss, old Dave Cavanaugh, decides to retire from business and sell out his store. Which he does.

DO YOU want to know the buyer? The Widow Smith from Loop City! Yessiree, the mother of gipsy-eyed Rita Smith who blasted Lew's baseball hopes into the slough of despond. Rita's father has died recently, leaving only a few thousand dollars to his widow and daughter. Mrs. Smith, who had worked for a hardware and implement company before she was married, wants to invest her money in a business with which she's familiar.

A quiet, nice-looking woman, she wants to

know if I'll keep on working for her. I will—at least until I can save up enough money to leave town. But when she puts that same question to Lew, he answers, "I'd tie a crankshaft around my neck and step out of a boat into Duck Lake before I'd work for the no-account Smith family." His eyes flash like blue swords.

"Can't we forget the past, Lew?" says Mrs. Smith. "I thought of putting in a line of sporting goods next Spring. And if I had someone to stimulate interest in baseball—someone like you—"

"No matter what I say, you're still better at insulting than I am," he retorts savagely. "I hope you go so broke in this store, but fast, that your doublecrossing daughter'll have to wear straight hair and second-hand slacks for the rest of her life."

As tears gather in Mrs. Smith's brown eyes, I glare at my wrought-up nephew and growl, "Now that you've showed Mrs. Smith what a polished, chivalrous little gentleman I've made of you, Mr. Ainsworth, may I remind you that it was not Rita Smith's mother who made a moonlight monkey of you? You apologize to her or I'll—"

"Sorry, Mrs. Smith," he says bitterly, more disturbed by the woman's tears than by my threatening manner. "There's no reason why the sins of the cheap little daughter should be visited upon the mother."

He turns away.

"Where are you going?" I ask him.

"To gather up my tools. Then I'm moving out to Batch Parmalee's farm. Furthermore, nobody's stopping me."

During this exchange of blows to the heart, gipsy-eyed Rita and her tall escort, Speed Spurrier, the wealthy, athletic pride of Loop City, enter the store.

Young Spurrier says to Lew, "Don't run off and hide *again*, Ainsworth. The Smiths really feel sorry for you."

"Quiet, Wayne!" says Rita firmly.

"Now they can feel sorry for you, Mr. Spurious!" says Lew. And moves toward the Loop City Lothario.

"So you think you're better at the sport of fisticuffs than at baseball?" young Spurrier says. "Well, here's where I show you that—"

He makes a quick try for a punch to Lew's grim-set chin. That punch barely grazes the mark. Then—whoosh! That left fist of Lew's wings up like a shot. Hard knuckles crack to Spurrier's none-too-firm chin. Down he goes, mopping the floor with his natty pinstripe suit as he skids against the axe-handle rack.

Whirling to face Rita, and looking like he might take a swing at her, Lew says, "That rather surprised you, didn't it, Miss Smith?"

"Yes," she says, never batting a lustrous,

dark eye. "I'd been misinformed about the young man having no spunk. Mere rumors I dare say."

Lew glares, turns away while Mrs. Smith and I take measures to revive a cocky son of a banker whose measure has just been taken.

If Groveville, with Lew gone, makes me feel as all alone for a while as a polar bear in Panama, there's some compensation. The Widow Smith, a competent, level-headed woman, is generous enough to up my salary, as well as trusting enough to make me manager of the store. She isn't afraid of work, either. Nor is glamorous little Rita who, attending business college in a big town, comes home during weekends.

Prejudiced against that trim little brunette as I am, what I object to most is that when she's helping out in the store Saturdays—and doing a quiet, efficient job of it—is the fact that Wayne Spurrier is also hanging around. Trying, between customers, he is, to make love to the girl.

I'm unpacking a bunch of baseball equipment, gloves, uniforms and bats, on a bright Saturday morning in mid-April when Speed Spurrier, looking for Rita, enters the store.

"Howdy, Hairless!" the smart Aleck says, "You'd better pack that stuff up again and ship it back. Don't you remember? I took the baseball spirit out of this hick town last June? And, with Rita's able assistance, turned a ball game into a rout. Also I turned your beloved nephew into the Handsome Hermit of Duck Lake." He laughs, sounding like a rock crusher.

"Get out of here, you gabby ghou!" I answer. "Crawl back under a muddy boulder, with the other fish bait, and try to remember that Lew shut you up with a left—"

"I do remember," he growls. Then, temper getting away from him, he stings me across the face with a mighty slap from his pitching paw. Fat, forty and furious, I try to hit back. But he's too young and fast. He pops a jolting right to my mouth and I nearly go down.

"Wayne! You cowardly—" screams Rita who's with her mother up in the little office on the mezzanine. Downstairs she flies, eyes blazing, to grab up a new hammer.

YOUNG WAYNE SPURRIER, the banker's son retreats toward the front door. Rita hurls accusations—not to mention a hammer that doesn't miss far, at him. He's turning to go out the door, when who should be there but Lew Ainsworth who, every Saturday, drives the Parmalee pick-up truck to town for supplies.

Lew looks at me, then at Spurrier. Then, tooth and nail, those young gents go at each other. I'm a little too numbed to see every blow that's struck. But I know that in about

two minutes—maybe three—Wayne Spurrier, battling like a cornered wildcat, is taking a beating that brings yells of delight from the gathering townfolk.

His eyes are battered and swelling, his lower lip's hanging at half-mast. His long, pointed nose is puffed and twisted, besides he's shy two front teeth. At last, a bit mussed up he lands on the back of his neck out there in the gutter.

"Good for you, Lew!" cries Rita.

Coldly he looks at her.

"If you were more allergic to rats," he says, "and less impressed with their wealth, my uncle wouldn't be exposed to that." He points to my dripping mouth. "Come on, Unk. Let's go over to the room and get you a clean shirt."

"Not till you apologize to Rita!" I tell him. "Don't blame her because I got punched. If you'd seen her starting after Spurrier with that hammer—"

"Was she really trying to help you, or was she just putting on another one of her acts?" Lew cut in.

"You're a grudge-bearing heel!" Rita says to him fiercely. "You can't forget, and you won't forgive."

"You're right, Rita!" I tell her.

"Whose bread I eat, her song I sing," says Lew bitterly. He walks away, his own shirt covered with blood. All on account of me.

Well, before another week has gone by, young, energetic Beau Trumball, of the Groveville Weekly, and I are getting a ball club together. Then we get a break.

The state starts building a new highway bridge over Grove River. Out of the construction crew that moves in, Beau and I find a half-dozen real baseball players. A lanky first baseman, a fast-footed shortstop, two fielders that can pound the pellet, a swell catcher and a pitcher who, although he's a little old now, can really twist 'em.

You ought to see the way that hurler, Red Moffitt, whiffs the batters on the high school team. In a game with them we win seven to nothing. There's only one fly in the ointment as far as I'm concerned. All too often when I'm watching the stocky right-hander, Red Moffitt, out there on the mound, I think of a taller, younger southpaw. I think of a kid that cracked up one day, and left a part of his heart buried under that mound out there on the Groveville diamond. A kid I haven't seen since he knuckle-blasted young Spurrier that day six weeks ago.

After taking the high school team, we play a stronger team over at Centerton—and wallop them eight to three. Then we take a still stronger team, the Elmpoort Pirates, into camp by a score of three to one. And Groveville, gripped by baseball fever.

Then comes a challenge issued by the cap-

tain of the Loop City team—Speed Spurrier. He not only challenges us—he up and dares us to meet him and his team. Furthermore wouldn't we like to place a few bets?

"Sure we'll play 'em!" I yell at Beau Trumball. "I'll bet my next month's salary that we beat 'em!"

"You will not bet," says Beau grimly. "I get around a little. I've just heard that the Loop City team, sponsored by Speed's banker papa, has been importing some fancy ball players. The Spurriers intend to go on to win the championship of the southern half of this great state!"

I blink, then growl, "I don't give a hoot. I'll bet my—"

"The only salary you ever have—next month's," Beau says. "All right. Risk in haste and repent at leisure, Unk."

The morning before that game finds me jittery as a wild zebra getting a whiff of the approaching Loop City Lions. I'm trying to work in the store that Saturday morning. But when a customer comes in and asks for a whetstone, I wrap up a monkey wrench and charge him for a rip saw. Whereupon Rita, comes up, smiles and says, "Run along Unk. Mom and I can take care of the store till we close at noon—for the ball game. Try to be calm and collected."

"Be calm and collect, my dear," I answer, thinking of the next two months' salary I've wantonly wagered.

Game time. The old grandstand's packed. Another five hundred people are sitting on baskets or boxes, or just fidgeting around on their feet. Red Moffitt's taking his warmup pitches, and the Loop City rooters are already beginning to hoot and heckle.

Batter up!

The Loop City lead-off man, a well-experienced import from a bigger town, cracks a sharp grounder that looks like a hit, but Bounce Crissick, our shortstop, spears it and whips it to first. One out! The fans scream. I breathe again.

Red Moffitt loops a curve ball in. The batter swings, misses. Then he fouls out to the first baseman on the next pitch, which is a fast one. The next man up is out on a called third strike—and gets tough with the plate umpire. The Groveville fans boo the beefing batter.

SPEED SPURRIER takes the mound. And do the Groveville bunch start recalling his fistic prowess! The batter has to fall away from that first zipping pitch. But Spurrier, a grudge in his heart, is bearing down from that first pitch. He fans the first hitter. The next one's out on a long fly to center field. The next one strikes out.

For three innings it's nip and tuck. At the start of the fourth, the first man up for

Loop City smacks a double down the left field line. The next hitter bunts. Our third baseman overthrows at first. A run comes in, and the bunt hitter goes to third.

Suffering, I appeal to Red Moffitt for tight pitching. He does get the next man. But the next hitter belts out a single between first and second. Another run comes in.

Old Red rubs the ball up, comes through with a fast one—and crack! A home run, far, far away. . . . Four runs, and only one out. But, thank heaven, the next two hitters fly out to right field.

"Those imported players are too heavy with the stick for old Red," groans Beau Trumball to me. "Oh, why did we ever—"

As Speed Spurrier walks out to the mound, he looks at me and jeers, "Shall we go on with this farce, Hot And Hairless?"

"Pull in your chest, you spurious sport!" I croak, mad enough to rend him apart. "It ain't your fine pitching that's—"

Placing his thumb to his nose, he accords me a finger wave. Then he winds up and burns one across. Crack! The batter smashes a hot liner right back at the pitcher—and Spurrier hits the dirt to get out of its way. It's a single for us.

The next batter bunts one toward the mound. Spurrier comes down fast, fumbles a little. Doesn't quite get the runner at first. Two on, nobody out. Two strikes, one called, on the third batter. Another swinging strike, a bad one down in the dirt. And the catcher can't hold it. Men on first, second and third. Nobody out. I go goofy.

Spurrier's upset. Then he walks off the mound, heads toward the Loop City bench and calls, "All right, Frosty Wickwire!"

That name numbs me a little. I've heard of him. A big-time twirler that might have gone to the top—if he hadn't been too tricky about the way he made his money. A stocky, frosty-eyed gent, with a fast right arm and a heart made of agate, he takes the mound. He fans our next three batters on exactly ten pitches. And do the Grovevillers groan!

First of the fifth. Old Red's pitching his heart out now. He gets by the first two batters. A fast ball—and whang! Another home run for Loop City. Five to nothing.

Strike—ball. A foul back over the stand. Then a foul tip that breaks the finger on our catcher's right hand.

"That does it!" growls Beau Trumball. "Nothing but a high school kid to fall back on now!" Beau's about to bawl.

"Mind if I try catching, Unk?" says a calm voice. And I whirl to face old Batch Parmalee, farmer, who's in uniform. Just behind him is Lew Ainsworth.

"Gosh, kid!" I gasp. "Do you think you could slow down these Loop City sluggers? Would you try? Are you willing?"

"If Batch can catch, yes," he says, quietly.

"But Parmalee's just a middle-aged farmer, Lew!" says Beau Trumball.

"He's a fairly good backstop," says Lew.

"But I'm not begging you to let us."

"I'm begging you!" I tell him.

Well, Parmalee puts on his equipment. Lew takes the mound. And Speed Spurrer, over on the bench, makes some nasty cracks. But Lew whips one pitch over. The batter only blinks at it. The side is retired.

We come to bat. Our first baseman gets a scratch single. Then Batch Parmalee comes up. Frosty Wickwire burns two fast ones by him. He never takes the bat off his shoulder. Then another fast one. Parmalee steps into it. A home run. Two scores across. The stands go haywire. But that agate-hearted twirler for Loop City ain't at all upset. He gets the next three men in order.

First of the sixth. It ain't fear of losing the game now that brings tears to my eyes. It's just watching Lew Ainsworth pitch.

His form's improved fifty percent. His fast ball is faster, his motion smoother, while his curves break like they were glancing off a post. His control too, is uncanny. He doesn't allow a hit during the next two innings, while Frosty Wickwire, good as he is, allows two of them. If only Lew and Parmalee had been the battery starting this game!

COMES now, the last of the ninth. Our best hitters coming up. Another scratch single by the first batter. Frosty bears down. Gets the next man. The next one connects for a double down the left field line. Men on second and third. Then big Saunders, my best hitter, goes down swinging.

"Three more pitches," gloats Speed Spurrer as Batch Parmalee steps into the batter's box. "The old farmer was lucky before. But lightning never strikes twice in the same—"

A blazing fast ball. Crack! Another home run high and far over the left fielder's head. Three runs. The score tied five to five. And me fit to be tied! It sounds like the old grandstand is going to be wrecked. But the next batter fails.

The game goes on—ten—eleven—twelve innings. And Lew has allowed one minor hit, an infield single. Then Parmalee comes up. Frosty Wickwire promptly walks him while the crowd boos and bellows—till the next hitter up gets a Texas leaguer. But Parmalee's too slow afoot to get farther than second on that hit. Two strikeouts, fast ones, for Frosty Wickwire. Lew up.

He swings lustily at the first two pitches, and again the Grovevillers groan. Then—even a pitcher hits once in a while—he smacks a line drive that's good for three bases, giving even portly Farmer Parmalee time to get home. We win the ball game!

I try to yell, can't—and fall down as I run toward the mound. Lew picks me up, grins and says, "Wipe that sweat out of your eyes, Unk. And you might say a word of thanks to Peg Parmalee."

"Puh—Peg Parmalee?" I quaver. "Why, he was one of the best-throwing catchers and hitters—"

"He still hits pretty well, don't you think?" asks Lew, patting Farmer Parmalee on the back. "It was him that got me throwing a baseball again. All during the spring we've practiced. And he's taught me how to—"

He stops talking now and freezes up as Rita Smith, her gipsy-brown eyes shining, comes piloting a well-dressed stranger out on the diamond.

"A scout from the *real* big time, Mr. Ainsworth," says Rita, trembling a little. "He wants to sign you up. Uncle Peg and I got him out here."

"Uncle—Peg?" Lew echoes dumbly.

"That's right," says Peg Parmalee, smiling. "I forgot to mention it, Lew, but I'm Mrs. Smith's brother. In fact, it was her and Rita that induced me to come to this country—when I wanted to buy a farm.

"Rita wanted me, even begged me, to take a young southpaw pitcher in hand. Wanted me to undo—more than undo—what Rita, a kid that made an awful mistake once, had done to that southpaw. All this was at the instigation of a spurlous sport named Speed Spurrer. That would-be pitcher making a break for his car there now! Of course, Rita didn't know another ball scout was in the stands that day. Didn't know a career was at stake."

I don't know whether it's fifteen or twenty times that Lew swallows before he can talk.

"Maybe I wouldn't have cracked up that day, Rita," Lew says, "if I hadn't fallen in love with you. Head over heels."

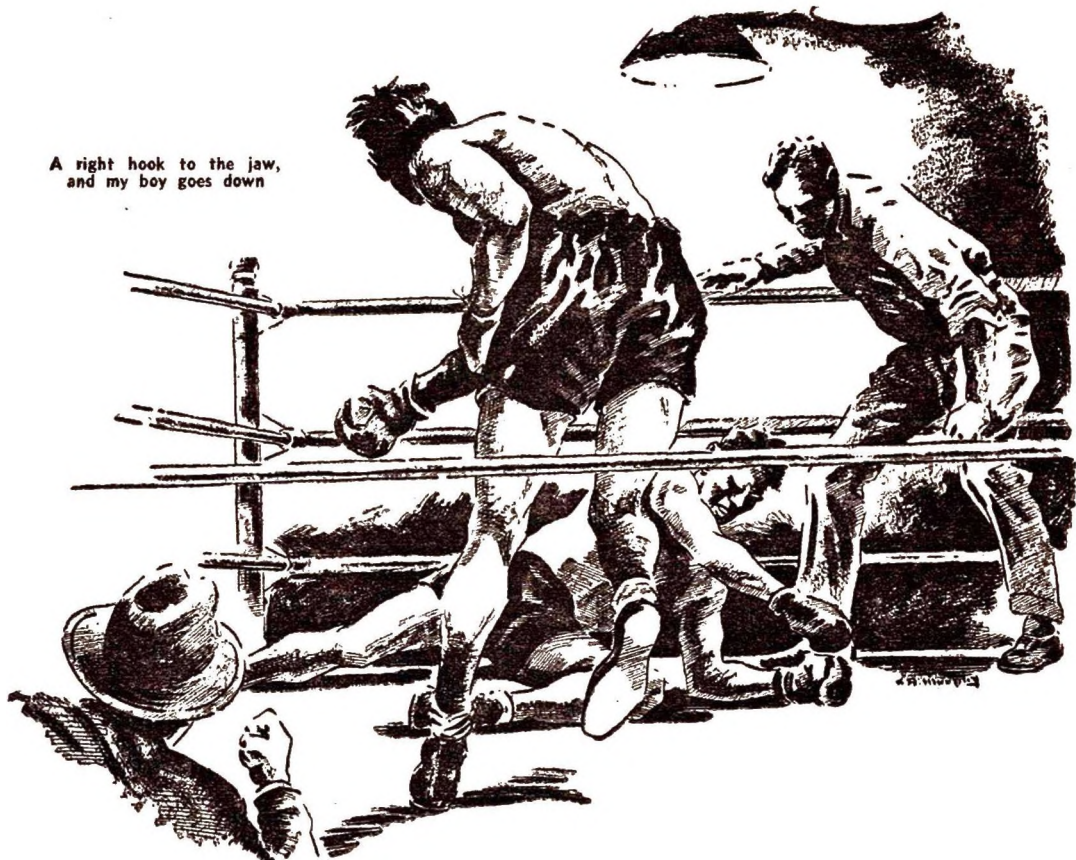
"Oh, you big lug!" She throws her arms around his neck. "Say I'm forgiven! Say it—please! Before you sign this contract!"

But he can't talk. He just kisses her while Mrs. Smith, walking up and placing a hand on my plump arm, says, "Happy, Unk? Proud of our little Rita and your handsome nephew?"

"Our little Rita?" I echo. "Say! I could love her as a daughter just as eagerly as Lew could love her as a wife."

"Well, sometime maybe—" Mrs. Smith smiles. My overtaxed heart skips along like a hard-hit grounder. Rita and Lew in each other's arms. Mrs. Smith smiling at me. Prospects of the future. Lew in the big leagues, and me in the box seats watching the young mound master slipping 'em past the sluggers. Boy, I'm so steamed up I could biff another ball through the boarding house window.

A right hook to the jaw,
and my boy goes down



MIDDLEWEIGHTS ARE HEADACHES

By DAVID GOODIS

Len was a good fighter, but his fiancée sure could throw a sharper hook—and she wanted him to get out of the ring!

THERE is a right hand to the jaw and it is followed by two short lefts to the body. What comes next is a long looping left and it lands on a chin and then there are two short rights to the midsection and my boy is up against the ropes. A man named Brenner puts a left hand in my boy's face and then crosses a right to the jaw.

I am getting ready to pack the bags.

A right hand hits my boy in the chest, a left gets him deep in the midsection. Then a right hook to the jaw, and my boy goes down.

I am asking myself why I ever let him take this fight. I want to weep. I am hoping that he won't be able to get up.

But he gets up.

The crowd that has sat down is now standing again.

And Brenner is grinning like a buzzard anticipating breakfast.

My boy takes a hard left to the mouth, and a lot of shiny red sprays all over his lips and chin. Then Brenner is working hard to throw the big one for the kill.

The bell—and my boy does not know where his corner is. He is walking around like a blind bear in Mammoth Cave. Finally he finds the corner and sags.

"That's all, kid."

"No, Tim, no."

"I tell you that's all. You're getting murdered out there."

"I'll find him this round."

It is the seventh coming up, and Brenner looks as good as new. My boy looks like a victim of explosion, fire, flood and shipwreck.

"You'll be all right for this round, kid," Donahue, the trainer says.

"Close your head," I say.

There are about 9000 fiends watching this massacre, and they are having themselves a very pleasant evening. I am hating them with all the hate in my system and I am also hating myself for pushing the kid too fast.

My boy is a good-looking middleweight who is twenty-six years old. When he is seventeen he is in the Golden Gloves and he is very good. When he is eighteen he turns pro. When he is nineteen he changes his mind and wants to go to college to become a statistician, because he is very good at arithmetic.

He graduates college and he even takes a year extra with this statistics study. He is ready to be a statistician and he is ready to be married. But he cannot find a job and in the meantime his girl is looking for someone else, someone with the well-known cabbage.

He is very unhappy about all this, and he decides to go back into the fight game. Already his girl is running around with one of these guys who drives a great big convertible and whose old man has a trillion dollars.

This middleweight, Len Reed, is very bitter. And when he comes to me I can see that something is bothering him and finally I get it out of him.

I put him in the ring with some tramp who I use for situations like this and Len nearly kills the tramp with three punches to the head. I take a good look at Len. He is only five eight. He weighs exactly 160. He is a very good-looking boy.

"Look here," I say. "You are twenty-six and you are not a child. If you are coming back to the fight game for the express purpose of committing homicide, you had better look for something else. You will have to forget this girl and you will have to stop

imagining that every man you face in the ring is this wealthy guy who has taken your girl away."

LEN says that I am absolutely right and that he will listen to everything I say. I get him a fight, a six-round prelim, and he cuts his man to pieces and knocks him into next month in one minute and thirty seconds of the first round.

He does the same thing in the next fight and the next and the next and the next nine fights and before I know it I have a middleweight sensation on my hands and I sign for the Brenner go.

I hate to think about it as the bell for the seventh gongs against my ears. I guess I sign for the Brenner fight because it seems to me that there is not a man alive who can face the fists of my boy Len when he really gets going. And I forget that the big reason for Brenner's fame is a very smooth boxing style that is only too willing to meet slugging wildcats like my Len.

My mind is made up and I am telling myself that my boy will not come out for the eighth round. In truth, he will be very lucky if he is alive at the end of the seventh. And I am looking down at nothing and shaking my head slowly and hopelessly from side to side and then I hear a sound that resembles a cyclone doing its worst.

It is the crowd.

I gaze at the ring.

Brenner is doing a back flip as if he thinks there is a nice cool pond for him to fall into. He lands on his neck and then his arms spread out and he is flat. My boy is leaning back against the ropes, breathing as if he has just sprinted seventy miles.

The referee is counting.

"He gave him the right," Donahue is screaming. "He gave him the right!"

The referee is up to eight and he is up to nine and he is up to ten and the crowd is trying to see if it can break the all-time record for making noise. A mob of lunatics are on their way to the ring, and the cops have to climb in to protect Len from his new admirers. I am in there with my boy and Len grins at me with a face that looks as if it has wandered into a washing machine.

"I gave him the right, Tim," he says.

With the aid of the police force and a few thousand ushers we finally manage to make our way to the dressing room and there my boy has a fainting spell, which does not sur-

prise me in the least. Donahue, who is one of the greatest handlers in the business, gets to work on him and outdoes himself on the patching job.

I am letting a few of the better-known reporters in and there is a lot of excited talk about "the greatest finish of the year."

And "the next middleweight champion of the world."

And "Brenner will want a return match."

And "Len Reed is the gamest, toughest fighter in middleweight ranks."

And so forth.

I am very pleased at all these kind remarks, but meanwhile Len has come out of his nap and he is gazing at someone who has just come into the dressing room. There is a look on his face that I have never seen before and it is certainly not a look which will indicate that he is ready for his next fight.

VERY slowly I turn to see what has come in through the door.

I see an item which is about five three and can't weigh an ounce over 103. She has hair as black as the blackest black and her eyes are the same color and her skin is as white as milk. This is something very out of the ordinary and I am wondering what is taking place and then I see this item moving toward the rubbing table and Len is off the rubbing table and before I can say James J. Corbett, these two are all tied up.

"I knew you'd come back to me," Len is saying.

"Oh Len, Len, Len—I've been crazy. I've been blind. Len, I don't deserve this. Throw me out. Throw me out in the street."

The way I am feeling at this point, I am all too willing to oblige, but Len has a bear hug on the black-haired damsel, and he does not even know that there are spectators to this little reunion.

It is time for me to remind Len that I am still around, and I put a nasty embroidery on my voice.

"Excuse me, folks," I say, "but we can't stay here all night."

Len comes out of his trance.

"Oh, I'm sorry, Tim. I want you to meet—Adrienne."

Adrienne fishes in her assortment of smiles and comes out with a No. 9 special. Right away I have this dame down pat, and I can see that I am in for problems.

"Pleased to meet you," I say.

"I want to thank you for all you've done

for Len," Adrienne says.

Did you ever hear anything like that in all your life? Right away she's taking charge.

Exactly fourteen hours after the Brenner fight I am the recipient of three offers. One is from Brenner, who wants a return match. The second comes from the west coast, where there is a Mexican sensation who has been knocking down every guy in sight. And the other is from Boston, where they are hungry for a good middleweight.

I am pondering the matter and figuring out percentages and studying the record of the respective pugilists who are anxious to trade punches with Len. It is not an easy task to make a decision, for despite my boy's grand finish on the preceding night, he is still not a Class-A middleweight. All experts to the contrary.

The door opens and Len is in the office.

I LOOK him up and down. His face is still sort of mussed up, but aside from that he is dressed like an up-to-date version of the Count of Monte Cristo. Inasmuch as Len is never a big man for fashions, I stare at him.

"Like the new get-up, Tim? I just bought it this morning."

"This morning?"

"Yeah, I was out shopping with Adrienne."

"Oh!" I say. I take a long breath. "Sit down, kid, I want to talk to you."

As if a twelve-ounce glove has just come along and hit him in the center of his face, Len sits down. He gives me a look which tells me very plainly that, although he is twenty-six and a college graduate and a statistician, he certainly does not know the score.

"Len," I say, "do you know the alphabet?"

"Sure I know the alphabet."

"What comes after A, B, C and D?"

"E—hey, what's this for?"

"I just wanted to see if you knew. And if you know the alphabet, it's a safe bet you'll be able to understand what I'm going to tell you. Are we ready?"

"Yeah, we're ready," Len says.

"Here it is," I shoot. "You knew this dame when you were a nobody. You weren't good enough for her then. Now you're on the road to the championship and she's back here with bells on."

"Wait a minute, Tim." Len stands up and his face is white and he is swallowing hard and he says, "You got it all wrong. Even if I lost, she would've come back to me."

"How do you know that?" I say.

"She told me."

"Oh, she told you," I say. And I am about to say a lot more, but there is a look on Len's face which tells me that anything I say right now will do as much good as using a hairnet to stop a leak in a water-main.

I throw the discussion over to another lane and I ask him how does he feel about a rematch with Brenner. He says that he is only too anxious to meet Brenner again and as he says it I know that his mind is very far away from Brenner and the ring and I am very much disgusted with the way this entire situation is shaping up.

"All right," I say. "We'll meet Brenner."

"I'll put him away in three rounds," Len says as he moves toward the door.

"Where are you going now?" I say.

"I'm having luncheon with Adrienne."

SO IT'S luncheon with Adrienne and shopping with Adrienne and dinner and show and dancing with Adrienne and I am a very disconsolate prize fight manager. In the middle of it all I sign my boy for the return match with Brenner and it is all I can do to keep my fingers from shaking and getting ink all over my sleeve.

This situation has happened to better fighters than Len Reed, and I must think up something very fast if I am to save my boy from a big fall down the hill.

I am getting exactly nowhere, and the calendar doesn't want to know from waiting, and it is time for Len to start training for the Brenner go. I select a nice, quiet spot in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania, and we are all packed up and ready to leave when Len glances at his wristwatch.

"She'll be here any minute," he says.

"Who?" I say, as if I don't know who.

"Adrienne."

"Is she coming with us?"

"Sure," Len says. Then he sort of grins like a dumb kid and he says, "Maybe I ought to tell you now, Tim. Adrienne and I are engaged."

"You're what?" I say.

"Last night I put a ring on her finger. I'm a very happy guy, Tim."

"I'm not," I am about to say, but I do not have the heart to say it, because Len looks so joyful about the way things are turning out. I take another gander at this dreamy expression that is spreading over his puss and I compare it with the killer glint that used to

be in his eye and I am thinking of the coming match with Brenner and I am getting sick.

Len opens his mouth to say something, but I am already headed in the other direction. I mean the direction opposite from where Adrienne is getting out of a cab and walking toward our station wagon. I walk very fast and turn a corner and walk fast and turn another corner and very soon I am in my office, murdering a perfectly good piece of Havana cigar.

What am I going to do about this Adrienne?

To such a deep extent am I thinking about this that I fail to hear the first three knocks on the door. I figure that there must be at least three knocks, because the next one is delivered with such enthusiasm that the door makes a sound as if it is ready to fold up and call it a day.

Before this can happen I reach out and open the door and there is a personality standing there who barges into my little office as if he is the landlord and I am three months in arrears.

He is five feet eight inches tall and he weighs somewhere in the neighborhood of 200 pounds and not an ounce of it is muscle. He is dressed in a camel-hair sport jacket that must cost at least a yard and a half, and instead of a shirt he wears a fancy handkerchief around his neck.

"Where is she?" he says, and right away I don't like his voice.

"Where is who?"

"Adrienne. Tell me where she is or I'll break you in half."

NOW I am a human being who stands about five six and who weighs no more than 130. But in my day I was right in there with the best of them, and I had a left hook that did a lot of destruction when it really got going.

"Am I to understand that you have plans to break me in half?" I say.

"Where is Adrienne?" the stout personality shouts. He takes another step toward me.

It is beginning to dawn on me that my visitor is looking for Adrienne and I am looking into my crystal again and seeing things.

"Who are you?" I ask.

"My name is Gardner Randerbunn." He says it as if the name itself is enough to knock me off my feet.

And it does, because this lad is none other than the wealthy personality Adrienne took up with when she decided that she didn't want to starve along with a starving statistician named Len Reed.

"Perhaps I can help you, Gardner. But I would like to clear up a few issues before we start talking business. Why are you looking for Adrienne?" I say.

He goes into an act that is a direct steal from the bughouse scene in Macbeth, or one of those plays.

"Why am I looking for her!" he screams. "He asks me why I am looking for her! I am dying for her! My Adrienne! What a miserable wretch I was!"

This is my first opening, and I scurry into it.

"Why were you a miserable wretch?"

"I sent her away!" Gardner screeches. "I had the universe in the palm of my hand and I threw it away!"

"Am I to understand that you handed this Adrienne a carload of walking papers?"

"I sent her out of my life!" Gardner shrieks.

"For another woman?" I say softly.

"For Theda."

"Who?"

"Well, if you would read the society columns, you would know all about me and Theda. She is the debutante of the year. And now—"

"I catch on," I say. "It is all over between you and Theda. You want Adrienne again."

Gardner Randerbunn has a look on his face as if he is just condemned to Devil's Island for a few hundred years.

"I don't deserve her," he says. "I don't deserve that she should come back to me."

"Don't talk like that," I say, and I am a very joyful soul at this point, because I am seeing all my problems solved. I am feeling like buying this Gardner a yacht or something, but he probably has seventy yachts already. Anyway, I say, "Adrienne will come back to you."

He puts two fat hands on my shoulders and looks at me as if I am the Governor and I have just handed him a last-minute reprieve from the chair.

"You will take me to her?" he says.

"I will take you to her."

All right, we go outside and parked at the curb is a piece of automobile that either costs a good 9500 or I am guilty of an outright exaggeration. This job is a few miles

long and it is all hood and there are 691 dials on the instrument panel. Gardner shoves the car in first and we are off for the Poconos.

THERE are about 11,000 followers of the fight game, surrounding the ring at the Garden, and when Brenner climbs through the ropes they make a lot of noise. But it is as nothing compared to the yell they set up when my boy Len enters the ring.

He gives them a short wave of his right hand and then he makes a fast return to the corner and digs his feet into the rosin and moves around with the short, jerky motions that tell me he is planning to murder a fellow being.

And if he has this attitude at his first go with Brenner, he has it three times as much for this fight. And of course it is because he is very bitter about the idea that Adrienne has once again given him his papers and he has given the diamond ring to Donahue, who is currently featuring a waitress who is even dumber than he is. Adrienne is back again with Gardner Randerbunn and my boy is a killer once more.

Now there is an old saying which tells us we should all profit from experience, and this particularly should apply to managers of prize fighters. But as Len comes back to his corner after the instructions, all I am thinking about now is the killer glint in the eyes of my boy.

"Go in there and tear his head off," I say.

For me to say a thing like that is like the Brooklyn Dodgers holding a clambake in honor of the Giants.

But the bell has rung and my boy rips away from the corner and he is in the center of the ring and no sooner does he touch gloves with Brenner than he is trying for a knockout. He throws a right hook that misses by forty-seven yards, and Brenner has a smart grin on his face and my boy tries to wipe off the grin with another right hook, and then a left, and a third right and he is not even in the vicinity of Brenner's face.

"Hit him already!" I shout, and this is not only an ambiguous statement. It is also downright dumb, inasmuch as my boy is in there for the express purpose of hitting him. I tell myself to shut my mouth. A second later I am telling myself to shut my eyes, because Brenner has twisted a left glove into Len's left eye and it is one of those jabs that is nothing more or less than a pity. It swells up the eye and cuts the eyebrow and a gal-

lon of gore starts seeping down over Len's left eye.

But Len does not seem to care, and he is in there, doing his best with a right hook and a left hook and a right cross and another right cross and a straight right, and every one of these punches fails to come near Brenner, who is very fancy and fast tonight. And Brenner hits the bad eye again, and I am sick already.

When Len comes to his corner at the end of the first round, I scowl.

"You're throwing too many punches. Take your time," I say.

"I'll kill him this round," Len says, as Donahue works like a fiend on the bad eye. "I'll knock his brains out."

"Do you hear what I'm telling you?" I say, in a louder voice. "Take your time!"

At the end of the second round my voice is even louder, and Donahue has two eyes to work on.

At the end of the fifth round I hardly have a voice left. My boy hardly has a face left. Brenner looks as good as new.

When my boy falls into his corner at the end of the sixth round I'm bawling.

"That's all, kid," I say.

"I'll get him this round, Tim." He sounds as if he has a mouthful of oatmeal. His lips and the inside of his mouth are all banged up and bleeding and when I look at his face I want to weep some more.

"No, kid," I say, with the lump in my throat feeling like three tons. "I'm not gonna let you go out there again."

"I'm all right, Tim. I tell you—I'm all right. I'll find him this round."

"Sure, he's all right, Tim," Donahue says.

"Close your head," I say to Donahue.

"Let me answer the bell, Tim," Len says. "I'm all right."

AND before I can answer, there is an hysterical voice right beside me, and it belongs to a female and she is yelling.

"No! He's not all right! Get away from me, you hippopotamus!"

I cannot help but turn to see what is going on, and I see Adrienne pushing Gardner, and he loses his balance as he goes back, and falls into the lap of a man with a typewriter and there is considerable aggravation in that section of the Garden.

"Stop the fight, Tim!" Adrienne yells. "Please stop the fight! Oh, Len, Len—look what's happening to you!"

Gardner has come back from the wars, and he is grabbing at Adrienne's left arm, and saying, "Now please, honey—you don't know what you're doing. I—"

"Get away from me or I'll scratch your eyes out!" Adrienne yells, and then she is really going crazy and trying to climb into the ring. I am trying to pull her back and so is Donahue and so is Gardner Randerbunn.

She kicks backward, her heel catches Gardner in the lip and he once again sails back into the man with the typewriter. The man with the typewriter has just finished arranging the papers which have been disarranged by Gardner's last visit and now there is a definite lack of friendship in that sector, inasmuch as the man with the typewriter is somewhat peeved by this time.

I can't see what is going on over there, since I am having my own troubles with Adrienne, who is still trying to climb into the ring. Donahue takes an elbow in the mid-section and then Adrienne is trying to tear all the hair out of my head. A few cops are standing idly by.

And in the middle of all this, Len is staring at Adrienne as if he has just come face to face with her after seventeen long years of futile searching in the depths of the Brazil jungle. It is all too much for me, and I fail to duck a wild swing by Adrienne and it catches me on the side of the head, just under the left ear, and I lose my balance and slide off the edge of the ring and fall on the floor, landing on my teeth.

Then I hear the bell for the start of the seventh round.

Before I can get off the floor I hear a commotion, and there are shouts which sound something like, "Get her out of the ring!"

"Throw her out! She's drunk!"

I am at the edge of the ring once more, trying to climb up there and get in and help to break it up. Brenner is trying to fight my boy Len and Adrienne is in there trying to punch Brenner in the face and the referee is trying to push Adrienne away.

The cops have finally wised up to the fact that something is going on which has not been previously advertised on tonight's card and they are climbing through the ropes. I am also climbing through the ropes. A cop tries to stop me and I throw a left which connects with his nose. Immediately I am jumped by a few thousand cops, and the only thing which saves me from a terrible death

is a lot of bottles which come floating into the ring.

In the dressing room I am awakened by a lot of chilly water which is tossed in my face by Donahue and my boy Len. I sit up very slowly and groan for awhile.

"All right," I say, "stop the water already. I feel as if I just swam the Atlantic."

"Tim, I don't know how to tell you, but I have to tell you."

"Well, tell me already."

"Tim, I'm through with the fight game."

Now it's funny, but I sort of expect this. Maybe I'm psychic. I look Len straight in the eye.

"Adrienne?" I say.

"Yes, Tim. She's been wanting me to quit all along. That's why she threw me over in the beginning. That's why she sort of took charge and made things difficult after the first go with Brenner. She kept telling me to become a statistician again. And we started to argue, and then, on the day we came up to the training camp, and you came up there with this guy Gardner Randerbunn, things were sort of miserable between Adrienne and me.

"She said she didn't want to stand in my way of becoming middleweight champ. And so she went back to Randerbunn. At first I thought she wasn't interested in me any more, that she was just another little four-flushing gold-digger. But you saw what happened in that seventh round. That's real, Tim. That's the real thing. She's true blue, Tim."

"Yeah, and tell him what you did to Brenner," Donahue chirps.

I am ready for anything now.

"What did you do to Brenner?" I say. Len shrugs.

"After you got hit on the head with that

bottle, Brenner lost his temper and took a swing at Adrienne. And that was just a bit too much for me and I gave him a right uppercut to the jaw and—"

"He flew a mile," Donahue adds. "I bet he's still asleep. I never saw such a punch. The mob went sheer out of its mind. I never saw—"

"Close your head," I say to Donahue. Then, to Len, "You were disqualified tonight, but the point is you knocked Brenner cold again." I am now a fight manager once more and I am seeing things very clearly in the crystal. I say, "We'll get another fight with Brenner. We'll—"

"Nothing doing, Tim," my boy says, with a bit of sorrow in his voice, but firm nonetheless. "I'm through with the fight game. I'm going to marry Adrienne and become a statistician for forty bucks a week, or maybe twenty-seven fifty. I'm sorry to let you down, Tim, but that's the way it's gotta be."

I work real hard and finally put a smile on my lips and I hold out my hand and Len takes it.

"Good luck, kid," I say.

"Thanks, Tim." He moves toward the door and he says, "I'm going down to the police station now, and bail Adrienne out. They got her down for disorderly conduct and disturbing the peace and hitting a cop in the eye. And I think the referee is going to prefer charges of assault and battery. She sure did start fireworks in that ring, didn't she?"

"Yeah," I say, and my voice sounds as if I just got hit on the head again. My eyes have a dull look as I watch Len go out of the dressing room and out of the fight game and I am seeing a potential middleweight champ walk out of my stable. I look at Donahue and he looks at me and before he can get a word out I say, "Close your head."

THRILLS IN SPORTS

(Concluded from page 74)

him. They rode in breakneck fashion caught the tail-enders, rode even with the pack. They had stolen their lap and were almost certain winners.

There were only eight minutes to go when the shout arose: "There goes Goulet!"

The old master had jumped the field. He rode as he never had before. The spokes turned so fast they seemed like silver plates with rubber edges. He and his big Tasmanian partner relieved each other every lap. They had been great riders for years, but never as great as they were now.

Gastman and Lands pursued madly. There were only a few minutes left. If they could hang onto the tail of the veterans they would have the race won . . . for the final gun might sound before Goulet and Grenda were able to lap the field. But the youngsters were too worn. Bit by bit, they were left behind, and one short minute before the race ended Goulet and Grenda lapped the field and assured themselves of victory.

There have been thousands of six-day races in the history of the sport, but never one with such a heart-thumping finish as this one. It was great for the old timers . . . but a bitter disappointment to the kids who had made such a valiant effort.



I see a big guy in overalls pick up a rock about the size of his head and get ready to pitch it

SHOT PUT SHAKEDOWN

By RICHARD BRISTER

*Scouts Flatface McGinty and Monk Avery go to the sticks—
and find a kid who could toss that pebble over the moon!*

ME AND "Flatface" McGinty are rattling along this high-crowned macadam road, wondering what great American's picture adorns the one-dollar bill, and when we will see one again to find out the answer. McGinty stares out the coupe's window and grumbles:

"As far as I'm concerned, Monk, you can have this country. Can't see nothin' but hills,

an' a lotta scrub pine, an a million rocks."

The heap groans to the top of another short hill. I snap off the ignition, coast down a short grade, then catch the engine for the climb up the next hill. This saves gas, but keeps me busy.

"You better be thankful," I remind Flatface, "that this country is hilly. We may save enough gas to reach a town this way.

Where there's a town, there's food, and . . . Uh, oh, did you cough, McGinty?"

It's the heap's engine. It's drawing up the last few dribbles of gas from the tank. I choke her full and gun her hard, trying to coax her over the top of one more hill. She noses over in a jerky limp, and we coast down into a shallow valley.

McGinty pushes his hat back off his bald head and grabs hold of his middle. McGinty is once a prize fighter, but all he can show for it now is a face like a pancake covered with bubbles and an appetite which never goes A.W.O.L.

"Vermont!" he growls. "They should of left the Indians keep it. Lissen, Monk, if I don't soon get somethin' to eat, I'll bust up one of them mean-lookin' rocks in me two bare hands, and . . . Hey!" He rubs some dust off of the heap's window. "Lookit that guy chuck them stone coconuts, will ya?"

There is a hilly stretch of cleared ground on Flatface McGinty's side of the road. I look where McGinty points and see a big guy in overalls reach down to pick up a rock about the size of his head, and heft it in his right hand, getting ready to pitch it.

There is a piled-stone wall at the edge of the cleared space the big guy stands in, and behind that stone wall is a thick growth of brambles and briars that ought to make Peter Rabbit a very happy home indeed, provided he can find his way through it.

"Holy smoke!" I gasp. "You mean the rube's gonna try to toss that rock all the way over into them brambles? Must be a good forty feet. That ain't no ping-pong ball the kid's hefting!"

McGinty chews on his lower lip, watching. "That's where he slung the last boulder he picked up, Monk. 'Course it wasn't as big as this one. Hey, mebbe we found somethin', hunh, Monk? An' me growlin' at the rocks of New England!"

I'M TOO busy watching the rube kid to answer. Watching and hoping. McGinty and me are in business for ourselves as a couple of athletic prospectors. We lead a gypsy life, combing the hinterlands for young fellows who've got something on the ball, in this sport or that, and ain't cashing in on it.

Last year we found a born left guard up in Canada, a big bohunk who'd never had his mitts on a football, but took to the game like the town ne'er-do-well takes to drinking.

We have a list of college coaches who are

willing, and able, to pay for good athletes, and we finally arranged a scholarship for our left guard down at Midwest. The kid made little All-American and me and Flatface McGinty collected a five-hundred-dollar bonus from the Midwest coach, who has his athletic council in one hip pocket and his alumni in the other.

Midwest is a young school, ambitious to build up prestige in a hurry, and none too choosy about how they do it. They've paid good prices to me and McGinty for most of the boys we discovered.

It is sometime now since we send them a boy, and the jalopy eats up our dough faster than we do. So while we watch that kid heft that pumpkin-sized rock, we are both dreaming of steak and French fries, besides sweating freely.

"If he tosses that rock across that wall," I breathe down McGinty's thick neck, "he's a natural shot putter. *Whup!* There she flies!"

Across the field there, the rube is flinging his left leg out in front of him like a baseball pitcher, while he gets his weight well under that small boulder. His upflung leg suddenly snaps down hard, and his whole big body springs forward like a jack-in-the-box. He follows through on that weight like an Olympic shot putting champion, and then stands there, his barrel chest heaving, while he watches the stone's arclike flight toward those briars.

The rock skims narrowly over the wall and disappears in the thicket. Flatface McGinty sighs like a guy getting his first real-life look at Lana Turner, and I'm crawling out from behind the jalop's wheel already, running across that stony field toward the big rube.

"Stand still right where you're at!" I yell to him, and cock an eye back at McGinty. "Bring the tape measure, Flatface."

The rube stands there gaping at me like I'd just crawled out from under a wet rock.

"This here's private prop'ty, mister, 'case you ain't awares of it," he says.

He's a redhead, built like a Sherman tank, with legs like the Big Inch and arms like young oak trees. His face is a field day for freckles. He has pale blue eyes, a beak nose, and a small, hungry-looking mouth. Which last is a storm warning, but neither me nor Flatface McGinty has enough sense to read it.

"Whaddaya mean, stan' still?" he goes on. "I reckon I'll move if I take the mind to."

He's got a jaw the size of a block of granite, and just as hard-looking. He starts to walk.

"Don't move!" I say.

"Listen here," he says. He's got one of them nasal voices, with sandpaper in it. "I don't know what your game is," he raps. "But me, I got to clear the stones off this field afore sundown. Pop's gonna pay me fifty cents fer the job, an' I gotta keep movin'. So . . . Hey, are you crazy, mister?"

I'm down on one knee, holding my hand on the spot he's just stepped from. McGinty comes running up with the tape, we stretch it across to the wall, and McGinty reads it.

"Forty-five even, Monk."

"See if you can find that rock he just heaved, without making a hamburger out of yourself in those brambles."

"Don't mention food to me unless you know where we can get some," growls Flat-face McGinty.

But he beats a path into the briar patch, and comes walking back with a round, jagged rock the size of his head. I look up at the red-headed rube, and he stares right back at me like he's certain I'm booby hatch bait.

"That the one you just tossed?" I ask him.

"Yup . . . Listen, mister, this is costin' me money. Unless you're fixin' to pay me for the time I'm wastin'—"

I ignore the suggestion, which strikes me as silly.

"Heft it," I say to McGinty. "Take a guess."

McGinty flips the rock slowly from one big hand to the other. His wide face takes on a thoughtful expression.

"If it ain't sixteen pounds," he says, "it's doggone close to it. Here, whaddaya think?"

I've handled a standard sixteen-pound shot in my time, and the stone feels about that weight to me. I smile at the slack-jawed rube, and turn on the Avery charm, which McGinty says there really ain't any.

"What might be your name, son?"

"Reuben MacDiddle."

I start to say "Cut the comedy," then I look at that dead sober face and I see he ain't kidding.

"How old are you, Reuben?"

"Eighteen." His nasal voice has a clipped tone to it.

"You finish high school, did you?"

"Yup, finished last year. Listen, mister, I got no time to chew the cud with you. This is costin' me money."

"How would you like to go to college, MacDiddle?" I ask him. "Free for nothin'."

THE pale eyes narrow and the small mouth looks hungry, but then he sniffs through that beak nose.

"You're joshin'. Joe Deens is goin' to one of them places, an' it's cost his mom plenty, a'ready."

I'm beginning to get this rube kid's number. He is slightly more than somewhat fond of a dollar. I switch the subject.

"You got any kind of a weighin' scales at the farm where you're livin', MacDiddle?"

"Sure—fer weighin' sacks of potaters. But—"

"Come on then." I nod down at the rock in my mitts. "If this thing weighs in anywhere near sixteen, you got a chance to change your whole future, young fella." I look straight at him. "You'll laugh at yourself for workin' so hard to earn fifty cents."

That last line gets him. He's curious, and he leads us straight to the MacDiddle farm. He pumps me steady. I stall him, not wanting to commit myself till we weigh in that stone.

Reuben's old man is in the barn along with the Widow Deens and her daughter, Marjory, from the neighboring farm. Old Martin MacDiddle, who is the spittin' image of Reuben, only smaller, is trying to sell the widow a milch cow. Mrs Deens is a stoutish, pleasant-faced woman, around forty, while that daughter of hers is pretty enough to adorn a calendar advertising Miami.

We introduce ourselves all around, and then they all watch, bug-eyed, while I hang that rock on MacDiddle's scales, and take a reading. It comes to seventeen pounds, and I chuckle at Flatface McGinty.

"If he can throw this thing forty-five, he'd shove the sixteen-pound ball out somewhere around fifty. We've struck gold, McGinty."

By now the rube kid is losing his patience.

"Jest what are you drivin' at, mister?"

I give him a short lecture on athletic scholarships as they exist at certain schools throughout this great country. I explain to him that years of pitching them rocks off of this and that field, plus a natural build for the weight events, has made him a shot putter, while he doesn't even realize it.

"You got a four-year college education right in the palm of your hand," I tell him.

"And it won't cost you a penny."

That small mouth of his tightens. It seems

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he ain't overly fond of book learning. And he says his old man's paying him two and a half bucks a week plus room and board, right here at home. He don't smoke, drink, nor go to the movies, so he's savin' plenty.

I'm watching that stubborn jaw on the kid, and I'm remembering the quick way he flares up when I tell him to stand still, after he pitches that stone. He's one of these cantankerous kinds, that don't like to be told nothin'.

I play a hunch that the old man is as fond of a dollar as the kid is. I take the old man aside from the others. I explain about Barney Simms, the track coach down at Midwest. I tell him Barney's got plenty of money behind him—which is true enough—and I explain that the kid will probably be able to work for his meals, and wind a few clocks once a week, and end up with money to spare at the finish of each college semester.

"How much?" the old man asks quickly.

"Depends on how hard he works, and how far he shoves the shot out there for Barney," I tell the old man. But I can see by the look in his eye that I've got him. "Maybe a hundred or two. Like I say, it—"

I cut off short as the old man wheels and glares at his son.

"Reuben," he says, "from now on, you mind your manners toward Mr. Avery here and Mr. McGinty. You're goin' to college!"

Well, like I say, Barney Simms is eager for point-winning track men. But before he coughs up half a grand to me and Flatface McGinty, for steering a good boy down to Midwest, he wants proof that the boy's really got it.

Me and McGinty watch the papers till we see where there's a May Day celebration planned for a town across state a ways. Which means a track meet, any way you look at it. We write to the newspaper over there, find out there's a shot put scheduled, and it's open to anybody that wants to enter.

Me, Flatface McGinty, and Reuben MacDiddle are right on hand at the shot put circle, when that meet gets started.

It is the kid's first look at a track meet—they bypassed track for a ball team at his high school—so I coach him, plenty.

"You got to keep your feet inside that chalked circle, MacDiddle. You get three official throws, but if you stumble over that foul board at the front of the circle, it don't make no difference how far you put that big ball out there. It don't count for nothing. So

[Turn to page 102]

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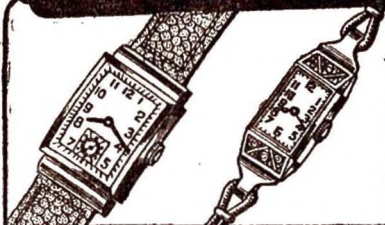
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—just take it easy. You got it all over these other chumps without hardly tryin', the way I look at it."

"Yeah?" says MacDiddle through his nose.

He don't sound very enthusiastic. He's one of these iceberg types that you don't get to know overnight. Me and McGinty have seen a lot of him by now. We've been helping him out with his farm chores, to earn our keep out there while we wait for May Day, but the kid don't unbend himself, or get at all friendly. In his young eyes, we're still just a pair of fast-talkin' slickers.

"It's too bad you ain't had a real shot to practise up with," I tell him.

Me and McGinty had wondered about borrowing money to buy one, but we never could get enough nerve up. Not in *that* household! But the kid can borrow somebody else's shot to toss in this meet.

"All right, kid," I say. "Looks like you're up first. Make it a good one."

HE GOES out there, wearing his underwear top for a jersey, and for track shorts, a pair of cut down dungaree pants. He's got tennis shoes on his oversize feet, all of which makes quite a picture. The crowd hems around him as he picks up the weight.

Personally, I'm looking for him to foul on his first try. But he stays inside that circle. That sixteen-pound lead ball rests in his big mitt easy as pie, after the head-size stones he's used to tossing. He lifts his left leg, hops across there and heaves it.

I'm looking for him to put one out there around forty-five feet. The pill starts out like it means business, then loses its zip in mid-flight and digs its own grave in the ground at thirty-eight.

I frown at the kid as he steps out of the circle. "What happened?"

"Can't get my fingers in back of that ball," the kid tells me. "It's too blame little."

There is three other men entered in the event, and their first tries all go out past MacDiddle's.

Try that iron ball on your next one," I tell him. "It's bigger than the lead one you were using. And put some pep in it."

He gets forty-one feet and a fraction with the big iron ball, but he loses his balance and stumbles over the foul board. So the toss doesn't count, and even if it does, forty-one feet don't win no hosannas—or checks—from Barney Simms down at Midwest.

"Ouch!" groans McGinty, and looks

mournfully at me. "You s'pose Old Man MacDiddle could use a couple of regular hands out at the farm, Monk? Me stomach's got used to three squares a day, and some-thin' tells me we're backin' a loser."

I concentrate on the rube kid.

"You've only got one more try," I tell him. You've got to come through, kid! You've got to make one good toss in an official meet, or Barney Simms won't give a hoot for you . . . What went wrong that time?"

"This here's a mite different from chucking stones off'n a field," he says, and shrugs his big shoulders.

"It oughtta be easier for you," I remind him, but he looks at me, dumblike.

He comes up for his third and last try and I'm prayin'. He knows there's a lot dependin' on him, this time, and he seems to be tryin', but the pill plops into the turf at an even forty-two feet. Which is good, understand, for a May Day meet in a small town, but which don't earn him no scholarship to Midwest College.

I'm too disgusted even to talk, but while the kid changes his clothes, McGinty says:

"We expected too much, Monk. After all, it was his first crack at a real track meet. You ask me, all that kid needs is practise."

"So?"

"So," says Flatface McGinty, "there's gonna be a County Fair next month, and another track meet, accordin' to the newspapers. I'm for givin' the kid another crack at it."

"What's the use? Unless he has a real shot to work out with."

"I was thinkin'," says McGinty, "mebbe we could buy that big iron ball from the fella that owns it."

"With what?"

"Bet I could sell our spare tire, Monk, for enough to buy it."

"Listen," I started to yell, "we need that tire, McGinty. We—"

But McGinty is on his way already. I can see he's got something, and I decide not to stop him. . . .

Me and McGinty work ourselves sick, that next month, trying to teach the kid to shove that regulation ball out there. But the kid's lost all enthusiasm, after flubbing out so bad in the meet. He looks on the practise sessions as so much extra work. And the farm

[Turn page]



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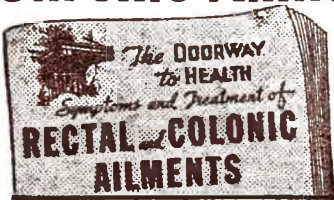
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work keeps him plenty busy, to start with. Like I say, he's got a long streak of stubbornness in him, and me and McGinty have to butter him down some to keep him working.

He gets so he can shove the pill out around forty-four, and once in a long while he beats forty-five. It's still not enough, 'not for Barney Simms. When I tell the kid so, he flares up a little.

"Looks like I jest ain't cut out for it then, Mr. Av'ry. Like I say, it ain't the same as pitchin' them rocks. Pitchin' them, I most always had a target to aim at."

"Wait a minute!" I say, sort of startled. "That's it, then. Hold it a minute."

I walk away from the shot put circle me and McGinty have fixed up for practise, and throw together a little stone wall about forty-five feet out there.

"Try aimin' at that." I tell him. He winds up and lets go with one that just clears the wall I've built for him to aim at. I grin at McGinty, he grins back, and we move the wall back to forty-six feet. So the kid drops that iron pill ker-plunk in the center of it.

"No use, Monk," McGinty sighs. "Forty-five seems to be the kid's limit."

He starts walking away glumly through Old Man MacDiddle's corn field.

"Where you goin', Flatface?" "Just for a walk," says McGinty.

KNOW different. McGinty takes a lot of these evening strolls, here lately, and I once seen him take a taxi to go two blocks in New York, rather than leg it.

"Give my regards to the widow," I yell at him.

Young MacDiddle stares at me. "He goin' to the Deens place?" he asks, cocking his red head toward McGinty.

"McGinty likes to eat," I tell him, sighing. "Mrs. Deens makes very good blueberry pies, to hear Flatface tell it. Figure it out for yourself."

"Why," says the rube, "I'm way ahead of you. And I'll bet you she lands him."

I look at him with my mouth hanging open. "How's that?"

"Why, shucks," he says, "'tain't no secret hereabouts that the Widow Deens is huntin' a hubby."

"I don't believe it, MacDiddle. McGinty wouldn't look twice at that old dame. It's those blueberry pies, or—or maybe that good-lookin' girl over there. That Marjory.

How come you ain't been makin' goo-goo eyes at that one, by the way?" I ask him.

"Pop says I'm too young to think about girls, Mr. Avery. Besides"—he looks kind of wistful—"costs a mint of money to spark a girl, these days. But the widow'll land your sidekick, sure as shootin'. You just take my word for it."

When McGinty rolls in about midnight, I'm up waiting for him.

"Just a short walk," I tell him, sarcastic. "Listen, Flatface, you can't do this to me. Sure, it's a nice little farm, but she's much too old. Besides, you ain't the type to marry for money."

He stares at me, blank-faced. "What's eatin' on you, Monk? You been raidin' Old Man MacDiddle's stock of hard cider?"

I figure his trouble's a guilty conscience. "All right, pretend you don't know what I'm talkin' about. But she'll lead you a dog's life. You ain't cut out for farmin'. You better stick with ol' Monk, Flatface. We have our ups an' downs, maybe. But there's lots to be said for the gypsy life we been leadin'."

McGinty shakes his big head from side to side. "I'm goin' to bed, Monk. Take it easy. You'll be okay in the mornin'."

I know how he feels. It's a skunk trick he's pulling, running out on me. He knows it, and he's afraid to talk it out in the open, for fear I'll talk him out of it. I guess them famous blueberry pies of the widow's is what tells the story. McGinty was always an easy mark, when it comes to food, an' always will be. That designin' Widow Deens knows it, and plays on his weakness.

He goes for another "short walk" the followin' night, and the one after that, and again the next night. I swear under my breath at the way he deserts me, leavin' me to sweat out the kid's practise sessions all by my lonesome.

I figure it's good-bye, McGinty, and it hurts me more than I let him see, 'cause me and McGinty've been together some years already. The only chance to wise him up, and save him from that woman's clutches, the way I look at it, is to improve the partnership's fortunes. A nice check from Barney Simms down at Midwest will do it, so I work harder than ever to get that rube kid shoving that iron pill out there.

But when I drive him down to the County Fair for the final big test, he's still a forty-five-foot shot putter.

Flatface don't even ride down there with

[Turn page]

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us. He drives down with the Widow Deens and her pretty daughter in their big black Packard. He don't even come down on the field, while I'm getting the rube kid ready to take his tries. All that time, when I need him most, he's sitting up in the rickety grandstand with them two dang' women, jawin' away at that middle-aged, man-crazy dame like he thinks she's prettier than Lana Turner.

She simpers and smiles, and makes a face like a cat that just surrounded a mouse. McGinty always was a fast talker, bein' Irish, and I figure that's the end of him. I get so all-fired disgusted, I just quit lookin' at him.

Besides which, I'm busy. The kid takes three practise throws, and he don't get nothing past that forty-five mark that's a bugaboo to him. First thing I know, it's time to start, and he's in that circle for his first official toss of the apple.

I pray, watching him get his weight down, then spring up, heaving it out there. It looks nice at the start, like it's going to ride out there plenty. I've got my fingers crossed for about forty-eight feet, which would be plenty. But the dang thing plops in the grass at exactly forty-five feet.

It's no use to try to pep-talk the kid. He works by opposites. I realize by now. Tell him to do one thing, he gets stubborn, and does just what you don't want.

I get a brainstorm, grab his arm, and point across to where McGinty is sitting between Marjory Deens and her mother. It so happens McGinty is turned toward the girl, right this moment.

"I ain't so sure it's the widow McGinty's stuck on, MacDiddle," I say, sneering.

THE rube looks over there, gulps once or twice, but don't say nothing. His small mouth takes on a hard look though, and you never see a more jealous look throwed than he throws at McGinty.

"I always thought you was stuck on that girl, MacDiddle, "I tell him.

He shoves an angry hand through his mop of red hair. "What if I am?"

"Well," I say softly, "if I was sweet on a girl, and another guy was monopolizing all her attention, I'd look for some way to get her lookin' at me."

"Yeah?" said MacDiddle. "How?"

"If you was to shove that ball out around fifty this next time, you'd have this whole crowd starin' at you. You'd be the man of the hour."

"Yeah?" he says. It's time for his second toss, and he steps in the circle. "I'm way ahead of you, Mr. Av'ry. Mebbe I wanta be the man of the year."

Saying which, he goes down in his crouch, hefts the ball on his shoulder the way I taught him, and pushes one out there with about as much pep as a man who ain't had nothing to eat for a week. He might as well of stood in bed, on that one. It don't even reach forty.

I know one thing. He's not even trying now, and I'm so sore I could bust him, if it isn't that he's built like a mountain.

I'm afraid even to look at him, for fear he'll see what I'm thinking. I've run out of tricks by now, and I figure the jig's all up, for me and McGinty. One more try, and the kid ain't got a chance in China of getting one really out there. Which will mean me and McGinty are still flat broke. Flatface will not be able to resist the Widow Deens and her blueberry pies.

I stand there, feeling lower than a panhandler's income tax, when I see a shadow on the grass in front of me. I glance up, and it's McGinty, standing there with the widow on one arm, and Marjory on the other.

"Whatta you want, Flatface?" I ask.

"Why," he says, "don't look so glum, Monk. Me an' Clara here have been talkin' about getting hitched for some time. We have just reached a decision."

"Look, Flatface, I'm busy."

"I do hate to steal your friend from you," puts in Clara Deens, in a voice which shows just how much she don't hate it, "but all's fair, you know."

The rube kid steps close to my ear and whispers, "Told you she'd nail him."

"If you'd put that pill out there for fifty, this next trip," I grit at him, "we still might save him."

McGinty is looking straight at me, and I see his left eye wink a little.


"Clara and me figured it would be awkward for Marjory—I mean, me marryin' her mother, an' comin' to live in the same house they both shared with Marjory's real father. Marjory's been wantin' to go to college for quite some time, so we decided to send her, didn't we, Clara?"

"That's right," beams the widow. "To— to . . . What was the name of that place you recommended so highly, Charles?"

This is the first time I hear Flatface called

[Turn page]

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by his real name in years. It stuns me some, but no more than his answer. "Midwest," he says. "It's a very fine coed college."

I hear young Reuben MacDiddle gasp beside me, and look at him, startled.

"Holy Moses!" he's gulping. "Now I got to make good on this last one!"

His final turn has come around by now, and he steps into that circle looking grim as a heavyweight champion going in a ring to defend his title. I see right away he means business, more than he ever has up till now, and I'm still wondering what it's all about while he's getting that big ball adjusted against his fingers.

He finally gets it just the way he wants it. He swings his left leg from one side to the other, in front of him. Those big muscles of his right leg ripple like lake water in a stiff breeze, and he sure enough makes a picture of a champ shot putter, if nothing else.

Then he starts frog-hopping across the circle on that flex-kneed right leg. Two hops, and he comes down on his left foot, hard. His whole big frame catapults up and out, as he follows through on the pitch.

He staggers around a good bit against the foul board. For a second it looks like he's going to lose balance and stumble across it. But he sticks his right leg behind him like an outrigger, and keeps inside the circle.

My eyes are glued to the flight of that pellet. It starts out like a Babe Ruth homer, low, and plenty of stem in back of it. But I have watched plenty of the kid's tosses start that way, and fizzle out in the middle.

This one keeps going! It rides out nice, finally starts dropping, and then the crowd lets out an Indian whoop as it digs a deep cup in the grass, fifty-one feet from that circle!

I am over slapping the kid on the back, while they measure it, legal.

"You did it, kid! You did it!"

"Reckon I didn't have no choice but to put one out there," he tells me. "If Marjory's goin' down there to Midwest."

It comes to me then. "That's why you were afraid to put one 'way out on your second try? You really thought McGinty was after your girl, instead of her mother. I told you to shove out a good one and make yourself the man of the hour, and you said you'd rather be the man of the year. Meanin'?"

"Meanin' I didn't hanker to go to college and leave her back home here. That's right, Mr. Av'ry, but don't let her hear you say it. She—uh—she don't know I'm sweet on her."

The mood I'm in, I could almost hug the goof, much less spill his secrets. Of course, I'm still pretty sick about McGinty. He tags along down to the telegraph office, where I mean to wire Barney Simms about my fifty-one-foot shot putter.

"You're mad at me, Monk," says McGinty. I give him the old silent treatment.

"In the first place," says McGinty, "I knew, the first day, he was carryin' a torch for that girl. I didn't figure he'd work very hard to get himself sent away from her, to college. And that first meet proved it."

I still don't look at him.

"As for me and Clara," he goes on, "I didn't have no choice but to make up to her, Monk. I had to work fast, and get in with her solid, to swing that deal about sending the girl down to Midwest. As it was, I just got her to say she'd do it in time for the kid's last try. The kid's just a lovesick young pup, so he came through, wantin' to go down there right with the girl. Ain't that what you wanted, Monk? What're you sore at?"

"You, you chump. Ain't you forgetting you're engaged to be married?"

"Why," says McGinty, "I ain't as big a chump as you think. I told her I already got a wife down in Texas. Clara's promised to wait until I can get a divorce."

"You ain't married," I say, grinning slowly. "Seems like kind of a raw deal to pull."

"On that dame? Lissen, I've asked some questions around. She won't wait long, once she knows it's hopeless. She'll get herself somebody better than me. There's the farm, and plenty of dough, from what I hear tell, and she ain't bad-lookin'."

I'm chuckling. He's right, I can see.

"As for the grl," he tells me, "I done her a favor. She always wanted to go to college. She'll get started down there at Midwest next fall, while Clara's still waitin' for my 'divorce' to come through, and Clara will let the girl stay, once she's started."

I look at Flatface McGinty and hate myself for not having faith in him. We walk into the telegraph office. "Barney'll pay us good for sendin' this kid down there to him," I say. "What'll we do first when we're back in the chips again, McGinty?"

"Buy a new spare for the heap an' get rollin'," says Flatface McGinty, without hesitating. "I seen enough rocks for awhile, an'—an'—"

"Yes?"

"An' I ain't forgettin' I'm engaged to be married!"

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JIGGY WAS A SOLDIER

(Concluded from page 81)

ing-room. I'll give you a lil' rubdown. C'mon! No hard feelin's! Okay? Okay!"

The big fellow's eyes were steady on Jiggy as he lay on his back and felt the ease of Jiggy's smart hands going into his muscles. It wasn't a squint that partially closed one eye. In fact, he hadn't had it before the start of that third stanza.

"You gotta sweat," Jiggy was explaining. "You gotta be able to sweat to be in shape. A man who sweats can't lose, you might almost say." He grinned a little. "Always you'll be in good heat, if you sweat."

"Speaking of sweat," Spangler said slowly "Speaking of sweat—you were dry as cracker-meal the first two falls. But in the third I could have sworn you were greased like a pig at a country fair! I couldn't even get a decent grip and hold it."

Jiggy might not even have heard, so disinterested were his eyes.

"Now, any time you can't sweat, Major, you jus' jump into our sweatbox. You know? That white metal case you step into and pull the top closed 'round all of you but your neck, and turn on the lights inside?"

"Me, I can get up such a sweat in that box I'm—well, like you say—like a greased pig. I mean, a fella wit' my build, especially. I got nothin' to grab onto, see?"

The hard light of intelligence dawned in Spangler's eyes.

"Yeah? How quick, would you say? How quick?"

"'Bout the time it would take you to make a phone call, maybe," Jiggy said, almost casually. "Like that, see?"

Spangler saw—with words. Words that concerned Jiggy, his alleged habits, his ancestry, his future progeny, if any. And he added a few extra words.

"I'm going into wrestling after I get out. I need a smart handler and manager. A man who can figure out how to win even when he's losing. Get me? What are you going to be doing when you get out, Jiggy?"

"I dummo," Jiggy said. "Hard to tell."

"You're a liar," Spangler said flatly. "You're going to handle and manage me. Understand?"

Jiggy was a good soldier. He grinned.

"Yes, sir, Major," he said.

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THE SIDELINE

(Continued from page 8)

the Sox fortunes much in the season just past. Tabor, while a powerful if erratic hitter, is notorious for his scatter arm and Newsome, as mentioned before, has figured in utility infield roles throughout most of his long career.

BEEF—WE GET IT HERE by Roy Lewis

Dear Cap: Congratulations to Roy C. Rainey for his story HOME TOWN BOY in the Spring issue of THRILLING SPORTS. Let's have some more of them. Congratulations also to Oscar J. Friend for STAND UP AND FIGHT.

However, I have two gripes. The first is—let's have fewer of those Baldy Simmons stories. They're just plain crazy! When I buy a sports magazine I want stories of real American grit and courage, not something about a goofy Frenchman and his "mind over muscle" hokey.

My second gripe is this—why doesn't any sports magazine ever print any stories about wrestling? There are plenty of baseball, football, track and boxing yarns, but for goodness' sake, why can't somebody write a story about wrestling?

With these two gripes off my chest I feel better. THRILLING SPORTS rates tops with me.—536 Piedmont Street, Orlando, Florida.

Well, Roy, you certainly picked on a Tartar when you assaulted poor Baldy. The excellent and enterprising Mr. Simmons is one of TS' longest lived and best loved characters. Perhaps you like your story folk bleak, bitter and grim, but the bulk of us fans like our high-tension stuff salted with an occasional laugh. In your behalf, however, we are writing Jack Kofoed and suggesting he have Baldy buy a toupee. Will that help—will it?

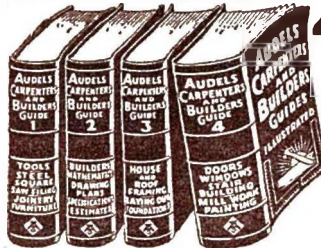
As for your wrestling story beef, what was wrong with ATOM-BOMB BURNS, by Tracy Mason, in our Summer issue? Let's hope it allayed your bio-chemistry. Actually, college wrestling is extremely dull to watch or to write about and the pro game has degenerated into such an unsavory racket that it takes an exceptional story on the sport to get by. Don't blame us—blame the promoters, managers and wrestlers who permit and practise the antics they do.

LETTER FROM GUAM

by A. S. Skojac

Dear Cap: I am interested in sports very much. Out here on Guam, tonight, instead of going to the movies, I picked up a copy of THRILLING SPORTS, Fall 1944 issue. I am interested in the following sports—football, baseball, basketball and ice hockey. I am 19 years old. My home is in the heart of New York

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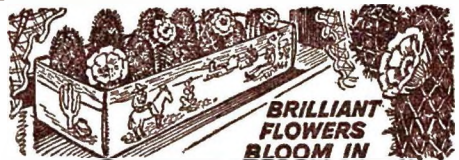
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OUR SPRING BATTING AVERAGE

by Bill Gardner

Dear Cap: Your magazine is one of the best on the market and the Spring issue was no exception. Here is the way I figured your batting average—

1. MIND OVER MUSCLE.....	350
Kofoed leads the league!	
2. THROWN OUT BY MCKIRNEY.....	320
REDHEADED PLAY-MAKERS.....	320
3. STAND UP AND FIGHT.....	300
HOME TOWN BOY.....	300
4. GOLD TO GO.....	280
5. TIMBER TROUBLE.....	250
League Average.....	301

Pretty good in any man's league. Hope the next issue's as good.—5506 Kenwood Avenue, Chicago, Ill.

Well, thanks a lot, Bill. We'll do our best to stay up there in the charmed circle. And thanks to all the rest of you who sent in letters to the Cap. If he didn't get them, he'd be in a very sorry pickle. So keep them coming and say what you think or feel and don't be afraid to sound off if you think sounding off is in order. Kindly address all letters and postcards to The Editor, Thrilling Sports, 10 East 40th Street, New York 16, N. Y.

OUR NEXT ISSUE

Now let's look over next issue's all-star roster of sports stories for your entertainment. Leading the fiction parade for next time is **A MODEL FOR THE CHAMP**, a prize-ring novelet by Tom Tucker which tackles the fistic game from a new angle.

It's the story of Hook Thompson, who spends his spare time building models of ships, planes and whatnot—and seems more interested in that hobby than he is in attaining fistic championship. Manager Pee Wee thinks Hook is swell material—but he has troubles with this model-building pugilist, as you'll find out in this splendid yarn. You'll be in there cheering for Hook all the way through—and laughing at his manager's antics!

An old-timer wants one more try at a sixty-minute game—and how he comes through is the theme of the splendid football novelet, **TOUCH-DOWNS DON'T COUNT**, by John Wilson in the next issue. You'll enjoy this tale—and then, next on the list, there's a complete Flatface McGinty novelet—**HEAVE THAT HOTCAKE**, by Richard Brister.

Of course, that isn't all. There will be plenty of other stories of every sport, plus **THRILLS IN SPORTS** by Jack Kofoed. The next issue is well worth waiting for.

And while waiting, see our companion magazines—**THRILLING FOOTBALL**, **EXCITING FOOTBALL**, **POPULAR FOOTBALL**, **POPULAR SPORTS MAGAZINE** and **EXCITING SPORTS**. They're all winners!

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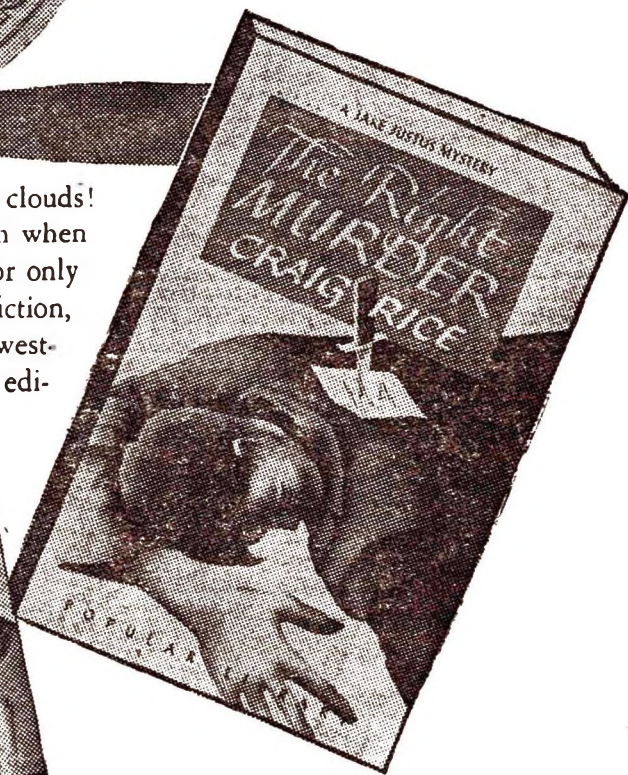
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